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EC-CENTRIC MAPPINGS OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

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To Ileana and
Ilenuș

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PREFACE

I.

The title of the book already suggests that it is not a kind of comprehensive treatise on the English Renaissance. The negation I have begun with is designed to foreground the main goal pursued in this critical project, which is the initiation of a series of dialogues between the Romanian readers in the nineties and a cultural past belonging to a tradition not entirely their own. I have to go on using negations and specify that a dialogue between Romanian readers and the English Renaissance is not at all a novelty in the field. The book should be looked upon as a reworking of previous dialogues established by Romanian scholars researching and teaching this subject. Nor is the English Renaissance itself, despite its remoteness in time and space and the linguistic difficulties it poses, a radical "Other", a cultural alterity to Romanian students. For us it is rather, as Gianni Vattimo puts it, "a site of traces and residues" of a long series of critical and theatrical readings of its texts as well as of political and ideological appropriations, all of which have contributed to the shaping of our present attitudes, beliefs and values[1]. The past which Tudor England represents to Romanian readers is not simply out there but it is also in us[2].

The difference which the readings in the present collection inscribe in the field of Romanian studies on the English Renaissance refers largely to the theoretical approach adopted. The analyses of early modern English texts are undertaken from an interdisciplinary perspective, often transcending and

transgressing the boundaries of established academic disciplines. Starting from the study of English literature, inroads are made into areas covered by disciplines such as history, anthropology, social theory and psychoanalysis. Secondly, a number of the essays included endeavour to recuperate marginal voices which have largely been ignored by Romanian scholarship and which the present essay make audible by means of a critical perspective that is itself "marginal" within the Romanian academic and critical community, namely "feminist criticism". Last but not least, although the texts selected for analysis are mainly "canonical" ones, they are subjected to non-canonical readings. This approach can create a space within Renaissance scholarship where culturally specific Romanian positions can also be introduced.

Apart from aiming at a past-present dialogue, the essays set out to stage an encounter between the political and theoretical discourses informing Anglo-American critical practices in the 80s and 90s and those informing our own contemporary practices. The essays should be viewed as part of a larger project designed to narrow the gap between Western and Romanian critical approaches to texts. This is not understood as a docile assimilation of messages and values developed by Western "centers of power", but as a series of negotiations, rereadings and reworkings.

The emphasis on the situatedness of the perspectives adopted in the essays, on the production of readings which could be relevant to Romanian readers in a specific socio-historical moment, presupposes that the author is herself fully imbricated in the results and effects of her analysis. The study of the English Renaissance undertaken in these essays continues the oppositional practice of the Romanian political performances of Shakespeare[3]. The past- present, East - West dialogue is meant

to highlight the need to revise established attitudes and beliefs in Romania and to mobilize new, innovating meanings likely to induce changes in our discursive and social practices.

II.

The deconstruction of the past-present dichotomy underpinning the present project implies that texts of the past evolve through constant dialogues and that the employment of multiple perspectives upon those texts is preferable to any approach which would reduce them to monological meanings. Apart from highlighting the critic's embeddedness in a given social and political situation, Renaissance studies have recently emphasized the need "to historicise" readings of early modern texts. "Context" became the catchword in the criticism and theory of the eighties which also initiated a new interdisciplinary approach to literary texts, an approach adopted in the present book as well. At the same time, intellectual historians such as Dominick LaCapra and New Historicist critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, Adrian Montrose and Jean E. Howard have pleaded for the need to deconstruct the relation between texts (literary texts) and contexts[4]. What is questioned is the status of history, or rather of the historical reality, as a kind of "transcendental signifier", to use a Derridean term. In a move which simultaneously denies relativism and positivism, the former being a mere replication of the latter, Dominick LaCapra reminds us that what we take to be the historical context to a given text is itself made up of texts of all sorts. Consequently, the study of "context" does not call for stereotypical, ideological "descriptions" but for interpretation and

informed criticism[5]. He argues in favour of close readings of texts and contexts alike in ways that recognize the complexity of both terms.

Two essays in this collection — "Representations of the Royal Body - Elisabeth I." and "Cross-dressing and Identity Fashioning in the Early Modern Period" — are not dedicated to what is usually regarded as "literary texts" but to the very texts that make up the context and which inform Elizabethan plays.. The analyses indicate the discourses and traditions that constituted them. They also foreground the assumption shared by New Historicist critics that what we generally refer to by the term of 'history' is not an objective, transparent, unified concept, nor can it can unproblematically function as a way of grounding and stabilizing the multiple meanings of the literary text[6]. Recent research on texts making up a given historical context has highlighted the internal tensions within these texts. Even propaganda discourses, for all their monological employment of meaning, have been shown to harbour contradictions in the very political and ideological positions they promoted. A more productive approach to texts (literary or otherwise) has been to look upon them as sites of contestation and negotiation between various social and ideological positions and between different discursive practices. This is the approach we have also tried to employ in our readings.

Our investigation of the historical context further sets out to trace what Stephen Greenblatt has called "the circulation of social energy". Following his suggestions, my own readings ask "how collective beliefs and experiences were shaped and moved from one medium to another.."[7]. I try to map out the circulation, transformations and appropriation not only of political and religious discourses but also of various other more marginal cultural practices, such as those related to the care and symbolic investment of the body.

The two essays also foreground the author's act of selecting texts in the process of constructing a relevant context to given texts. Earlier in the seventies, the French school of the *Annales* emphasized the situatedness of any act of establishing a context. Michel de Certeau went so far in challenging the apparent "neutrality" or "objectivity" of the context as to consider that it is the historian who decides what text , what element of the archive, should function as "document"[8].

Without denying the materiality of history, the analyses undertaken in this book refuse the unproblematized dichotomy between "history" and "literature" and also point to a new role that can be allotted to literature. As I have proved in my previous studies on the Reformation theater in Germany and England[9] and as Jean Howard puts it forcefully, " literature is part of history... it is an agent in constructing a culture's sense of identity[10]." And I would add, so is literary criticism.

III.

To explain the title of the book. The essays engage several kinds of mappings: to begin with, sixteenth and seventeenth century maps are discussed in relation with the imaginary constructions of political and geographical spaces. The first two essays in the collection concentrate on the bearing maps had to Thomas More's projection of a "utopian" world. This alternative, possible world, which is "mapped out" both discursively and cartographically in the sixteenth century, is contrasted with what can be called an actualization of this model in twentieth century socialist Romania.

The book is furthermore concerned with the political relations and ideological discourses of Elizabethan and Jacobean England as they are mapped out in Shakespeare's texts.

Strategies of legitimating power are discussed in a canonical play - *Henry V* and in a non-canonical one, whose paternity has often been contested — *Henry VIII.*

An important section of the book is devoted to the mapping of the body of early modern English women. The political meanings attached to the body are traced in the representations of the royal body - Elisabeth I, as well as in the representations of marginal, if not deviant bodies, such as those of cross-dressed women or of witches. The topos — the female body stands for the city/country — is investigated in the analysis of Shakespeare's poem *The Rape of Lucrece.*

Last but not least, the book sets out to map out the new, (postmodern ? postcommunist ?) cultural meanings which contemporary Romanian theaters have produced in their recent performances of Elizabethan and of Shakespearean texts in particular.

The term "ec-centric" is meant to be taken primarily in its etymological sense, meaning " not situated in the center" (OED). This refers obviously to the perspective from which the readings included in this collection have been performed. While assuming the "marginality" of the reader's position in terms of her geographical and political location as well as in terms of the critical approach adopted, the essays endeavour to deconstruct the dichotomy center- margin, in the same spirit as they deconstruct the opposition past-present. The cultural dialogue staged by the essays enables the author to project several other maps which are interlaced and interact with each other. The reader of this book is called upon to focus on various mappings of Renaissance England and at the same time to trace in the "margins" other maps as well: those of discursive and social practices in our postmodern and postcommunist times, East and West. What these mappings have in common is the acknowledgement of heterogeneity and diversity, of historical, political and cultural differences.

Note

[1] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 161.

[2] Domin que LaCapra considers that the past cannot be posed as a radical alterity to the present because this would presuppose, among other things, the homogeneity of the present and would thus disregard the extend to which our present is informed by our past. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 140. I think that this thesis is applicable also in the case of a past belonging to a foreign culture, to the extent that the cultural productions of that past have not only been widely circulated in the other culture but have also had a considerable impact upon the respective culture. Even if Shakespeare (to choose the most influential figure of the English Renaissance) has not been assimilated by our culture to the degree he has been incorporated in the German culture, where at times Shakespeare was considered to be more German than English, he has represented a major cultural icon in Romania as well. For the dialogic relation between past and present see also Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language.* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983) and *Soundings in Critical Theory* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[3] On the oppositional, overtly political character of Shakespeare's performances in Romania and other East European countries which employed Shakespeare's plays to convey coded messages about the present political situation, see Dennis Kennedy's papers "Introduction", *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance,*, Dennis Kennedy (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and "Shakespeare without Language" , *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance* , James C. Bulman. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) as well as the essays included in the collection edited by Michael Hattaway, Boika Sokolova, Derek Roper, *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994)

[4] LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 128.

[5] LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 313

[6] Jean E. Howard, "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies" Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (eds.) *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, (London and New York : Longman, 1992) 29.

[7] Stephen Greenblatt, "The Circulation of Social Energy", *Shakespearean Negotiations*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988) 5.

[8] In his article "L'opération historique" Michel de Certeau shows that it is all the historian's construction. Even the documents are not just given data; it is the historian who produces them giving them the status of data:"...au titre de pertinences nouvelles, il constitue en documents des outils, des compositions culinaires, des chants, une imagérie populaire, une disposition des terroirs, une topographie urbaine,etc. Ce n'est pas seulement faire parler ces 'immenses secteurs dormants de la documentation', et donner la voix a une silence...C'est changer quelque chose qui avait son statut et son rôle en une *autre chose* qui fonctionne différemment". Michel de Certeau, "L'opération historique" in *Faire de l'histoire*. 1. (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p.44. quoted in Dolores Toma, *Histoires des mentalités et cultures franșaises* (Bucuresti: Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 1996) 13.

[9] Madalina Nicolaescu, *Frond\ [i propagand\. Teatrul reformat din Anglia si Germania in secolul al XVI-lea* . (Bucuresti: Ediura Universit\]ii din Bucure[ti, 1996)

[10] Howard, 28.

MORE'S UTOPIAN MODEL MAPPED OUT AND ACHIEVED*

I.

Louis Marin describes More's Utopia as " a perfect and total presence ... constructed through its language in order to serve as origin and foundation for every map and image"[1] What could be the relation between More's text and its "representation", namely the map drawn by Ambrosius Holbein introducing the second edition of More's text? More's utopian model can also be viewed as a "possible world" functioning as a "source" or reference point for other possible worlds or their actualisations[2].

The paper sets out to explore the dialogue that can be established between the text of Thomas More's *Utopia* , its graphical illustration, and a third text, that of the totalitarian regime in Romania conceived of as an actualisation of the utopian model. My interest lies in the comment that the texts can perform on each other mutually enriching each other.

II.

The first thing that strikes us about the woodcut map from the second edition of More's *Utopia* (the map in the first edition of the work was a cruder drawing) is the-presence of two worlds. The real world of Book I in which Hythlodaeus and Morus converse on the subject of "the best state of a commonwealth and the new island of Utopia" coexists with the utopian world

* This paper eas presented at the Conference of the American Association of Renaissance Studies, Stanford, 1993.

described in Book II. In More's text the utopian world projected in Book II, appears indirectly as an embodiment of the perfect commonwealth that was discussed in Book I. Holbein's map confronts us with the co-presence-existence of a real and an hypothetical world, of the referent and its alternative model.

Utopia is not associated with what Marin calls the "non-world," that is the world which has not as yet been identified and named.[3] nor is it shown as an island lost in a vast expanse of sea, abandoned in some marginal position on the map, suggesting the far ends of human experience of space. In Holbein's map the utopian, hypothetical island is framed by the real world . Actually, it enjoys a central position where the major directions from the real world converge. The real world, on the other hand, is shown receding to the corners of the map. An intriguing inversion is thus performed, foreshadowing further reversals.

The map suggests both some of the traditions in which More's *Utopia* is inscribed and the radical re-readings performed by More's text. The presence of the sea and of the ship immediately brings to mind the literature of travel and discovery that was becoming increasingly popular in the early 16th century. The text itself mentions Amerigo Vespucci's travels. However, the Utopia illustrated by Holbein looks surprisingly different from the *terra incognito* inscribed on the world maps of the time , and very much like a world that is fully known and richly mapped out. It is not a blank spot in space a space that was filled in picturesquely with dragons or allegorical figures in many world maps of the 16th and the 17th century. It is a richly inscribed world with the names of towns carefully marked under drawings of houses and churches, and with roads connecting the towns. By way of contrast the actual world is shown as marginal and peculiarly non-specific. Consequently the image of the utopian

world on the map displays a higher degree of "reality" and concreteness than that of the actual world. The use of techniques of pictorial perspective foregrounding the island gives an interesting reading to More's text : the usual relation between the actual and the e, a significant departure from the tradition of travel and discovery literature.

A closer look at the flag of the central ship on the map reveals the mirror image of the word "NOR" (in German: Narr, in English: fool). The viewer is reminded of the inscription "Ad Narragonia" on the flags of the Ships of Fools in the illustrations to Sebastian Brandt's *The Ship of Fools* or on Bosch's painting on the same subject. Ambrosius Holbein's map has therefore inscribed More's *Utopia* in the tradition of the Ships of Fools whose destination generally was "Narragonia," a tradition which had become pervasive by the sixteenth century. Brandt's own work, published in 1494 in Basel, was almost immediately translated into Latin and French (1497) and later on into English (1508) ; it enjoyed a tremendous popularity and launched a literary tradition. Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* can also be included in this tradition. In carnivalesque scapegoating practices such as the Nuremberg "Schembartlauf" the Ship of Fools was eventually assailed and burned down[4] . Images of the Ship of Fools particularly in the painting of the time but also in literary discourse capture the general anxiety over the prevailing sense of spiritual and political crisis.

Hythlodaeus, the character in More's book who has been to Utopia and reports about it, bears a name that associates him closely to the theme of folly. Collin Starnes explains that the name "Hythlodaeus" was made up by More of two Greek roots meaning "nonsense" and "knowing."[5] Representing Hythlodaeus as a fool, More continued the tradition of humanistic satire directed against scholars (Sebastian Brandt himself appears in illustrations with a madcap behind his doctoral cap). Did More really intend to present his utopias as another version of Narragonia?

III.

Hythlodaeus's " folly", however, is shown to be largely a projection of the corrupt lawyers surrounding Cardinal Morton. It is from their perspective that his assessment of theft and its causes in 16th century England (the process of enclosure) is considered to be the inaccurate description made by a "stranger". The reader senses only too well that at this moment Hythlodaeus is merely voicing the views held by Thomas More, at that time the Sheriff of London, and that Hythlodaeus' opinions are meant to carry the weight of authority. The tables are turned : it is the corrupt lawyers who are revealed to be the real fools (in the second book More totally discards the category of lawyers as both useless and pernicious). The country exposed as a version of "Narragonia" turns out to be England. Holbein's map can be said to provide a correct reading of the text as it significantly shows the ship bearing the flag "Nor" to be oriented towards the real world.

It is quite safe to consider Book I of the *Utopia* as a critical exposure of the "follies" of the English political and social life, of the masquerade of the Tudor court. That More went beyond the limits of the conventional satire against the mores of the time has been convincingly argued by Steven Greenblatt. More regarded the English court as an essentially absurd and insane world in which pride and ambition became hopelessly entangled in the illusion of their own theatricality.[6]

Pride counts as the arch-evil or arch-folly. Damian Grace shows that "it is not only a post-lapsarian affliction of the will, as St.Augustine has argued, but a defect of judgement".[7] It projects a kind of false consciousness very much akin to modern, Marxist interpretation of ideology. In an altogether non-Marxist

interpretation, Damian Grace establishes the analogy between More's concept of pride and ideology : both function in the sense of " a systematic but plausible distortion of reality". Grace also identifies the "ideological problem" to be More's foremost concern in his critique of the mentalities of his time. More's rhetorical devices are largely determined by his endeavour to find a method capable of penetrating and unmasking this veil of illusions without sounding too boring , too "educational".

The relationship between utopia and ideology has also been studied by Paul Ricoeur[8]. According to Ricoeur, the utopia projects an external vantage point, a "no-place" (ou-topos). The extra-territorial perspectives determine a radical re-thinking of whatever is taken for granted in the familiar world and a contestation of the prevailing ideology.

The fantasy of an alternative society and its topogra-phical figuration "nowhere" works as most formidable contestation of what is. Utopia thus appears as the counterpart of the basic concept of ideology, in which it is understood as a function of integration. By way of contrast, utopia appears as the function of social subversion.[9]

IV.

Viewed from this perspective, the utopian world described in Book II represents the very centre of rational behaviour, the counterpart to the world of role-playing and self-fashioning. It is the world of truth and essence as opposed to that of appearances, a description which probably accounts for the higher degree of centrality that the painter has conferred upon it in his map. Peirce's description of icons, a category in which he included diagrams, metaphors and algebraic expressions may indicate

interesting relations between maps and utopias. Peirce identifies the source of the semiotic process in an awareness of lack and consequently in a projection of desire. According to Peirce the process of abstraction can be described as a mapping out of desire; scientific theories and signs in general are projections of a hypothetical state of things that supplement the self by filling in its lacks and gratify desire. the truth of signs should therefore be considered in relation to desire and to imaginary projections.[10]

What is most intriguing about Holbein's map is the unexpected insights it discloses once one changes the perspective from which it is regarded. We have seen that the inscription on the flag becomes legible if it is viewed as a mirror image. The same "reversed " perspective, which seems to render the painting intelligible, shows the Ship of Fools to be oriented not towards the real world, where Hythlodaeus and Morus are debating, but towards the Utopia. This "reversed " orientation coincides with the direction of Hythlodaeus's deictic gesture of pointing towards Utopia, a gesture in which the distance between the two worlds is almost bridged. The status of the Utopia , oscillating between two opposite possibilities — as the seat of rationality or of folly — is shown to be essentially ambiguous.

Viewed from this new perspective, Hythlodaeus's position as an "outsider" acquires new meanings : he may be a "fool" after all, or to put it in today's jargon, he is the "other" who has had the experience of a different world. In More's text he is credited with the "knowledge" of "unknown peoples and lands" that Amerigo Vespucci, himself, had never reached. The position of the Utopia is subtly shifted towards the *terra incognito* placed at the far ends of the map of human experience and which allegorically borders on the imaginary, the fantastic, the irrational. This position corresponds to the textual description of the Utopia, which Hythlodaeus located in the distant and at that time almost mythological austral hemisphere.

Michel Foucault dwells on the apocalyptic significance of the voyage undertaken by the Ship of Fools.[11] The happiness the fools hope to attain in " Narragonia" is a false one, as it represents the diabolical triumph of Antichrist, the negation of all truth. When read within the context of folly as suggested by some of Durer's, Bosch's and Bruegel's paintings (Durer's *The Knight of the Apocalypse*, Bosch's *The Ship of Fools,* Bruegel's *Dulle Griet*) the "nonsense" in Hythlodaeus's name, the "absurd" laws and customs in Utopia that More could not agree with , discharge a most disturbing effect. The utopian world appears to be not only a contestation of the real world, governed by illusion-fostering pride; it is also a dramatic negation of rationality itself, a negation of "Eutopia", that is the model of the best possible world. The latter is shown to conceal some basic, existential form of madness. The negation of rationality inevitably triggers off apocalyptic connotations. One should also consider the spiritual and political context of deep crisis in which *Utopia* was written — a time when only two extreme possibilities presented themselves to many thinkers : either a total rethinking of the prevailing spiritual structures (this was to be the program pursued by the Reformation five years later) or a dissolution into chaos and nonsense. More's discourse seems to suggest that the two possibilities might not be mutually exclusive. The name of his narrator "Raphael Hythlodaeus" establishes the paradoxical co-existence and interaction between "healing" (by and through God/Logos) and "nonsense".

The map drawn by Holbein reinforces the ambiguity and indeterminacy at the heart of More's *Utopia* that have perplexed contemporary readers. The fact that Holbein was fully responsive to this quality of the text powerfully refutes the idea of the univocity and transparency which More's *Utopia* supposedly displayed to his contemporary, sixteenth century readers.[12] The map further

indicates that More's text straddled the rift that Foucault thought had occurred in the Western experience between tragic, existential forms of madness as presented in painting and the fully controlled madness, reduced to satirical butt , within the rational discourse of the humanists.[13] (Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* would be the perfect example of the latter form).

To Greenblatt the subtle displacements, distortions and the ceaseless shifts of perspective in More's text are" the closest equivalent in Renaissance prose to the anamorphic virtuosity of (Hans) Holbein's art".[14] More continuously hedged in, problematized and relativized the meaning of his political and philosophical discourse by means borrowed from fictional discourse, such as the unreliable narrator, the serio-comic style or specific details that create the illusion of verisimilitude. His *Utopia* is a hybrid genre, a mixture of political and philosophical treatise and fictional discourse. Clear-cut distinctions are obviously inappropriate when dealing with a text that is simultaneously inscribed in several spaces defined by different traditions.

More's humanist dialectical way of thinking could be described as dialogical.[15] Dialogue — in a modern understanding of the term as a movement to and fro between simultaneously present yet fundamentally different, if not opposite, points of view — could be said to be the keyword to More's technique. Relying on the Ciceronian tradition of periastic argument, More seems to have been keen on establishing a new rhetorical method which would be opposed to the dogmatic scholastic "dialectics".[16] His rhetoric is best embodied in the conversation carried on between the three humanist scholars : Morus, Giles and Hythlodaeus (in spite of the latter's uncompromising stance). This form of dialogue serves as counterfoil to the combative and rigid discussion at Cardinal Morton's dinner table. The new method stands out for

its openness and receptivity to different positions, it does not aim at domination and at the exclusion of other positions. Critical enquiry and inconclusiveness are basic to its functioning. Damian Grace views the relation between the "utopian" and the real world also as dialogical, as More did not commit himself unreservedly to either position. The reader is also encouraged to enter this dialogue. If he is to carry on the dialectical method, the modern reader should establish a dialogue between past and present[17] and refrain from pinning down the meaning contained in More's work to any given model.[18] The kind of debate on the meaning of *Utopia* that has continuously developed new perspectives seems to be the most adequate response to More's dialectical strategy.

To what extent does the map involve a "misreading" of More's text or a limitation of its semantic possibilities? Jean-Claude Margolin has noticed a blatant departure from the topography indicated in More's text : Holbein's island looks very much like a self-contained circle, whereas Hythlodaeus describes it as a "new moon".[19] The crescent shape suggests simultaneously the Utopian's receptivity towards a foreign world as well as the reverse desire for isolation, in defence of their identity.It is a fact that the first edition engraving does show a crescent shape. The self-contained image of the island on the map seems to have arrested the dialogical movement of More's text.

It is also significant that the map failed to render the uniformity that governs the organisation of space in Utopia. It presents the viewer with a delightful variety which belies the thrust of More's argument. The cartographic description renders the utopian world too familiar, too close to the real world in its circumstantiality. Elizabeth McCutcheon's seminal article on More's use of litotes has shown how he can undermine the specificity and verisimilitude suggested by circumstantial details[20].

Should it mean that Holbein failed to grasp the radical character of the Utopian commonwealth, namely its communism? Could this "misreading" have been deliberate?

V.

The projection of the utopian world reinforces the unmediated criticism of the Tudor Court and the Tudor myth offered in Book I. The force of the criticism embodied in the construction of the Utopian world derives largely from the implicit assumption that the hypothetical world represents a kind of model of social and political organisation, a norm of action and social relationship (even if flawed and contradictory).

The model embodies solutions to present issues, solutions that are developed within a process of "recapitulating" and rewriting past traditions. Collin Starnes, for example, has thus argued that Utopia represents a re-writing of Plato's *Republic,* which involves standing on its head the Platonic concept of justice.[21] M. Bristol has shown that More relies heavily upon fourteenth and fifteenth century traditions of self-contained feudal communities to preclude the capitalist development of individualism and mercantilism.[22] The utopian world acts out past traditions in an effort to forestall undesirable future developments.

More projected a model of political organisation that departed radically from the system in force in most of the European countries at that time. Starting from a concept which was widely debated within humanist political thinking — *vera nobilitas*—More, in a democratic move, generalised its applicability.[23] Civic virtue and political responsibility are no longer be the requisite quality of the leader alone but of the entire community. This involves a powerful decentralisation of power

whereby the prince's role in governing is drastically reduced. More's major thrust in this argumentation was to oppose the inefficient and wasteful display and abuse of power by the absolute monarchs of his time, notably by Henry VIII. In contradistinction to the situation in England, power is almost de-personalised in the utopian world. It is dispersed all over society; it is embodied not only in its various institutions, but mainly in the regulations governing the organisation and the running of everyday activities.

Although political power in the Utopia is rethought in what may seem democratic terms — elections are held every year, all officials, the ruler included, can be disposed of for failure to discharge their responsibilities — and in spite of the new distribution of power, the individual's political rights and freedom, his autonomy as a free agent are drastically curtailed and undermined. His opportunities to participate in the decision-making process of the city have become insignificant. He is not a citizen but a subject in a well-regulated system.[24] Democracy and the traditional civic values that sustain it in a classical republican model have been emptied of substance. Negotium (i.e. civic involvement) in Utopia no longer involves, as it did in ancient Athens or Rome voluntary participation in the public forum of the city — an activity that confers the highest meaning and value on individual life.[25] Negotium is reduced to mere compulsory, physical activity that hardly anybody is exempted from.

If More cannot recuperate the ancient Greek high commitment to the general cause of the commonwealth by genuinely revitalising the meaning of *negotium*, he will try to suppress the private world as the opposite term to the general cause. In this respect, More's *Utopia* is more radical than Plato's *Republic* and anticipates the extreme forms of communist regimes : private property, privacy in general, is completely eliminated.

Even bodies are held up for public inspection. The Utopians are therefore left with a dangerous void: they cannot fulfil their personality by actively participating in the decision-making process of the city, nor do they have a private world to fall back on.

A Romanian reader would be instantly reminded of the laws on the compulsory nature of labour in the former socialist countries, of the high value attached to physical as opposed to intellectual work, of the rotation of the population from cities to the countryside attempted in Cambodia and envisaged by Ceausescu.

The depressing sameness of the cities in Utopia, the uniformity of clothes, the strict surveillance exerted over the population,the restrictions on travelling, the spurious extolling of civic virtues at the expense of individual freedom, rights and wants are all features describing twentieth century totalitarian countries. The Romanian student might have discovered that the two worlds described in Book I and Book II of *Utopia* are not mutually exclusive as More described them to be; in view of their later actualisation in Eastern Europe, they could not only "peacefully" coexist but also mutually reinforce each other. This would mean that the utopian system as presented by More, in fact, includes its own negation.

More's rigorously regulated world proves to be an entropic system that undermines the self-organisation of society and precludes all possibility of change. Both Plato and More went to great length to envisage a constitution that could suppress competition for power and still make government possible. The twentieth century actualizations indicate that, in order to maintain the system, the very element has to be introduced that More was eager to exclude : the strong man, the dictator, a Stalin, a Mao, a Ceausescu.

Looking at Holbein's lovely woodcut a Romanian reader will wonder if Holbein did not sense the dystopian elements in More's text and consequently suppressed them. The subversive otherness of More's Utopia seems to have been domesticated and neutralised; the abstract, totalizing tendency of the utopian world seems to have been assimilated to the desire for specificity informing iconic representations of the Renaissance. The variety and circumstantiality inscribed in Holbein's map can serve as a counterfoil to the monolithic homogeneity governing the East European rewriting of More's Utopia. Both readings of More's model, however, failed to capture the "undecidability" and the dialogic movement at the heart of his text.

Note

[1] Louis Marin, *Utopics : Spatial Play* (Atlantic Highlands, N J. : Humanities Press Inc.) 50.

[2] Considering the description of the utopian model as a possible world in relation to other possible worlds that can or cannot be actualised I rely on the approach undertaken in the logic of possible world : Raymond Bradley and Norman Swartz, *Possible Worlds and Introduction to Logic and its Philosophy* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1979). I also relied on Baudriallard's discussion of the precession of simulacra and the relation between model and reality. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York : Semiotexts, 1983) p. 2,32,63.

[3] Marin, 42.

[4] Jacques Heers , *Fetes des fous et Carnavales* (Paris :Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1983) 272-3.

[5] Collin Starnes, *The New Republic. A Commentary on Book I of More's "Utopia"* (Waterloo , Ontario : Wilfred Laurier Univ. Press, 1990) 24.

[6] Greenblatt stresses More's disgust at the theatricality of Henry VIII's court, at the ceaseless role-playing that he himself participated in and which he regarded to be sheer madness. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning. From More to Shakespeare,* (Chicago : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980) 16.

[7] Damian Grace, " A Dialectical Interpretation of the *Utopia* ", *Miscellanea Moreana. Essays for Germain Marc'hadour. Moreana* , 100, vol. 61 (1989) 22 -288.

[8] Paul Ricoeur, "Ideology and Utopia", *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics,* (Evanston, Illinois : Northwestern University press, 1991) 318-324.

[9] Ricoeur 320.

[10] " As to the process of abstraction, it is itself a sort of observation... It is familiar experience to every human being to wish for something quite beyond his present means, and to follow that wish by the question, 'should I wish for that thing just the same, if I had ample means to gratify it'. To answer that question, he searches his heart, and in doing so he makes what I term an abstractive observation. He makes in his imagination a sort of skeleton diagram, or outline sketch, of himself, considers what modifications the hypothetical state of things would require to be made in the picture, and then examines it, that is *observes* what he has imagined, to see whether the same ardent desire is there to be discerned. By such a process, which is at the bottom of the mathematical reasoning, we can reach conclusions as to what would be the truth of signs in all cases, so long as the intelligence using them was scientific." Charles Peirce, *Philosophical Writings* (New York : Dover Publications,Inc., 1955) 98.

[11] Michel Foucault, "Stultifera Navis," *Madness and Civilisation* (New York : Vintage Books, 1988) 3-37.

[12] Starnes 2.

[13] Foucault 18.

[14] Greenblatt is discussing Hans Holbein's famous painting "The Ambassadors" and establishes an interesting connection with More's textual strategies. Greenblatt 22.

[15] Grace 284.

[16] Grace 294.

[17] See Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History : Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983) 23-72.

[18] Grace is contradictory to the extent to which he considers the synthetic model that the reader is supposed to supply to be necessarily one "truly worthy of the Christian ideal". Grace 292.

[19] J.C. Margolin, "Sur l'insularite d'utopia. Entre l'erudition et la reverie," *Miscellana Moreana. Essays for Germain Marc'hadour, Moreana* ., vol. 61 (1989) 303-321.

[20] Elizabeth McCutcheon, "Denying the Contrary. More's Use of Litotes in the *Utopia* ", *Moreana* , 31/32 (1971) 107-121.

[21] Starnes 3.

[22] Michael Bristol, *Carnival and Theater*, (New York and London : Methuen, 1985) 88-94.

[23] For a very good discussion of More's stance in the humanist controversy on the meanings of true virtue —*vera nobilitas*— and on the importance on the two traditions , the Platonic and the Ciceronian one, that had developed this issue in the Renaissance, see Quentin Skinner, "Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* and the Language of Renaissance humanism", *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge and London : Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987) 123-158.

[24] J.C. Davis , *Utopia and the Ideal Society. A Study of English Utopian writing 1516 -1700* (Cambridge Univ. press , 1981).

[25] See Hannah Arendt on the public space and the generation of value in the Greek agora. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958).

TRAVELING ON MAPS TOWARDS UTOPIAS OR THE MANY WONDROUS THINGS ICONS CAN PREDICT

"It may seem at first glance that it is an arbitrary classification to call an algebraic expression an icon; that it might as well, or better, be regarded as a compound conventional sign. But it is not so. For a great distinguishing property of the icon is that by direct observation of it other truths concerning its object can be discovered than those which suffice to determine its construction". (Peirce, 105-106).

I.

Peirce's classification of signs into icons, indexes and symbols is widely cited. His further inclusion of diagrams and metaphors next to images into the category of icons is not only little known, but it is somewhat puzzling as well. It is this very strangeness , however, that can reveal the radical character of Peirce's theory of signs.

Peirce considers analogy to be the principle underlying the process of iconic semiosis. This comes out most obviously in the case of images where likeness is the ground for which an image can stand for an object. The relationship, as viewed by Peirce, is not dyadic; it is mediated over an interpretant. A major tenet of Peirce's metaphysics is the denial of dualism (see Meyers, 515). Any duality between sign and object, appearance and reality is rejected in favor of a triadic relationship. "A sign , or *representamen* , is something which stands to somebody for

something in some respect or capacity" (Peirce,102). The triadic structure introduces a crucial element in Peirce's semiotic approach, namely mediation. There is no direct relation between sign and object; the two components of the sign do not imply each other, they have to be mediated over a third element which is the *interpretant*. The definition is not confined to a person in an actual semiotic situation. The interpretant is actually another sign reading a semiotic relationship. It usually forms the object of yet another *representamen,* so that the process of semiosis can go on. The word "father" for example can denote a given individual, its interpretant contains the words "male" and "adult" which in their turn are read by further interpretants as they refer to different classes of individuals. The chain is infinite.

If the analogy between icon and object is not based upon the intrinsic properties of the two, then the mediation established is psychological rather than logical. It introduces a relation which is not based upon an effective causality but upon a final one. It is the triadic mediation which makes room for intentionality in the semiotic process. The relationship between the components of a sign is established by an act of judgment, of decision. It is based upon certain beliefs which , according to Peirce , means that they are based upon habit, recurrent use. This is why signs may falsely associate ("whale" was given the interpretant "fish") and the relationship between a *representamen* and the interpretant can register changes. Iconic analogies are set up in order to serve definite purposes within a given system of signification. Peirce admits that the principle of likeness is subject to interpretation and that all iconic signs inevitably include conventional elements. In this context Peirce's inclusion of diagrams and metaphors under the heading of "icons" should no longer be surprising.

II.

What I am basically interested in is the importance of imagination, of projection that Peirce acknowledges in his semiotic theory. Peirce never abandoned the Kantian idea that imaginative ability was necessary for the full use of reason and judgment. The creative act involved in the process of semiosis does not contradict or diminish its cognitive value; to the contrary an alloy of imagination and reason is not only suitable for theoretical thought , it is essential for the full development of scientific theories. (see Tiles, 17o) Present-day scientific thinking would be inconceivable without models designed as diagrams, which function in a similar way that metaphors operate in poetic and rhetorical discourse. (Tiles, 174).

Peirce's own definition of the process of abstraction which underlies that of semiosis is most revealing :

> As to that process of abstraction, it is itself a sort of observation. ... It is a familiar experience to every human being to wish for something quite beyond his present means, and to follow that wish by the question: Should I wish for that thing just the same, if I had ample means to gratify it? (Peirce, 98)

To answer that question, he searches his heart, and in doing so he makes what I term an abstractive observation. He makes in his imagination a sort of skeleton diagram, or outline sketch, of himself, considers what modifications the hypothetical state of things would require to be made in the picture, and then examines it, that is *observes* what he has imagined, to see whether the same ardent desire is there to be discerned. By such a process, which is at the bottom of mathematical reasoning, we can reach conclusions as to what *would* be true of signs in all cases, so long as the intelligence using them was scientific.

What is striking about the definition Peirce gave to his own approach to the interpretation of signs, is not only the combination of imagination and scientific intelligence but the importance of desire and of lack. (A Lacanian deconstructive analysis of Peirce's approach would not be amiss.) Scientific theories and signs in general are projections of hypothetical states of things that would supplement the self, fill in its lacks and thus gratify desire. The truth of signs is hypothetical, it can only be considered within imaginary projections and in relation to desire.

The description of the icon quoted at the beginning of the paper stresses the predictive function of the icon: the observation of its structure can reveal features of the object that have not been known so far. The icon can be associated with the predicate of a proposition as it supplies new information. Prediction is thus opposed to explanation. Peirce is totally unsympathetic to deductivist thinking, his own theory precludes the existence of an ultimate essence, the center, the fixed origin, to use the Derridian jargon, that is the absolute sign which would arrest the process of semiosis. Like in Derrida's free play there is no sign that refuses to be " translated" further into another interpretant which in its turn would call for another sign and so forth.

The icon, therefore, has the capacity of revealing "unexpected truths" (Peirce, 106) about an object by projecting an alternative to the object. The alternative is supplemented with information derived from the observation of the icon's own structure. The projective, predictive function of the icon shows how, in Peirce's semiotic model, it is meaning that determines reference, it is connotation that determines/defines denotation. The way people think of objects (including concepts, events, laws) depends on the way they interpret the signs they are using. According to Peirce, there is neither thought nor experience which is not sign and is not in need of interpretation (see Tiles, 175).

We are therefore, on the one hand trapped in the "prison house of *signs*", on the other hand, as we are projecting the reference of objects, we are continuously creating our world by projecting ourselves onto it.

The interpretation of the predictive quality of the icon has brought us surprisingly close to the ontological definition of comprehension offered by Heidegger. To Heidegger an understanding is a projection (*ein Entwurf*) by which significance comes into being. The human being, "thrown" into a world that is not its own, projects itself towards a possibility of being. In his projective interaction with the world, man "lights up" the world and creates a new spatiality. (see Heidegger, *Being and Time,* sections 28-39).

In his essay *"Die Zeit des Weltbildes"* Heidegger takes up Husserl and argues that objective facts can be recognized as such only within the frame of a picture. The frame is important not only for the order and coherence it introduces in our interpretation of facts, but mainly for the possibilities it opens. Reality seems to make sense only to the extend that it makes further alternative projections possible.

Jean Baudrillard takes the idea a step further : icons, such as models and maps no longer predict and project the real but they actually generate it . Simulacra precede reality. (Baudrillard, *Simulations,* 3)

Baudrillard emphasizes the importance of the " representational imaginary" which "both culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer's mad project of an ideal extensivity between the map and the territory" (Baudrillard, 3). It is the imaginary quality of the model, the ontological difference and tension between the two modes of being (the real and the imaginary) that lends authenticity to reality; the actual world can only be "real" by comparison with the projected alternative world.

III.

In his essay "*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*" Heidegger places the "*Entwurf*" (the model, the diagram, the projection) in the context of the "*Weltanschauung*" of modern man. The German word for representation , "*Vorstellung*" is taken to mean: a) to imagine (*sich vorstellen*), b) to bring forth, to exhibit (*vor-sich-bringen*), c) to place in front of oneself, to confront oneself with (*entgegenstellen*). In keeping with the same Kantian notion, Heidegger, like Peirce, asserts the interaction between imagination and scientific reasoning. The world can be understood as a whole to the extent it is recreated and projected:

> Das Seiende im Ganzen wird jetzt so genommen, daß es erst und nur seiend is, sofern es durch den vorstellend-herstellenden Menschen gestellt ist *(Die Zeit als Weltbild, 86)*

Heidegger reinforces the cognitive function that Peirce allotted to the predictive function of the icon and adds new, ontological value to it. The "*herstellend-vorstellende Mensch*" (the creative -imagining man) brings forth, exhibits the Being of the whole. Like Peirce Heidegger departs from the dualistic conception of the opposition between reality and appearance. Truth (Being) is presupposed to show itself, to disclose itself, to *appear.* Heidegger translates the Platonic "*aletheia*" into "*Unverborgenheit*" that is " being unhidden". Heideggerian truth discloses itself in images and visions , in "*Vorstellungen.*" In this context representations play the important role of bringing forth, of "making present" truth, the being of beings (see Spariosu, xi).

The novelty of modern icons, i.e. of modern representations of being, is the projection of man (the projector) inside the picture. Man positions himself in the midst of beings as the measure of all beings, as their point of reference:

"Der Mensch wird zu jenem Seienden auf das sich alles Seiende...gründet. Der Mensch wird zur Bezugsmitte des Seienden als solche" *(Die Zeit des Weltbildes,*86).

Heidegger interprets the position man projects himself into as an assertion of power and control over the world. It is only in the struggle for centrality and supremacy that man acquires the status of a "subject". The world projected by modern man interprets being in a reductive, almost exclusive way. Being is read to imply basically human being; to be more precise, it implies the being of the subject who imposes himself as the measure of all beings. The world projected as an icon , (*das Weltbild*) offers an interpretation whose starting point and final goal is man. Because of its exclusive concern with man, Heidegger describes humanism as a moral aesthetic anthropology. (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*, 91). Humanism is also the age in which the world is turned into a picture :" die Zeit des Weltbildes". The meaning Heidegger gives to the "*Weltbild*" created by humanism is that the world itself exists *as* a picture, i.e. it is recreated as a representation. The latter is not just the "the world picture", i.e. the appearance of the world (87). This definition takes us back to Peirce's triadic mediation : the relationship between object (the world) and sign (the picture of the world) is not a direct one; it is mediated by an interpretant. What interested Heidegger was the restructuring and recreation of the object.

Heidegger explains at great length why it was only modern man, the "subject", that could conceive of the world in semiotic terms. The definition of the world as a picture does not apply to earlier periods : "daß überhaupt die Welt zum Bild wird, zeichnet das Wesen der Neuzeit aus". Neither in ancient times nor in the middle ages did man locate himself as the center of reference. In neither period did he presume to project an icon of his own particular "spatiality" as the universal picture of the world

IV.

If the major process of modern times, according to Heidegger, is the conquest of the world as a picture (turning it into a picture): " der Grundvorgang der Neuzeit ist die Eroberung der Welt als Bild" (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*, 92), then the 16th and 17th century maps can be said to offer revealing instances of this process. They make present modern man's desire to assert his power over space, his will to represent and thereby to control what eludes his grasp, what is out of reach, whether in space or time. In this sense maps can be said to trace the "graphic unconscious" of early modern man.

Peirce himself had accounted for the process of semiotic abstraction in terms of "desire", with signs projecting hypothetical states of things that could gratify these desires and could fill in gaps or the lack in the identity of the self. (see above, 3-4).

Renaissance world maps are delightful objects of art combining realistic representation with allegorical figures. The latter are mainly used to ornament a highly elaborate frame and also to map out the *"terra incognita"*, the New World whose exploration was in its early stages. Maps silently enact a dialogue between two modes of thinking : an empirical way of acquiring and processing knowledge embodied in the rigorous cartographic lines and symbolic, abstract reasoning suggested by allegorical iconography. The results of geographical discoveries and progress in mathematical rationalization of space are framed by images that take us back to the grotesque gargoyles of gothic cathedrals.

On the other hand maps in early modern times proved useful instruments in asserting power over the territory represented. English renaissance maps, for example, are famous for

the figure of royalty dominating the picture, almost to the extend of effacing it. (see the 1592 Ditchley portrait of Queen Elizabeth, standing over the map of England.) The insignia of power in the world maps are to be deciphered from the allegorical images framing them.

The dragons that encircle the world and inhabit the *terra incognita*, for example, indicate man's obstinate efforts to assert dominion over all space by charting it . No blank spaces should be left on the "picture of the world". Man has to leave his imprint even if what he is representing are most fanciful figures belonging to imaginary worlds. A collection of fantastic sea monsters covers remote areas such as Iceland (Ortellius's 1585 map,). Regions lying beyond the horizon of man's knowledge at that time, as was Northern California, represented as an island, were filled with charming otters and fearful sea monsters.

Pieter Goos's 1666 world map displays not only the four winds placed decoratively outside the world. The cartographic image is also framed by the icons of the four seasons that appear concurrently and in concord. The representation of the four seasons suggests the coexistence of present, past and future in man's godlike grasp of time and temporality. The maps can therefore be said to project the early modern man's desire for sovereignty over time and space through knowledge and representation.

Next to triumphant dragons and stately images of time, the frames of the maps also boast wheels of fortune and skeletons echoing the medieval *danse macabre*. Sometimes the Latin word for death — *MORS* —is broken down and scattered to the four corners of the map, replacing thus the decorous images of the winds (Hereford, 14th century. Death projected in the margins questions the plenitude depicted by the artifice . Frame and center establish an interesting dialogue asserting or contesting

the limits of man's knowledge and power, mapping out or interrogating what he assumes to be his dominion.

The same approach of combining icons of the "real" world and "allegorical" figures can be seen in the map attributed to Jean de Gourmont. This time it is folly that provides a context which frames our reading of the world. The fool's cap is placed outside the world encircling it, the moral implication being that we are unable to see either the real value of our lives or the quality of our world. The map triggers off associations with the enormously popular tradition of folly and the "Ship of Fools" in the discourse of both early modern literature and painting.

The juxtaposition of the two registers — realistic and symbolic — simultaneously projects man's fantasy of power and displaces him from the desired central position. Man is both projected as omnipotent and omniscient and is thrown back on his mortal limits . He is a creator and rejoices at the picture of his world; at the same time he is relegated to the humbler position of the helpless, finite *ens creatum* that he occupied in the earlier, medieval world picture.

The gist of the maps lies in their ambivalence. From this perspective they can be compared with Holbein's painting "The Ambassadors". There the anamorphic figure of the skull is counterpointed to the figures of the two scholars, representatives of the *homo universalis*, and to their impressive gear. The maps, books, instruments of astronomy and geometry, musical instruments stand for, and are themselves expressions of, the advancement of human learning. In order to be able to decipher the image of the skull, however, the viewer has to change his perspective to another vantage point where the sumptuous images are thrown out of focus, distorted past recognition and revealed to be just worldly vanities. The skull seems to leer across the painting to the viewer and at the representation of human learning.

To come back to the maps, they actually represent conflicting attitudes towards man's position in the world. They can be viewed as sites for the struggle for "subject position" that Heidegger referred to. They also enact the transition from the medieval to the modern world picture.

The position of the *terra incognita* at the frontiers of man's experience can be charted on a temporal dimension as well. Its marginality , bordering on and possibly transcending into the imaginary can be compared with utopias or similar projections of future possibilities of being. Like maps, utopian visions reflect the desire to go beyond the limits of one's present capacity and actualize one's utmost possibilities. The new territory can very well be the world of the "other", beyond mortal visions and visitations. It can be the New World, just as well as the world of death, or the projection of an "absolute future"— whose model governs present actions and behavior.

Ambrosius Holbein's woodcut illustration to the 1518 edition of Thomas More's *Utopia,* offers an interesting example of a graphic icon representing and commenting upon a textual icon : a humanist utopian vision of the best possible commonwealth.

The first thing that strikes us about Holbein's map of Utopia is the reversal of positions: it is no longer the *terra incognita* inhabited by sea monsters and dragons that provides the frame, but it is the real world that is scattered at the corners of the map. The utopian island enjoys a remarkable centrality on the map and a corresponding degree of "reality" and concreteness . It is fully charted out with specific details indicating towns and their names, buildings and roads. The inversion in status from a blank spot in space to a fully inscribed world suggests the departure from the tradition of travel and discovery literature that More's text appears to belong to.

The spatial organization of the map, however, seems to meet the definition of the utopia which is inherent in its own name: a hypothetical place of no-where (u-topos) which should provide an extra-territorial perspective to the actual real world. Paul Ricoeur comments upon the function of the utopia to estrange and de-familiarize the real world in order to subject it to merciless criticism : "The fantasy of an alternative society and its topographical figuration "nowhere" works as the most formidable contestation of what is. Utopia thus appears as the counterpart of the basic concept of ideology, in which it is understood as a function of integration. By way of contrast, utopia appears as the function of social subversion" (Ricoeur, 320). The utopian world seems to embody all the norms and values which were found lacking in the real world. It is the very center of rational behavior, the counterpart to the world of role-playing and self-fashioning of the Tudor court that More loathed so much. Utopia stands for the world of truth and essence as opposed to that of appearance, a description which fully tallies with the high degree of veracity that the painter has conferred upon its map.

The map is intriguing for the unexpected disclosures it offers upon close inspection. For example, the flag of the ship coming from Utopia and heading for the real world, reveals the mirror image of the word "NOR" (Narr, in German). The viewer is reminded of the inscription "Ad Narragonia" on the flags of the Ships of Fools in the illustrations to Sebastian Brandt's *The Ship of Fools,* or on Bosch's painting on the same subject. Traditional meanings associated with carnivalesque practices of scapegoating otherness or with the humanist satire against the follies and vices of the world spring to mind. After all More's *Utopia* was written in response to Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly.*

A closer look at the mirror image that has revealed the inscription shows the ship to be oriented not towards the real

world, as it first appeared to be, but towards Utopia. The island, which More's text located in the remote southern hemisphere and described as inaccessible to Amerigo Vespucci, now appears as the world of the "other". Its representation on Holbein's map reveals it as another *terra incognita* . The ideal appearance of the island seems to be just a revamping of the *Schlaraffenland* (the land of Cockaigne) motive or the projection of the apocalyptic world of Antichrist . Both were common destinations for the Ships of Fools in early modern mythological thinking. (see Foucault, 3-37). From this perspective Utopia is not only a contestation of the real world, it is a negation of rationality itself, and definitely a parody on the word "Eutopia", which means the best possible world.

The inscription of folly on Holbein's map captures the basic ambiguity and indeterminacy of More's text (see Greenblatt,) The changing position of the ship approximates the text's two way movement in time: Utopia is on the one hand a projection of possible future development of society and anticipates communist regimes of the 20th century. On the other hand its radical political and socio-economic structure re-enacts popular traditions of the past. More looked nostalgically to the social ideals of the self-contained, feudal communities of the 14th and 15th century. The "repetition" of the past in the projection of the future was designed to preclude the development of undesirable phenomena such as individualism and mercantilism, social mobility and the collapse of established hierarchies.

To rephrase the oscillation in More's text in semiotic terms one could say that the icon (the utopian world) certainly predicts future developments in the object (the actual world). In doing so, however, it retraces former contexts and recapitulates earlier situations.

Holbein's cartographic illustration of the utopian world displays the same ambivalence and contradictory movement as does More's text and... as do most of the world maps of early modern time. Their charm lies in the inconclusiveness of their semiotic predictions. Today many of the predictions have been fulfilled and most of the *terra incognita* has been turned into utopia or dystopia achieved.

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ON THE USES OF HISTORY - *Henry V* *

I.

"I began with the desire to speak with the dead" is the memorable beginning of Greenblatt's book *Shakespearean Negotiations*. To initiate a conversation with the past has meant for new historicists, cultural materialists, feminists and other poststructuralist scholars in the English Renaissance to engage with texts of the past in ways that can be relevant to the discussion of burning issues of the present. (I will not dwell on the differences between the various critical positions. The very purpose of my present endeavour requires that I should focus on what they share rather than on where they differ). Jean E. Howard has called this exchange with the past "a politically committed historical practice" whose overarching goal is to "organize the critique of present practices and the institution of alternatives".[1] Studying the past is therefore informed by a passionate commitment to deepening our intellectual grasp of the present and to working out alternatives that could change and better the world we inhabit. This paper will consider some aspects of a two-fold dialogue Romanian scholars can carry on a) with the past as instantiated in the English Renaissance and b) with the new theoretical approaches to history in the Anglo-Saxon world. The theoretical discussion on the 'uses of history' will be given a more particular focus by an analysis of the ideological functions history discharges in Shakespeare's *Henry V.*

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II.

Jean Howard insisted on the " reconstellation of the past so as to produce significance for the present". This entails an active attitude towards the past which addresses questions of the now and here. The past is not safely separated from the present.[2] The postmodern view denies the possibility to find in history, particularly in a temporally and spatially removed past, such as the early modern English period, a haven of certitudes and a refuge in plenitude, the study of which would fend off the anxieties and frustrations produced by a disconcerting present. The postmodern position adopted by new historicists and cultural materialists rejects therefore the definition of the historian and the literary critic, as totally objective, politically unbiased, placed outside ideology and the social and cultural discourses that shape his subjectivity. Our access to the past being highly mediated and textualized, it necessitates a continuously changing work of hermeneutic reconstruction, a process where values, beliefs and positions held by the historian cannot be bracketed out. Knowledge of history can no longer be but "situated knowledge". Making historical knowledge is inextricably bound up with power. Engagement with history can and should therefore be employed as an oppositional political practice.

What used to appear in Romania as a desire for politics-free objectivity which would carve out a space for spiritual autonomy and cultural and political resistance in the midst of an extremely invasive totalitarian politics, has to be reconsidered from this perspective. Avoiding the dirty world of present day politics, adopting the gentlemanlike /ladylike style of dealing with literature and history which used to guide criticism in England as well,[3] have proved after all to be politically complicitous. Rather

than being a subversive strategy, this approach often signified a nostalgia for a lost totality as well as the desire to avoid any dramatic confrontation with power.

The rejection of claims for "absolute truth", the acceptance of the historian's inherent partiality and situatedness does not necessarily lead to pluralistic indifference or cultural and moral relativism. It presses historians to subject their own assumptions to a rigorous critical scrutiny, to detect unsuspected political consequences of their theoretical stance. I think that Romanian scholars studying the post-modern engagement with history can discover their own "blind spots" in dealing with texts and become more aware of the insidious ways in which the theoretical framework we have been using in our critical readings has been informed by the ideology of the former totalitarian regime. Identifying our covert debts to the very system we tried to oppose is an integral part of a larger enterprise to subject our approaches and values to a process of rethinking and reassessment.

Asking the dead, mobilizing the past to explicate the meanings of our own present situation should not involve a narcissistic projection of our concerns and anxieties onto the past. Postmodern approaches to history have often emphasized the status of the past as an Other who is speaking in a different voice. Keeping a genuine dialogue with the past also means a readiness to listen to this Other even when the information it conveys contradicts our model.[4]

More often than not historiography or historicizing approaches to literary texts have tended to suppress the uncomfortable voices of the past. One of the ways of silencing the Otherness of the past is to adopt a unifying, homogenizing view of history that corresponds to the belief in the unified Cartesian subject. Relying on Raymond Williams' identification of residual, emergent and dominant elements in any given

historical period, new historicism at its best has refrained from defining a period in terms of its dominant culture alone. Such a move tends to replicate former monological discourses on history and to leave no space for resistance and contestation. Romanian scholars are only too keenly aware of the oppression and manipulation exercised by monological discourses. Our persistent resistances to a more pluralist and non-elitist understanding of history should therefore be the subject of intense critical analysis.

What is further worth highlighting in our world, which seems to be fixated on the "hard", economical aspects of reality and on their relation to power, is the importance post-modern,(Foucauldian) approaches attach to meaning, to its production, circulation and distribution. Most of the struggles for power in various historical periods take place in the form of a contest for the possession of meaning and authority. The importance recently attached to the production, dissemination and struggles for meaning, the new reassessment of discourse as practice have led to the erosion of the opposition between history and literature. Literary works, theatrical representations can be judged not only as an effect of their socio-political context but as political interventions upon this context.

An approach which insists on the difference between past and present and avoids the obliteration of the Other in a presenteist approach, further presupposes the deconstruction of traditional beliefs in universals and grand recits. At the same time it insists on the historically specific construction of subjectivity and of its system of values. The "universal" appeal of Shakespeare's characters, their status as "not of an age but for all time" for example, is radically interrogated and exposed as an instance of "bardolatry". This is not to deny Shakespeare's plays

the quality of "great texts", but to highlight the way canonization has domesticated or even bracketed the more critical and challenging potential of his plays.

In Eastern Europe, and to be more particular, in Romania, it is theatrical representations of Shakespeare's plays rather than scholarly work produced by the academia that have been more audacious in drawing upon the provocative possibilities his texts offer. In his introduction to *Foreign Shakespeare* Dennis Kennedy points out the oppositional character of many of the Eastern European performances concluding that Shakespeare's plays have never been as powerfully political since the time of their first performances.[5] The editors of *Shakespeare in the New Europe* add that although, or maybe because, Shakespeare is worshipped as an icon for his transcultural and transhistorical values, he tends to be appropriated for immediate political purposes, be they conservative or radical.[6] Shakespeare's appeal as a central cultural value sanctions radical critiques of the status quo, while the temporal and spatial remoteness of his plays allows for greater experiment. The recent performance of *Julius Caesar* by the Bulandra Theater offers an interesting example of a provocative engagement with past history that is refashioned so as to mirror and comment on our own recent "revolutionary" past.

Our academic approaches, our teaching of Shakespeare may well borrow more from our theatrical practices. Since the theater has started to veer away from politically informed representations and to move towards more consumerist, commercial ones (see the recent performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the national Theater), it is high time academic scholarship took up the challenge to provide more radically critical readings of Shakespeare's plays.

III.

The issues we choose as conversation topics for our dialogue with the dead are inevitably determined by our historical moment. Myself, as an East European reader approaching *Henry V*, cannot help associating it with the war in Bosnia and with the use of violence during our own "revolutionary" events in 1989. My major interest therefore lies in the ideological strategies employed to legitimize state violence which the play uncovers. Alan Sinfield has commented on two such strategies which were quite a commonplace in Shakespeare's time: the appeal to God and providence, and the appeal to nature.[7]

The metaphysical legitimization of warfare is offered by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the famous bee hive speech. In a similar fashion Lancelot Andrewes assured the queen in a sermon that the campaign in Ireland headed by the Earl of Essex in 1599 was " a war sanctified". References to "nature" and to its divine design are used not only to sanction the hierarchical structure of society which functions upon the principle of obedience. At the same time they legitimize the acts of violence and theft committed during the war. The Archbishop's speech seems to reiterate the arguments disseminated in England in the famous *Homily Against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion*. He starts by employing a commonplace — the analogy between the body politic and a bee hive, both of which are instituted by heavenly design. The analogy enables him to foreground obedience as the bedrock of the political system and to sanction as universally valid the activities undertaken by the different social categories, including those of soldiers.

> They have a king, and officers of different sorts,
> Where some, like magistrates, correct at home;

Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad;
Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds;
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
To the tent royal of their emperor. (1.2.190-197)

In a general secular appropriation of theological categories, armed assault and pillage , provided they benefit the king's interest or shore up his position, become fully legitimate. Not only the justification of the war but, more specifically, the heroic representation of Henry works in such terms. His is a power rooted in nature — blood, lineage, and breeding— but also deriving ultimately from God's law as it was encoded in nature and, by extension, society: France belongs to him "by gift of heaven/ By law of nature and of nations".[8] The French king's power is seen as lacking divine sanction, and hence devoid of authenticity and legitimacy: it is described as "borrowed clothes" and "custom".

IV.

A Romanian reader in the nineties will definitely be interested in another power strategy employed in Shakespeare's play, namely the use of history.

It is also the Archbishop of Canterbury who turns to history in order to legitimize Henry's claims for France. Recourse to history involves both archives, access to which seems to be exclusively permitted to the Archbishop, and narratives of the past, such as the stories about the glorious feats performed by Henry's ancestors, Edward III and his son Edward the Black Prince.

Like the divine design of nature, history is invoked as an authority, containing the objective, hard-core truth upon which kings can build their policy. Unlike the other two discursive strategies, recourse to history is more complex and ambiguous. History can provide the motivation for acts of violence which have dire consequences for the population; it can also compromise the authority of the king. Henry warns the Archbishop, who provides the historical arguments underpinning his campaign in France:

> Take heed how you impawn our person
> How you awake our sleeping sword of war
> We charge you in the name of God, take heed;
> For never two such kingdoms did contend
> Without much fall of blood, whose guiltless drops
> Are everyone a woe... (1.2. 21-27).

What the king is shrewdly trying to do is to shift the burden of responsibility on the historiographer, on the one researching the historical facts (the Archbishop), and thus clear himself of possible charges with the waste of innocent blood. At the same time Henry is emphasizing the textuality of history and the relativity of the truth which is as much discovered as it is produced by the historian. Historical truth authorizing the king's action is shown to be not only the product of archival research but, largely, the result of interpretative work. Henry himself expresses doubts about the accuracy and impartiality of the Archbishop's reading of the archives, without mistrusting, however, his loyalty:

> And God forbid my, my dear and faithful lord,
> That you should fashion, wrest or bow your reading (1.2.13-14)

History is used to equate the king's desire for power with the desire of the people. As the king is their "head" , it follows

that they should be viewed as mere bodies, and in this quality they should carry out the desire initiating from the head. The Archbishop pleads:

> O let their bodies follow, my dear liege
> With blood and sword and fire to win *your* right (my emphasis)
> (1.2 132-133)

History is understood as an act of remembering which prompts further repetition of past action. Apparently working hard to persuade the doubting king to start the war against France, the Archbishop urges him to remember the deeds performed by his forefathers:

> Gracious lord,
> Stand for your own, unwind the bloody flag,
> Look back into the mighty ancestors,
> Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb,
> From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,
> And your great uncle's, Edward the Black Prince
> Who on the French ground played a tragedy,
> Making defeat on the full power of France. (1.2.101-108)

The appeal to history involves a regenerative return to the mythic origins- the mighty ancestors. It is interesting that although Edward's and consequently Henry's claims to the throne of France were made possible by the inheritance of a female member of the family, no mention is made of women or of their legacy. History is reworked excluding the influential role played by women. Henry's title to the lands of France depends on Edward III's mother — Isabella, daughter of Philip IV of France. The French declare that the Salic law bars succession through the female line: "they would hold up this Salic law/to bar your highness claiming from

the female". The Archbishop argues in favour of a claim to the throne through the female line. The key role of the female, however, produces a general nervousness. The more influential women are the greater the stress on masculinity. This accounts why going back to the origins, remembering the ancestors does not also include the women of the past. Acknowledging their share in the making of history would pose the danger of feminization. The female element, either in the king's lineage or in his present environment (e.g. Falstaff who adopts a female subject position), must be repressed, if not excluded. If Henry is to become "This star of England", then it is s the image of male heroism that should be capitalized upon.

The invocation of history entails the desire for the construction of the future as a repetition, a re-enactment of the past:

> Awake remembrance of these valiant dead,
> And with your puissant arm renew their feats (1.2.117-118)

What is to be remembered and repeated is also the unmitigated violence of past deeds of heroism. The Black Prince's slaughtering the French is held up as an example to Henry V : " Whilst his most mighty father [Edward III] on a hill/ Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp [the Black Prince]/ Forage in blood of French nobility" (1.2. 107-110). The warning Henry V gives the citizens of Harfleur seems to suggest that he has learned his lesson in history and is on the point of "reenacting" the past, committing even worse acts of violence. He exults in scopophilic images of anticipated rape and infanticide, and goes as far as to associate his soldiers with Herod:

> If not, why, in a moment look to see
> The blind and bloody soldier with fouled hand
> Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters

Your fathers taken by the silver beards,
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls;
Your naked infants spitted upon the spikes
Whilst their mad mothers with their howls confused
Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry
At Herod blood-hunting slaughtermen. 3.2.33-41

V.

Even if the nationalistic discourse and the view on history as a repetition is endorsed and reinforced over and over again (reaching a climax in Henry's inspiring speech on St. Crispin's day), the play does not offer a single, homogeneous perspective on history. The Archbishop's view is carefully hedged in and challenged as the play constructs an ideological discourse of stimulating indeterminacy.

New historicist and cultural materialist critics have pointed out the ambivalence of the theater towards the official discourse.[9] The Elizabethan stage offered representations of power which were, indeed, closely monitored by the state — both texts and performances had to be licensed. When performed at court the plays were constructed so as to incorporate the official policy on a given issue. In such cases the theater seemed an extension of the royal power. The same play, however, might acquire different, if not even oppositional meanings, when performed in the popular theater houses.[10]

Similar to a Derridean supplement, the Elizabethan theater has been understood by contemporary critics to rewrite power by representing its forms from a marginal position which allowed much room for experiment and play. Its radical ambivalence has

been traced back to the particular geographical position of the theater houses, outside the City, in the liminal space of the Liberties.[11] The theater was both an integral part of the Elizabethan culture and was displaced from it, being at a cultural and ideological remove from it. This position made slightly eccentric or decentered perspectives available to the stage, and gave it the uncanny ability to tease out and represent cultural contradictions.[12]

In addition to the "undecideability" of its position towards the Crown and the political center, the Elizabethan theater was also a prosperous commercial enterprise which was highly responsive to market forces. Consequently it was exposed to beliefs and practices of subordinate or emerging classes and had to accommodate a high degree of ideological mobility. The topics it engaged were more often than not those where ideology was under strain.[13]

Given the multiplicity of discourses, practices and political positions that informed the theater and encouraged its penchant for ambivalence, it should come as no surprise that a play like *Henry V* should both project a fantasy of power derived from the Tudor myth and alternative perspectives that betray the inherent instability of this ideological construction.

The dominant, "official" historical discourse employed by the Archbishop is questioned by means of dramatic embedding and juxtaposition of scenes. The scene immediately before the Archbishop of Canterbury's official sanction of the war in France includes a discussion between the Archbishop and Bishop Ely. The Archbishop's position on a "hot" religious issue is designed to arouse suspicions among the Elizabethan audience. They are encouraged to look for ulterior motives in the Archbishop's advocacy of Henry's claim on French territories. In this discussion, often glossed over, by critics focusing on the heroic

dimensions of the play, the Archbishop mentions a deal the clergy is going to make with the king. The latter has apparently consented to give his support to the suppression of the Lollard movement and to the withdrawal from Parliament of the bill requesting the dispossession of the church. In return, the Archbishop ensures the legitimacy of his claims in France. In 1588 the Church had adopted a similar strategy: it encouraged resistance to the Spanish Armada as a maneuver to head off impending criticism of the church's wealth. [14]

The Archbishop's and the king's plans to put down the Lollard movement was designed to rouse strong feelings among the Elizabethan audience who tended to look upon the Lollards as proto-Protestants, as native initiators of the Reformation. In his highly influential work *The Acts and Monuments of the Church*, issued in 1563, John Foxe had reread the Lollard movement, clearing it of the charges of heresy, and had projected its leaders as early martyrs defending the "true faith". Furthermore the Lollards' intentions regarding the dissolution of monasteries and the dispossession of the church, mentioned in Shakespeare's play in the discussion between the two clergymen, were successfully taken up by Henry VIII. His actions, though politically rather than religiously motivated, received large support from the Protestant propaganda , so that by the time of Elizabeth's reign they were looked upon as one of the most popular actions of the Reformation. The church's unacceptable wealth and display of glamour was still a hot issue towards the end of the 16th century. The deal between the clergy and Henry V must therefore have cast serious doubts on the correctness of the Archbishop's discourse, including his recourse to history.

The play offers counterperspectives to the vision of the past projected by Canterbury. A different version of the return to the origins is given by the French. As might be expected, their

view on English history cannot be positive, but the terms they use will be taken up by Henry later in the play. The Dauphin describes the Norman conquest and the subsequent formation of the English people as a process of spent lust resulting in bastards.

> O Dieu vivant! shall a few sprays of us,
> The emptying of our fathers' luxury,
> Our scions, put in wild and savage stock,
> Spurt up so suddenly into the clouds,
> And overlook their grafters? (3.5. 5-9)

The foregrounding of contamination and promiscuity sets up a clear opposition to the English celebration of their early history which insists on purity and on male acts of bravery. According to the Dauphin, a similar process of bastardization is expected to happen as a result of Henry's campaign. Henry's action is defined as a conquest and a rape. Bourbon, for example, envisages the victory of the English as the contamination of his fairest daughter by a slave, no gentler than his dog. (4.5.15-16).

The idea of bastardization, contamination or miscegenation does not circulate only among the French noblemen. It unexpectedly crops up in Henry's own words in the wooing scene: he urges Katherine to consent to the conception of a prince who would be half French and half English. (5.2.211-218)[15] The French king also dwells on this aspect: "Take her, fair son and from her blood raise up/ Issue to me" (5.2. 366-367). The issue have to be French to strengthen the English king's claim on French territory, but the mixture of blood risks producing effeminate, French-style men. At the beginning of *1 Henry VI*, the son of Katherine and Henry V is called an "effeminate prince" and loses the French cities.

The most subversive counterperspective to the official discourse and to the meaning attached to the king's military campaign is not initiated by the enemy or by an outsider, be he the Irish captain MacMorris or lower class figures like Nym, Bardolph and Pistol, but by a representative of the common people. Catherine Belsey has pointed out the symmetrical position allotted to William vis-à-vis the king, whose popularity lies in his identification with the people, in his definition of himself as a man of the people.[16] At the very climax of the play, just before the decisive battle, William, representing the people - *der gemeine Mann* in the German Reformation propaganda — interrogates the legitimacy of the military action. While not making himself guilty of disobedience, William holds the king responsible for the innocent blood that will be shed, for the chopped arms, legs and heads, for the grief of widows and orphans. His words echo Henry's early description of war as a fall of much guiltless blood. The king cannot fall back on Canterbury's theological and historical arguments to assure William of the rightness of the cause. Henry's anger, his later emphasis on the monarch's sleeplessness betray his insecurity caused by a want of legitimacy. History resurfaces in his prayer to God: what the king remembers is no longer the triumphalist version of the nationalist discourse, but the recent history of usurpation and violence committed against Richard II. This is the very past Henry V would like to repress and which returns at moments of crisis. What Henry is afraid of is a "repetition" of the past, that is of further riots and rebellions. Alan Sinfield and John Dollimore have pointed out the obsession with maintaining order and with suppressing resistance in the play.[17]

Henry has to face the consequences of the view on history promoted by the dominant ideology and which is acted out in Henry IV part 1 and 2, namely the thesis that rebellion breeds rebellion. Henry IV had to cope with this repetitive pattern that

was unleashed by his initial act of usurpation. The vision of history as a repetition of the past reemerges in *Henry V* , despite the strong claim to throne the new king seems to have.

Henry V is shown to have no difficulty in coping with the conspiracy mounted by Cambridge, Scroop and Grey. He seems to be in full control of the situation. It is the king who traps the conspirators and not the other way round. The words charged with affect that Henry uses to reproach his former friend and present enemy, Lord Scroop, imply that the conspiracy was not at all a marginal event but reached out to and involved the king's most intimate friends and counselors:

> But O,
> What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop, thou cruel,
> Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature?
> Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
> That knew'st the very bottom of my soul,
> That almost might have coined me into gold,
> Wouldst thou have practised on me, for thy use? (II.2.93-99)

Henry's prayer, following his discussion with William, betrays his sense of insecurity. It also expresses the desire to arrest the implacable process of repetition whereby he would be punished for his father's crime of rebelling against and usurping a legitimate monarch.

> Not today, O Lord
> O not today, think not upon the fault
> My father made in compassing the crown (4.1. 6-9)

Henry's wish for discontinuity, for a radical change signifies a departure from the view of history projected in official documents or in sermons like the famous *Homily against Rebellion and Willful Disobedience* , where history is understood as a continuity, with acts teleologically connected to each other, establishing repetitive patterns.

Henry V confronts the Romanian reader with a multiplicity of perspectives on history and the uses they can be put to. Alongside the dominant official discourse of and on history that can easily be appropriated for nationalistic and/or military purposes, the play includes counterperspectives that either deconstruct the mainstream view or offer alternative viewpoints. Its apparently monological discourse reveals faultlines and spaces for resistance that are carved out at the very center of power.

In his dialogue with the past Shakespeare made the past speak about the present. Alan Sinfield has pointed out that the play is after all about Essex's campaign in Ireland. It projects the hopes of the English of a definitive victory over the Irish and at the same time it suggests the dubious motivation for such action as well as the violence this war involved.

The various versions of the past represented in *Henry V* as constitutive of national identity and unity are difficult to fit in a celebratory project without doing violence to the text and without imposing on it a reductive homogeneity.

My own dialogue with the play has, I hope, projected it as "a great text one stays with", as Dominique LaCapra defines canonical texts. Reading and watching the play can be of great help in understanding and assessing the historiographical practices and propaganda strategies of our present. Dwelling on the plurality and contradictions in the view on history as they are represented in *Henry V* could help us counteract prevailing trends in Romanian historiography, where the desire for totality, the nostalgia of unity and coherence prevent historians from acknowledging the heterogeneity and the "Otherness" of the past.

Let us hope that fresh approaches to history mediated by the study of Shakespeare's plays from postmodern perspectives will help to discontinue the oppressive repetition of past patterns of thought and action.

Note

[1] Jean E. Howard, "Towards a Postmodern Historical Practice", in Frances Barker (ed) *The Uses of History. Marxism, Postmodernism and the Renaissance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press,1991) p. 114.

[2] see Catherine Belsey's approach to the study of history in"Making History Then and Now: Shakespeare from *Richard II* to *Henry V*" in Frances Barker (ed) *The Uses of History,* 25-31.

[3] See Alan Sinfield's discussion of "traditional" postwar approaches to the English Renaissance in "History and Ideology, Masculinity and Miscegenation: The Instance of Henry V" in *Faultlines. Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 109-143.

[4] Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1985) 37.

[5] Dennis Kennedy. (ed.) "Introduction : Shakespeare Without his Language," *Foreign Shakespeare*: *Contemporary Performance.*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[6] Michael Hattaway, Boika Sokolov, Derek Roper, *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (Shaffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 21.

[7] Sinfield,118-122

[8] Sinfield, 116.

[9] on the ambivalence of the theater towards the official discourse see : Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare. Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988)

[10] see Leah Marcus' analysis of the performance of Coriolanus at court for James I, and on the popular stage for the more republican minded Londoners, in " Revisions: Coriolanus and the Expansion of City Liberties", *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 202-213.

[11] Mullaney, "The place of the Stage", 2-26.

[12] Mullaney, 30-31.

[13] Sinfield, 314.

[14] Sinfield, 317.

[15] on the treatment of miscegenation in Shakespeare's chronicle plays see Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996)7-116 and Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines*,138-141.

[16] Belsey, 39-40.

[17] Sinfield, 118.

BAFFLING SHAKESPEARE: HENRY VIII - A COMPROMISE FIGURE

I.

If the authorship of *Henry VIII* is still more or less a mooted issue, this is largely due to the institutionalized status that the Shakespearian plays enjoy. *Henry VIII* duly appears in the Folio; we can credit Hemminges and Condell with the necessary knowledge on the authorship of the play, even if some of their claims about the purity of the texts and their quality as "originals" are rather exaggerated. By the time the Folio was published players had become sufficiently aware of the importance of authorship, as an institution and had grown out of the view on playwriting as merely a craft where team-work was not only frequent but, under the existing pressure for rapid dramatic output it was often a necessity.

Doubts about the single authorship of *Henry VIII* first rose in the 18th century on the basis of criteria that Foucault associated with the social function of authorship[1], that is a coherent moral and ideological message and a more or less unified style. In spite of the great success the performances of the play enjoyed in the 18th century — it was ranked as the third most popular play, behind *Richard III and 1 Henry IV*[2]—Samuel Johnson and other critics after him smelled "impurity" and were in doubt whether to include it or not in the canon. Maybe it was no accident that concerns about the authenticity of the play on the ground of the "purity" and the artistic evenness of the text first took shape in the age of classicism. What is more intriguing is the fact such

criteria should still be in force nowadays, and that sophisticated computerized techniques should be devised in order to prove their validity.[3] To Johnson it was the ambiguous tone of the Prologue and Epilogue that did not fit in with the already canonized "image" of what a Shakespearian text should be. This is why they had to be attributed to a second author—possibly to Fletcher. Such doubts were "scientifically" spelled out and proved by Spedding in 1850[4].

Surprisingly enough, it was not Spedding's mechanistic method of counting verse endings or the occurrence of" does" versus" doth"," has" versus" hath", that had so much staying power. It was the cogency of his arguments that had a lasting impact and which correctly pointed out the basic disunity of the text and the ambivalent effect that the King produces, aspects which could not be reconciled with what everyone cherished as Shakespearian texts. It was the "bad Shakespeare", as Maurice Charney puts it[5] that had to be fobbed off on another author.

The problem concerning the authorship of *Henry VIII* is actually one of defining canon and of coping with texts that refuse to tally with a paradigmatic view of Shakespeare. Needless to say, that the issue is ideologically freighted given the social and political function of a Shakespearian text and in particular one like *Henry VIII* which deals with history and political authority.

It is no wonder, therefore, that attempts to "save" the authorship of the play have more often than not entailed reparative attempts to save the authority of Henry VIII . Spedding's major objection was that

> .....throughout the play the king's cause is not only felt by us, but represented to us as a bad one. We *hear*, indeed, of conscientious scruples as to the legality of his first marriage; but we are not made, nor indeed asked, to believe that they are sin-

cere, or to recognise in his new marriage either the hand of Providence or the consummation of any worthy object, or the victory of any of those common frailties of humanities with which we can sympathise. The mere caprice of passion drives the king into the commission of what seems a great iniquity; our compassion for the victim of it is elaborately excited; no attempt is made to awaken any counter-sympathy for him; yet his passion has its way; and is crowned with all felicity, present and to come....I know of no other play in Shakespeare which is chargeable with a fault like this, none in which the moral sympathy of the spectator is not carried along with the main current of action at the end. [6]

II.

Spedding's objection was later countered by integrating the meaning of the play in "redemptive" narratives. Wilson Knight treats the play in terms of the Christian myth of conversion and projects it as a recapitulation not only of earlier histories but of all of Shakespeare's plays[7] :

> So the wheel comes full circle : 'and where I did begin there shall I end". *Henry VIII* binds and clasps this massive life-work into a single whole expanding the habitual design of Shakespearian tragedy : from normality and order, through violent conflict to a spiritualized music, and thence to the concluding ritual. Such is the organic unity of Shakespeare's world.

At the same time as the "organic unity" and the overall design is asserted, the king is defined as "the tower of strength and sanity above intrigue and theological subtlety."[8] Frank Kermode simi-

larly combats Spedding's arguments viewing the play in terms of the morality structure representing the rise and fall of man, a pattern of action that unifies the play and to which all major characters are subjected except the king, who is equated with God and who exercises God-like functions.[9] Subsequent interpretations treated the play as a romance and Henry as a Prospero-like figure, " as [a] high-priest, beneficent controller."[10] There is a need to assert the" design" informing the play even if some ambiguity is allowed to leave its imprint on the moral character of the king.[11]

What is at stake is the vision on history that we can bring ourselves to acknowledge as embraced by Shakespeare. Redemptive readings of *Henry VIII* go out of their way to prove that the Shakespeare we know and cherish could not have projected in his last play a vision in which history is governed by amoral forces and in which events of great consequence for the history and identity formation of the English people, such as the break with Rome and the establishment of the Church of England, were the outcome of whims, carnal desires and the political manipulation of a despotic ruler. Frank Kermode correctly showed that:

> The idea that, since good men fall and bad men escape earthly retribution, there is an element of chance, and that, in a disordered world-center, the provisions of Fortune operate but fitfully, was rejected by the orthodox as epicurean; it was, in fact, an aspect of that Pyrrhonism to which the protestant temper was naturally opposed.[12]

Not only the orthodox but also subsequent critics of the play have been opposed to this Weltanschauung.

The more politically oriented Shakespearian criticism of the late seventies and eighties have discovered and appreciated in

Henry VIII the very features that Kermode most emphatically denied. Starting with Lee Bliss and Frank Cespedes the king has been revealed as a ruthless, self-aggrandizing absolute ruler and the workings of history have been shown as amoral, capable of simultaneous creation and destruction.[13] The general attitude has been skeptical rather than hierophantic, as Shakespeare is understood to be deconstructing rather than celebrating the history of England as it was narrated by Hall and Holinshed[14]. Counterhegemonic perspectives , embodied by the Queen or the Catholic opposition, have been favored over the established Protestant patriarchal stance. The divorce has become a key issue in the play. The abundant use of spectacle has also been reassessed from a new "Foucauldian" point of view : the spectacle of power offered by the courtly masque, when transposed in the different, more democratic context of the popular theatre, was subjected to critical scrutiny and found wanting.[15]

The question inevitably rises whether the latter readings (which I also subscribe to) cannot be blamed , in their turn, of a kind of "transferential displacement", that is of being tempted to read into the play our dis-enchanted, de-centered postmodern view of history. Topical "local" readings of the play in their attempt to deflate the figure of the king, tend to favor one historical context as term of reference at the expense of another. Stuart Kurland, for example, identifies the similarities between Henry VIII and James I and indicates that the play is a topical comment on the misgovernment of England during James's rule.[16] Kurland does not mention, however, the more immediate historical context of the play, namely the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Frederick, the Elector Palatine, an alliance that promised to strengthen the cause of Protestantism in Europe. Although the play was performed neither at court nor during the wedding

festivities, the connection between the encomium in Act V to Queen Elizabeth , the first English Protestant queen, and Princess Elizabeth is more than obvious.

III.

A counterpunctal perspective, which would resist the temptations of a totalizing reading, could be most adequate in approaching the play. Frank Cespedes provides the apposite cue insisting on the "ironic patterning of human affairs" as the major dramatic action of *Henry VIII.*[17] While Cespedes considers the play in terms of "interlocked parallel movements", I would rather view it as a tantalizing texture of opposed text and subtext. At the surface level of the text the authority of the king is repeatedly asserted and the providential design is almost overstated. It is at this level that characters in their fall, before they die, invariably bless the king[18], it is at this level that tribute is paid not only to Elizabeth but also to James in a tradition that was well established in Elizabethan drama[19] and that twentieth century contemporary audiences perceive as "ghastly sycophancy."[20]

At the level of the political subtext the king's authority as well as the providential design underlying historical development is seriously questioned. The result may be compared with the structure of dreams as Freud described them. Images emerging from the unconscious which are perceived as subversive and threatening by the censuring agent are subjected to distortion and a "respectable" facade is fabricated for them so that they may gain access to consciousness. The result is a compromise between the initial disruptive wish and the censuring, refurbishing activity.

This delusive dream structure could also throw some light on the mystifying figure of the king. Although criticism has been centered on the discussion and assessment (be it positive or negative) of Henry VIII, performances have never been able to focus on him and make him an impressive figure on the stage . Conventional performances in the 18th and the 19th century impressed the audience with lavish pageantry and concentrated on the conflict between Katherine, the noble queen, and Wolsey, the Machiavellian villain. More ironic, Brechtian performances , initiated by Tyrone Guthrie, sacrificed the spectacular element and rendered the Shakespearian text in its entirety, without, however, managing to provide a convincing figure of the king. In "an orgy of irresponsible invention",[21] Cranmer's prophetic vision was undermined by "alienating effects" (the Duchess sneezed loudly during his speech). For all these "effects", no convincing dramatic center could be provided to hold the play together. In Guthrie's revised version of 1956, the performance had to fall back upon spectacle and on the interaction between Wolsey and Katherine . Famous actors and actresses such as Mrs Siddons, Irving, Gielgud have been creative in the roles of Katherine or Wolsey but no memorable performance of Henry VIII has been recorded. The ambivalent, shifty compromise-figure of Henry VIII can hardly be rendered in the concrete and precise contours of a stage performance . The world represented on the stage strikes as de-centered in a way that is bound to make the audience feel vaguely uncomfortable, as if they were missing something. Spectacle can fill in this gap and project fantasies of royal splendor and political authority . The irony has it, that these fantasies are, actually, undermined by the dramatic interaction framing the pageant.[22]

Taking up the dream analogy one can venture to state that, at certain moments in the play, Wolsey discharges the function of representing both himself and a displaced image of Henry VIII. Both Buckingham and Katherine put the blame on Wolsey's scheming when in fact they are pointing to the king.

Henry's figure is particularly obfuscating during the two trials. Katherine interrupts Buckingham's trial to bring to the king's notice the excessive taxation that has made the rebellion of the population imminent. The king acknowledges the power she is entitled to yield and gracefully accepts the justice of her claim, particularly as the action requested by the queen was in his own best interests.

> Kate. Thank you majesty;
> That you would love yourself, and in that love
> Not unconsider'd leave your honour nor
> The dignity of your office, is the point
> Of my petition. (I,ii, 13-16)

Later on, when the queen once again tries to use her influence and her position to defend Buckingham, the king simply ignores her and leaves her speechless. This time she was acting against his interests. Consequently the king talks to the surveyor and urges him to disregard the queen's interruptions: "Speak on;" (142) and "let him on; /Go forward" (177-78).

The king's role is obscured at the end of the proceedings when it appears that the Cardinal had played the most important role and is to bear the blame for it. Shakespeare deliberately has Wolsey round up the hearings in a devilish tone that a villain like Richard III could well have used, so as to shift attention away from Henry:

Wol. Now madam, may his highness live in freedom
And this man out of prison?
Kate. God mend all. (I,iii, 199-203)

During her trial the queen identifies the king as both the locus of power and the responsible agent. Therefore she makes it a point to address him directly. In order to do so she actually disrupts the prescribed ceremony and changes the script that she was cast in.[23] The king remains silent whereupon the queen shifts gear and changes the direction of her charges against the cardinal :" Lord Cardinal/ To you I speak." (II,iv,67-68) and "I do believe/(Induc'd by potent circumstances) that/ You are mine enemy....For it is you/ Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me...(76-77). The Cardinal is again foregrounded in order to conceal and thus protect the king. The result is a compromise, displaced figure in which the two identities are actually indistinguishable.

The king , indeed, controls the action of most characters in the play , but the true nature of his action is rarely allowed to surface undisguised. Katherine, alone, is given the privilege to expose his absolute, terror-based and corrupt rule in a more or less straightforward way:

Kate. ..... can you think lords,
That any Englishman dare give me counsel?
Or be a known friend 'gainst his highness 'pleasure
(though he be grown so desperate to be honest)
And live a subject? (III,i,83-87)

.....

Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge
That no king can corrupt. (III.i 100-101)

The reason why her shocking statement about Elizabeth's father and the initiator of the roeformation in England was prpobably

not deemed dangerous by the censors was that it was put in the mouth of a fallen, Catholic queen, whose credibility must have been rather limited in the eyes of Shakespeare's Protestant spectators. Her lines have been easily glossed over by critics who associated Henry with God's deputy on earth.

Cranmer's utopian prophecy, irrespective of the ironic framing that can be attached to it, pays lipservice to the official ideology and duly reminds the audience that the same Henry was Elizabeth's father and the founder of a new age in English history and English religion. The tribute to James can also hardly be gainsaid.

Introducing as the tribute to the monarch and his prerogatives, Shakespeare reverted to dramatic forms that he might have considered antiquated. At the same time this device further disrupts the dramatic unity of the play.

The figure of royalty that he projects is most disruptive and disquieting. Text and subtext rend the unity of the play and of its "message" to pieces. The tantalizing interaction between the disjunctive levels and pieces invites the contemporary public to a serious revision of the canon.

Note

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[1] Michel Foucault," What is an Author" *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon,1984)

[2] Linda Mc.J Micheli, "Margret Webster's *Henry VIII* : The Survival of 'Scenic Shakespeare' in America", *Theatre Research International*, vol 11, n0 3, 1986, 214.

[3] Baillie, William M. "Authorship Attribution in Jacobean Texts." *Computers in the Humanities.* (Edinburgh :Edinburgh University Press,1975) 73-81.

[4]. James Spedding. "Who Wrote Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* " *Gentleman's Magazine* , 34 (1850).

[5] Maurice Charney. ed. *"Bad" Shakespeare. Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon,* (London and Toronto : Associated University Presses,1988)

[6] quoted from Frank Kermode "What is Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* About?" Eugene Waith ed. *Shakespeare. The Histories* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.Inc., 1965) 171.

[7] G. Wilson Knight. *The Crown of Life* (Oxford :Oxford University Press,1947, published in the USA New York: Methuen &Co, 1982) 336.

[8] Wilson Knight 314.

[9] Kermode,172.

[10] R.A. Foakes. *King Henry VIII .The Arden Shakespeare.* (London and New York : Routledge,1991) lxiii.

[11] Alexander Leggatt, in one of the subtlest and most nuanced analyses of the play, discusses "the split judgements" and the mixed style that is more than baffling at times. However he cannot but underscore the "fusion" that occurs in the play, the recurrent patterns that all foreground the design.Alexander Legatt. *"Henry VIII* and the Ideal England" *Shakespeare Survey,* 35 (1985),131-143.

[13] Lee Bliss "The Wheel of Fortune and the Maiden Phoenix of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* " *EHL*, 42 (1975) ,1-25 and Frank Cespedes, " 'We are one in fortunes' : The Sense of History in *Henry VIII', English Literary Renaissance*_ 10 (1980), 413 -438.

[14] Peter L.Rudnytsky. "*Henry VIII* and the Deconstruction of History", *Shakespeare Survey*, 43 (1991)43-57.

[15] F. Schreiber-McGee. " 'The View of Earthly Glory' :Visual Strategies and the Issue of Royal Prerogative in *Henry VIII', Shakespeare Studies* (1988), 191 -200.

[16] Stuart Kurland," *Henry VIII* and James I :Shakespeare and Jacobean Politics", *Shakespeare Studies,* vol 19 (1987) 203-217.

[17] Cespedes 423.

[18] Eugene Waith considered the blessing which three different characters—Buckingham, Wolsey and Katherine—who all owe their fall to the king, as set-pieces of declamatory rhetoric and duly ascribes them to

Fletcher. Eugene Waith, "*Henry VIII* and More historical Tragedies", *The Pattern of tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (New Haven:Yale Univ. Press, 1952) 117-135.

[19] Alexander Legatt discusses the tradition of juxtaposing a tribute to the sovereign to the plot of the play. The device is considered to be crude and typical mainly of early Elizabethan plays. Leggatt endeavors to demonstrate that Cranmer's vision is "fused", that is organically related to the rest of the play. Leggatt, 140.

[20] Sheridan Morley. "Theatre". *Punch*, 22 June 1983, p.56 quoted in Linda McJ. Micheli. *Henry VIII. An Annotated Bibliography* (New York & London :Garland Publishing Inc.,1988) 352.

[21] Norman Marshall. "Shakespeare Since 1940." *The Producer and the Play.* (London: Macdonald, 1957) 190- 220.

[22] The coronation procession, for example, is framed by the discussion between the two gentlemen who mention Buckingham's trial and fall anticipating Anne's own fall as well as by Katherine's spiritual coronation in heavens.

[23] Kim Noling. "Grubbing Up the Stock : Dramatizing Queens in Henry VIII", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988) 291-305.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ROYAL BODY : ELIZABETH I

I.

Representations of the royal body were profoundly political. At a time when the monarch could rely on neither a standing army, police force nor on a developed bureaucracy to enforce his/her power, much of the stability of the reign depended on the skill to manipulate representations of the royal appearance. Whether they were pageants in the streets of London like the one organized on the day before Elizabeth's coronation, the prince's appearances in Parliament or paintings to be copied and circulated, the representations were all carefully designed to carry messages on the stability and magnificence of the monarch's position that met the particular demands of a given historical moment.

Queen Elizabeth believed strongly in the power of display, ceremony and decorum. Fictions and theatricalism, which had always been an essential constituent in the sovereign's ruling strategies, were lent an inordinate importance during her reign. " We Princes" she told a deputation of Lords and Commons in 1586, " are set on stages, in the sight and view of all the world duly observed"[1]. Elizabeth placed extra emphasis on the fashioning of her public image as she had to fight a potentially disastrous disadvantage — her gender.

In 1558, before Elizabeth was crowned, the Scottish Puritan John Knox published *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* in which he argued

that a woman ruler could only retain power by a monstrous combination of usurpation, seduction, and witchcraft. Female monarchs were compared to the enchantress Circess and to Amazons. Their rule is described as an unnatural event that deeply threatens the nature of order.

> he that iudgeth it to be a monstre, that a woman shall exercise weapons, must iudge it to be a monster of monsters, that a woman shal be exalted above a hole realme and nation[2].

After Elizabeth's coronation, the Protestant camp in England requested John Calvin to provide a legitimization for Elizabeth's rule and indirectly disclaim Knox's position. Calvin failed to produce the requisite legitimacy on the basis of the biblical text. His letter of response to William Cecil explained that he considered the

> Government of Women... a deviation from the original and proper order of nature, it was to be ranked, no less than slavery, among the punishments consequent upon the fall of man: but there were occasionally women so endowed, that the singular good qualities which shone forth, in them made it evident that they were raised up by divine authority[3].

Elizabeth's presence at the head of the state and church threatened to jeopardize the political hierarchy she was the guardian of. The Elizabethan dominant structures of thought and belief privileged the body of the prince in relation to the body of the subject. At the same time they privileged the male body over the female one. According to the cultural logic of these practices, the prince's body had to be male. The versions of woman produced by the major discourses of the time — political, medical, juridical — invariably projected her body as inferior to man's body. The female body was colder, weaker, contained more fluids and was more permeable, therefore more

open to dangers from outside and inside, less under control and more unpredictable[4]. No wonder that in order to overcome the major shortcoming of displaying a female body as the Prince's body, the official spectacles and pageants aimed at her transformation into an almost magical being, a creature of almost infinite beauty, wisdom and power.

Gender was itself a political category that interacted with other categories -social estate, economic and educational position, to form the web of relations that ensured the preservation of the established power and order. All modes of authority were invested in positions occupied by men: fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates and lords[5]. Louis Montrose estimates that Elizabeth ruling over her male subject must have been an affront to the very principles she was supposed to enforce:

> As the anomalous ruler of a society that was pervasively patriarchal in its organization and distribution of authority, the unmarried woman at the society's symbolic center embodied a challenge to the homology between hierarchies of rule and gender[6].

This essay will trace some of the strategies both the queen and her courtiers employed in order to obfuscate, contain and turn the meanings from a political liability into a powerful capital.

II.

Queen Elizabeth's awareness of the political significances of her visual representations can be derived from the strict control that she imposed on the production and circulation of her portraits: they had to be approved of by her Master Serjeant

Painter and any copies had to be further licensed. The technique and style of painting that she favoured was not that of Renaissance illusionism: it used neither perspective nor shadow to construct for the spectator the illusion of what the eye might actually see. This was partly a matter of fashion, as English painters had relatively little contact with Italy and the painting of the time had much in common with heraldry[7]. At the same time depictions of the Queen that were too truthful were judged unacceptable: the images had to convey the queen's eternal beauty and freshness, which explains why paintings that shed light upon her face, showing her advanced age and physical decay, like the engraving made by William Rogers, were consequently suppressed[8].

What the portraits had to present was not the queen's "natural body" which was natural, fallible, mortal, subject to decay, but her "Body politic" which, as Plowden wrote, was "not subject to Passions as the other is, nor to Death, for as to this Body the King never dies " [9] According to Ernst Kantorowicz, her reign witnessed the first major secular elaboration of the mystical legal fiction of "the King's Two Bodies". In her Parliamentary accession speech, Elizabeth declared that although she was "but one Body naturally considered," she was now also, by God's "permission a Body Politic to govern"[10]. Elizabeth kept making reference to this "Body politic" to ensure subjection and contain "this ideological dissonance, this contradiction in the cultural logic" which her "natural body" produced [11].

The Homilies show how the queen's rule was ensured metaphysical legitimacy by bringing both bodies into focus in a manner that should contain the disruption of the order which the gender of the sovereign implies. The "Exhortation, concerning good order and obedience, to rulers and magistrates", one of a series of homilies devised and disseminated by the regime to be sermoned in state churches, proclaimed that:

> Every degree of people in theyr vocation, callying and office hath appointed to them, theyr duety and ordre. Some are in hyghe degree, some in lowe, some kynges and prynces, some inferiors and subjectes, priests, and layemenne, Maysters and Servaunts, Fathers and chyldren,husbands and wives, riche and poore, and everyone have neede of other...God hath sent us his hygh gyft, our moost deere soveraiygne Lady Quene Elizabeth, with godly, wyse and honorable consayle, with superyors and inferiors in a beautiful order and goodly... The scripturs of the holy goste...perswade and comaund us al to be obedient sujects: fyrst and chiefly, to the quene's majestie, supreme head over al, and next, to her honorable counsaile,and to al other noble men, magistrates, and officers, whiche by God's goodness be placed and ordered[12].

The queen's gender is foregrounded in calling her "our Lady Quene". Later on in her reign, Elizabeth would adopt more gender neutral terms. In this homily her gender is beautifully incorporated in the social order so as to imply that it was given divine sanction. The fact that the queen's presence is qualified as a "gift" from God might suggest that her position is an exception to the rule. Indirect reference is thus made to Calvin's statement according to which a woman at the head of the state was a deviation in the natural order of things, but if elected by divine authority the respective woman would rise above her condition.

When the Homily considers that obedience to her is commanded by the Scripture, it focuses on the queen's "Body politic" and resolves thereby any possible tension that might be generated by having "al other noble men, magistrates and officers" obey a woman.

Insistence on the "Body politic " was not enough. The misogynist terms of the seditious discourse of the time indicate that the female body of the sovereign was a matter of continuous

concern among her subjects[13]. Elizabeth's "natural body" had to be refashioned as well. The skillful manipulation of the iconographic meanings of her portraits indicate Elizabeth's efforts to shape a public and political image for herself, thus opposing a tradition where women's images were constructed by men within highly constraining predetermined roles. Unlike her coronation portrait, where the young queen was treated "like a blank and impersonal page upon which statesmen of her reign and afterwards could inscribe their own version of female majesty"[14], her other portraits insist upon the queen's powerful and commanding gaze, upon the austerity of her expression, suggesting a capacity to discipline and subdue unruly (male) desire.

The projection of the monarch's magnificence, stability and authority presupposed a strategy of bodily representation which differed from previous traditions and styles. If one compares the 'Armada' portrait, representing Elizabeth at the acme of her power, with Hans Holbein's portrait of her father- i.e. the painting *Henry VIII with Henry VII* - one is struck by the difference in the treatment of the royal body. Henry's picture exaggerates his physical attributes to suggest his magnificence. He is shown standing, legs astride, arms akimbo, the feet aligned with his shoulders in a posture that combines aggression with strength. His shoulders are improbably oversize. His equally large codpiece focuses upon his virility. Elizabeth could not avail herself of the same strategy foregrounding the body's strength as an icon for the power of the state. The elaborate dress painted in the 'Armada' painting, with its huge puffed up sleeves and vast skirt, its excessive abundance in ornaments, all aim at the opposite effect — they *deemphasize* the materiality of her body. (see table 1) The intersecting circles and semicircles that are underscored by the shape of her ruff, of her hairdress and her

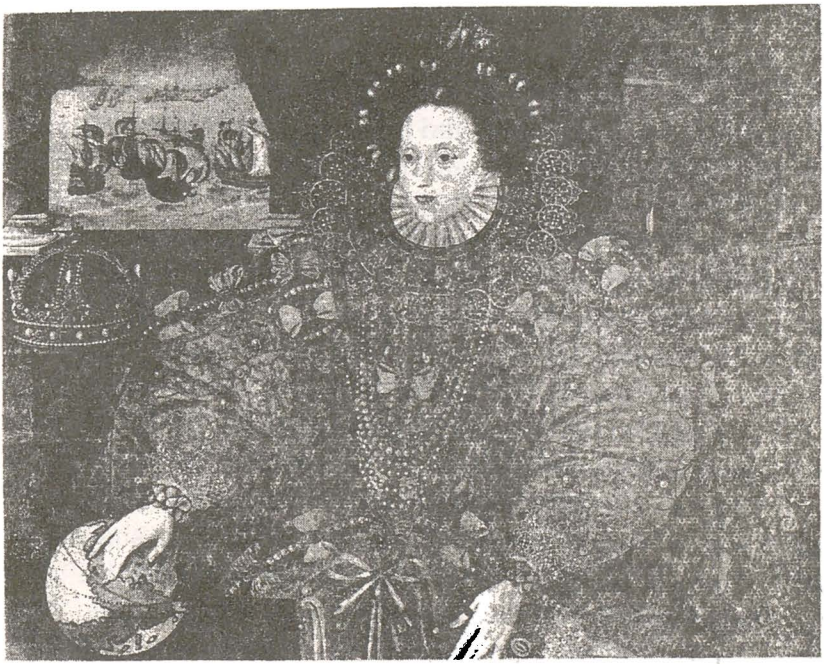


Table 1: George Gower, *Elizabeth I – The 'Armada'* Portrait, 1588.

Hans Holbein, *Henry VIII with*
Henry VII, 1536-7
National Portrait Gallery, London.

sleeves geometrize the body almost denying its natural shape. The message conveyed is that of the containment of sexuality and of the drives of the body. Later portraits carry on the strategy of creating a figure " abstracted from any kind of immediacy and materiality"[15], constructing an image of a disembodied, extra-human, or rather more than human queen. Apart from the Darnely portrait, painted by the Italian Frederigo Zucaro some 13 years before the 'Armada' portrait, the paintings show an Elizabeth that is looking somewhere in the distance, not meeting the viewer's gaze, nor focusing upon any concrete, earthly object either. The emphatic geometry of her shape in the later portraits, the golden rays coming down from her head in the form of a halo, all contribute to the impression of her unearthliness.

Elizabeth did not deny the rules that constructed gender identity and the gendered body in her time, rather she worked with them and exploited them to her advantage. She deemphasized her corporeality to foreground the mystic "Body politic" in her representations. At the same time she shrewdly put to value those aspects of her female, natural body that could acquire potent significance in the political and cultural context of her reign , namely her virginity.

III.

The political significance of the cult of virginity promoted by Elizabeth can be understood from the anthropological perspective offered by Mary Douglas. In her work *Purity and Danger* Mary Douglas inquires into the ways the body is used as a metaphor for society and social processes particularly at moments of crisis and risk. Her cross-cultural thesis is that the body's "boundaries can represent any boundaries which are

threatened or precarious". She adds that "we should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points"[16] The Land as a Woman metaphor, the projection of society as a body threatened at its orifices were deeply ingrained in Renaissance England. Although the country had no longer been invaded since 1066, England perceived itself as a besieged fortress, in constant danger of conquest and invasion. Virginity was appealing to the Elizabethans because it symbolized the possibility of warding off this danger. As Douglas puts it, it encouraged the symbolism of the body as "an imperfect container which will only be perfect if it can be made impermeable." The female body was thought of as a particularly leaky body; virginity, however, could seal it off. Medieval belief that the hymen sealed off the uterus abetted the idea of a virgin as a sealed vessel.[18] Medieval women's passion for fasting sealed the body from food and from the passage of other substances through orifices. It is against these beliefs and perceptions that the English queen's virgin body could project the image of an inviolable land. The skillful employment of the body symbolism enabled Elizabeth to defend her maidenly autonomy and to turn it into a political capital. When in 1559 a parliamentary delegation urged their new, young and female sovereign to get married, since "... Nothing can be more repugnant to the common good the to see a princess, who by marriage may preserve the Commonwealth in peace, to lead a single life, like a Vestal nunne", Elizabeth turned the very meanings attached to virginity to her advantage and proclaimed defiantly:

> ....this may be sufficient, both for my memory, and honour of my Name, if when I have expired my last breath, this may be inscribed upon my Tombe;
>
> Here lyes interr'd Elizabeth
> A Virgin pure until her Death.

Elizabeth changed the political significances of her chastity into an empowering strategy, manipulating them in as skillful a way as her father exploited the image of his masculinity.

Let us again consider the details of her famous 'Armada' portrait. As we have already shown, items of her clothing provide a symbolic comment on her corporeality. The 'Armada' dress abounds in pearls, symbols of chastity. Ropes of pearls hang round the queen's neck, the dress is studded with pearls. The pearls in her hairdress make up a circle suggestive of self-sufficiency. The association between chastity and inviolability and the queen's strength of mind and will power is evident.

The invulnerability of the chaste body suggested by the pearls is reinforced by the ribbons tied in bows that outline the contours of her dress. The ribbons convey the same meaning as the sieve used in another portrait and which makes reference to Tuccia , a Vestal Virgin, who carried water in a sieve from the Tiber to the Temple of Vesta to prove her chastity. Ribbons, pearls and a sieve that can hold water imply that the leaky orifices of the female body have been sealed off, to make it impenetrable.

Both Louis Montrose and Catherine Belsey have pointed out the function of the giant pearl placed in the middle of her 'Armada' dress, at the apex of the inverted triangle made by her stomacher. Comparing the portraits of Henry VIII and of Elizabeth, critics have found that the location of the pearl corresponds to that of Henry's codpiece[20]. In its representation of the gendered royal body, Holbein's painting of Henry VIII stresses the inseparability of sexual and political potency, of virility and kingship. The 'Armada' portrait concentrates on the image of virginal self-containment as the embodiment of the queen's power by showing in the corresponding place first an ostentatious bow and secondly a huge tear pearl in the middle of its knot.

The symbols of chastity should be placed in relation with the defeat of the Spanish 'Armada', scenes of which are shown in the background. Louis Montrose explains that

> ... Elizabeth's virgin-knot suggests a causal relationship between her sanctified chastity and the providential destruction of the Spanish invaders.... The inviolability of the island realm, the secure boundary of the English nation, is thus made to seem mystically dependent upon the inviolability of the English sovereign, upon the intact condition of the queen's body natural[21].

The symbolism of the costume sums up the arguments Elizabeth used in order to fend off the constant demands to marry that had been made on her ever since her coronation.

Elizabeth constructed herself as an embodiment of the classical body which is perfectly closed off. Peter Stallybrass has argued that this type of body serves as point of reference for the tragic heroines of the English Renaissance theater.[22] Their state was a *hortus conclusus* , an enclosed garden walled off from the enemies. Elizabeth herself is said to symbolize and to be symbolized by the *hortus conclusus* of the state. The major differences between the ideal informing the construction of female heroines in the theater and Elizabeth's image is that in her case " the body enclosed ", is not viewed as "an object of policing by fathers and husbands" , it is not a fenced-in patriarchal territory[23]. Stallybrass argues that the body of women was subjected to constant surveillance which concentrated upon three areas: the mouth, chastity, the threshold of the house. These three areas were frequently collapsed into each other, so that speaking, for example, was connected with wantonness. The image of the enclosed body not only restricted women's freedom of movement and cut off their contacts with the outer world, but in a more significant way it denied them their voice, the expression of their

desires. They were reduced to the status of objects, deprived of any autonomy and agency. This was clearly not the case with Elizabeth I. The closure of her body is self-imposed and is employed as an empowering srategy. It functions as a sign of the queen's personal autonomy, which is legitimized by its association with the autonomy of the state. The personal and the public levels of meanings of the closed body reinforce each other as a source of power for the queen.

IV.

The inclusion of maps in her portraits and the association of her body with the domain covered cartographically indicates the fact that her body is not only an enclosed one but also an enclosing one; its closed boundaries are not viewed merely as an effect of a restrictive patriarchal ideology but also as enforcing the queen's power of domination over the country. The very body of the queen is endowed with an interesting agency. In the Ditchley portrait she is literally standing on the map of England so that the cartographic representation of England and the visual representation of the queen's body should merge, reinforcing at the same time the relations of domination between the sovereign and her realm. In a Dutch engraving of 1598, Elizabeth's body encloses all Europe:[24] her breasts are France and the Low countries, her left arm is England and Scotland, her right arm is Italy. Under her left arm, an island is enclosed by a fence against the Catholic navies. Both her body and the domains subsumed by the cartographic image are constituted as domains of Elizabeth's rule. In the 'Armada' portrait, the queen's elegant hand is caressing a globe, her fingers resting on America. At

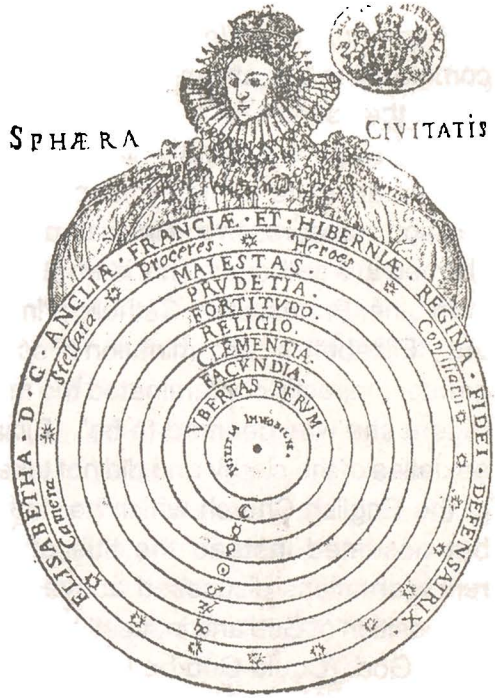
the time the portrait was made England was trying to assert itself as a maritime and an imperial power, with Sir Walter Raleigh founding the colony of Virginia. The portrait foregrounds the associations the queen was trying to make between her chastity and her imperial ambitions. Further meanings inscribed on her body can be derived from objects placed in her proximity. Still in the 'Armada' painting, next to the queen on the chair of state, almost touching her dress, there is an imperial crown. The same imperial crown placed over the arms of England reappears in the title page of Christopher Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales* published in 1579. Elizabeth is not only shown competing with the king of Spain in her claim to imperial power and authority, but her images actually appropriate iconogrpahic elements symbolizing the catholic emperor's power. The engraving made by Crispin de Passe in 1596 shows her between the pillars of Hercules, which were originally devised as an impressa of the Emperor Charles V. The words "Plus Ultra" on the impressa signified his determination to extend his empire beyond the boundaries of Europe. His son Philip II, Mary Tudor's husband, inherited this impressa. By appropriating the columns, Elizabeth signified her naval triumph over her brother in law and her plans to extend *her* empire beyond the sea.

However, the inclusion of elements from the catholic emperor's iconography deconstructs the stark opposition between the Protestant queen and the catholic enemy that much of her imagery tried to set up. Steven Orgel has identified other subversive, catholic iconogrpahic elements appropriated by Elizabeth's iconography. The title page of Saxton's Atlas, a page representing Elizabeth as a patron of geography, includes at the top of the frontispiece an image of two women, which Orgel deciphers as being Peace and Justice embracing [25]. The image

makes reference to a psalm in the Vulgata. Mention should be made that Protestant churches rejected the Vulgata, which was employed in Catholic churches, and introduced translations from the Hebrew into the native tongue. The differences between the terminologies employed in the Latin and the translated versions exhibited not only theological , dogmatic relevance but also political importance. In the English established versions of the Geneva Bible and the Bishop's Bible the same psalm is translated not by the term of justice but by that of righteousness. Righteousness became a key term in the Protestant religion. The use of this term is rather shocking: the image of armoured justice embracing peace unambiguously introduces catholic terminology in the image of a queen who wanted to be identified as a defender of the Protestant religion. As Steven Orgel has found out, the image was borrowed from the impressa employed by Pope Julius III, who was vilified in England as a prosecutor of Protestants and was even viewed as Antichrist [26]. Are we to understand that Elizabeth's "enclosing" body also incorporated and thereby controlled and disciplined opposite religious and political positions?

Various engravings made in the late period of her reign present her body as all encompassing , dominating over the whole universe. John Cases's *sphaera civitatis*, published in 1588, the year of the 'Armada' gives a diagram of the world, conceived of in terms of the Ptolemeic concentric circles. (see table 2) "At the center is the globe of the Earth, labeled *Justitia Immobilis*. Then come the spheres of the seven wanderers, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn... The outermost sphere is filled by an inscription of the official style and title of the queen. Finally, above and beyond the spheres is the figure of the queen herself, apparently in the act of embracing

Table II. Frontispice to John Case, *Sphæra civitatis* (Oxford, 1588).



the universe." What is it exactly that the queen is embracing and thereby dominating? The diagram gives us a schematic image of the world and the title indicates the *sphaera civitatis*, the state. Does this imply that Elizabeth rules the world as she rules the state? Catherine Belsey interprets this image as showing Elizabeth doubly on top of the world. "Not only does Elizabeth claim the right to undisputed monarchy in her existing realms (no Pope, for instance), she also claims justification for extending and expanding those realms."[28] Catherine Belsey further analyzes other engravings and argues that the queen is shown to embrace, to enclose the universe. In this position she appears to be usurping the position and role of God, by appearing as

both *primum mobile* and Sovereign God. As such she is commanding "the affairs not just of the realm, not just of the Earth, but of the cosmos."

It was Elizabeth's claiming not only temporal power but also an absolute authority in spiritual matters that rendered her position transgressive. Her catholic sister Mary Tudor had not claimed this authority. This is what marked Elizabeth's difference from other Protestant or Catholic princes. As Philippa Berry points out , "Elizabeth's contamination of spiritual authority with feminine gender indirectly contaminated the masculinity of the God whose regent she was deemed to be". Elizabeth tried to appease the anxieties of the clergy and did not take the title of "supreme head" of the English Church which her father Henry VIII had created, but assumed instead the title of "supreme governor". The representations discussed above, however, show her claiming the position of God and indirectly undermining the traditional vision upon God. (Could God be female?).

V.

Elizabeth's sexuality was all the more subversive as it was not contained within the structure of patriarchal marriage. Elizabeth's insistence on her virginity, her refusal to get married was deemed as transgressive in a Protestant system of values where women could only be conceived of in relation to marriage as wives to be, wives or widows that were urged to remarry hastily. The campaign against celibacy was the first foundational movement of the Reformation. Marriage was a politically and dogmatically central issue with the Protestants. *The Book of*

Common Prayer regulating religious life in England sanctified marriage and stated of matrimony that it was "an honourable estate, instituted of God in paradise at the time of innocence, signifying to us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church"[30]

Elizabeth did not contest the importance of marriage, by obdurately sticking to a value (i.e. virginity) cherished in the opposite Catholic camp. She skillfully circumvented it. When her male advisors prompted her to conform to the patriarchal expectations, she explained that:

> ...I am already bounde unto an husband, which is the Kingdom of England...(And therewithall, stretching out her hand, she shewed them the Ring with which she was given in marriage, and inaugurated her Kingdom, with expresse and solemne termes) And reproach mee so no more, (quoth shee) that I have no children: for every one of you, and as many as are English, are my Children... [31]

England is her husband and the English people are her children. The Queen is both a virgin and a nurturing mother. Elizabeth appropriated the Virgin Mary image and created her myth early in her reign; she would play and replay it with slight variations until her final days. Louis Montrose quotes the French ambassador of King Henry IV , who in 1597 commented upon the strange way in which the aged queen was dressed:

> She was strangely attired in a dress of silver cloth, white and crimson...She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom, and passing low, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot... her bosom is somewhat wrinkled...but lower down her flesh is exceeding white and delicate, so far as one could see. As for her face it is and appears to be very aged. It is long and

thin, and her teeth are very yellow and unequal... Many of them are missing so that one cannot understand her easily when she speaks quickly" [32]

On her second appearance , the queen was

clad in a dress of black taffeta, bound with golden lace... She had a petticoat of white damask, girdled, and open in the front, as was also her chemise, in such a manner that she often opened this dress and one could see all her belly, and even to her navel...When she raises her head she has a trick of putting both hands on her gown and opening it inasmuch that all her belly could be seen. (33-37)

Pasi Falk has pointed out that dress along with bodily and facial gestures function as a communicational code preceding verbalization.[33] Nothing escapes significance, not even the simple act of walking, sitting or raising one's head. This is all the more so in an important diplomatic encounter as the one between Elizabeth and Henry IV's exceptional ambassador. What her dress was meant to signify was her maiden status, the colour and the low cut were the current fashion of aristocrat virgins in England. The ostentatious display of her breast was designed to convey her other status as a selfless and bountiful mother, feeding her children. It was an embodiment of the political idea that the queen provided sustenance to her subjects. Like her bosom, her belly must have figured her political motherhood.

Elizabeth's femininity, other than as a projection of the Virgin Mother, is iconographically present in many of the accessories to her splendid outfit. The Ditchley portrait, for instance, which has her stand upon the map of England and dominate her realm with her very body, also includes a pair of elegant gloves and a fan, the accessories of a fashionable woman. Sophisticated fans made of rare feathers are present

in the portrait attributed to J.Bettes the Younger, showing an ethereal Elizabeth, sending forth rays of gold, or in the Darnely portrait, where the fan mellows the severe expression of the "iron lady". The image of Peace and Justice kissing above also insists on Elizabeth's femininity. Elizabeth identifies with both the armored Justice and the naked Peace holding an olive branch in her hands. The embrace unexpectedly suggests a disturbing sensuality. Steven Orgel thinks that the naked putto standing in the back and holding the scales suggests Cupid and the figure of naked Peace would thus inescapably refer to Venus.[34] The chain of significances taking one from Vesta to Venus is not totally amiss in the case of Elizabeth. It also makes a genealogical claim: Elizabeth is descended from Venus, the mother of Aeneas and the great-grandmother of Brutus, legendary founder of Britain. The goddess of love is the source of the British line. Elizabeth is invoked as both Venus and Vesta by John Lyly in *Euphues and his England*: "having the beauty that might allure all..., she has the chastity to refuse all, accounting it no less praise to be called a virgin, than to be esteemed a Venus".[35]

VII.

What about the sexual ambiguity that she also promoted in an apparently transgressive manner?

In the 'Darnley' portrait painted in 1575, Elizabeth is no longer wearing as elaborate and rich a dress as in the 'Armada' portrait. The pearls are there but no longer in the same lavish display. The headdress is comparatively unassuming. The portrait was made in a more realistic vein, probably under the influence of the Italian painter Frederigo Zuccaro or even by

Zuccaro himself.[36] Judging by the number of copies that was licensed , this must have been one of Elizabeth's favorite portraits. It is the only portrait in which she meets the viewer's eye, dominating her/him with her stare. It might have been her gaze or the austerity of her expression which suggests the capacity of both self-control and of controlling the others, that made this portrait enjoy the queen's high rating. Of all portraits this one drew most attention to Elizabeth's descent from Henry VIII: her commanding look, the high shoulders of her dress suggest masculine strength. The red and gold frogging on the bodice, in conjunction with the shape of the waist, hints at a softened, duly feminised, ornamental breastplate.[37]

The suggestion of androgyny in the portrait aligns her with warrior maidens of the psychomachia, Virtues defending Vices in armed combat. Their function is to civilize and check impulses, to contain and discipline unruly male desire. Like Spenser's Britomart, the androgynous image of Elizabeth is not meant to be subversive, to upset gender hierarchies. She is designed to signify anything but the unruly "woman on top" of carnivalesque festivities described by Nathalie Davies.[38] At the same time, one cannot help linking this image with her insistence on autonomy, with her determination to" have here but one Mistress, and no Master", as she reportedly told the Earl of Leicester.

The popular imagination did project carnivalesque versions of the queen: her body was rendered permeable, as she was rumoured to have had illegitimate children and to have used her progressions through the country in order to deliver them secretly. [39] In such instances she was reduced to her "natural body". The queen's other immortal body, which was the incarnation of a sacred principle of kingship, was ignored. In other instances the two bodies were conflated, the body politic

turning female. This was particularly the case when Elizabeth figured as the defendant of the true Protestant faith and defeater of popery. In the ballad "Upon the Death of Queen Elizabeth" the queen's triumph over the Pope involves the triumph of the female over the male. The triumph is furthermore shown in grotesque terms:

.....
It might have taken other folkes
That better might have been mist
And let us alone with our good Queene
That lov'd not a popish Priest
She ruld the Nation by her selfe
And was beholden to no man
O shee bore the Sway, and of all affairs
And yet she was but a woman...

And now if I had Argus eyes
They were one too few to weep
For our good Queene Elizabeth
That lyes fast asleep
Asleep she lyes, and so shee must lye
Untill the day of Doome
But then shee'l arise and pisse out the Eyes
Of the proud Pope of Rome. [40]

Elizabeth's sexual autonomy is foregrounded (she was beholden to no man). Her sway over men extends even to the world beyond. Doomsday is imagined as the time for the queen's final blow to the Pope and for his carnivalesque humiliation by her.

The queen's representations suggesting androgyny such as the "Darnely" portrait or Spenser's indirect representation of her as Britomart attempt to contain and avoid associations with grotesque bodies or with Amazons for that matter. Britomart's

greatest triumph is the defeat of Artigall, the queen of the Amazons, Her action is followed by the "normalization" of the Amazons' society through the reintroduction of the patriarchal rule:

> The liberty of women did repeale,
> Which they had long usurpt; and them restoring
> To mens subjection, did true Justice deale:
> That all had as a Goddesse her adoring,
> Her wisedome did admire, and hearkned to her loring.
> (FQ, 5.7. 42)

The ideal embodied by Britomart as a champion of patriarchy is opposed to the proud amazonian self-reliance celebrated in the ballad. Nevertheless Britomart's restoration of women to male subjection did not contradict Elizabeth's position of a ruler, since the queen was distinctly projected as an exception to the rule who only reinforced the established political and gender hierarchy. Walter Raleigh, the only one among Elizabeth's encomiasts who had the courage to associate the queen with the Amazons, insinuated that she is both like and unlike the Amazons. The only way she can cleanse herself from the sinister associations with the Amazons was by undertaking the typically male action of the conquest and invasion of their land :

> Her Majesty heerby shall confirme and strengthen the opinions of al nations, as touching her great and princely actions. And where the south border of Guiana reacheth to the Dominion and Empire of the Amazons, those women shall heereby heare the name of a virgin, which is not onely able to defend her own territories and her neighbours, but also to invade and conquer so great Empyres and so farre removed.[41]

In this context one should notice that what contains the potentially transgressive position of the queen is paradoxically a

transgression of gender borders inherent in the emphasis on her masculine nature. It was less the masculine side, the suggestion of androgyny than her insistence on female self-sufficiency that rendered the image of Elizabeth subversive.

At Tilbury in 1588 the queen presented herself, like Spenser's Britomart, as a martial maiden: she rode a white horse and was dressed in white velvet; she wore a silver cuirass on her breast and inspected the ranks carrying a silver truncheon in her hand. The composite body image that Elizabeth constructed for herself both in her appearance and in the famous speech delivered on this occasion was authorized on the notion of the queen's two bodies. In her speech she mentioned in a gesture of self-deprecation the weakness of her female body, only to subsume it within an assertion of the authority conveyed by her body politic. The latter was spelled out as male and was indirectly identified with that of her father[42]: "... I know I have 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" .

Against the typical identification of corporal and geographical boundaries in the woman- country metaphor, the invasion of the Spanish is imagined as a rape of her royal body. In this respect Elizabeth echoes the Lucretia motive: her body, in whose chastity her honour is invested, is viewed as vulnerable to invasion and permeable to pollution. Unlike Lucretia who submitted to the rapist's force and was polluted, the Queen of England will defend herself and her land. Her other mystic body enables her to take arms against the invader/rapist. "And I think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any Prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonour should grow by me, I myself will take arms".[43] Lucretia has to leave it to her male kinsmen to act. Elizabeth's all-inclusive identity incorporates the aggressive male position which is taken by Brutus in the Lucretia story.

Elizabeth adopted a number of linguistic strategies to reinforce the sense of her " body politic" as male and to make it gradually prevail over her female, natural body. She had no objections to the term *queen* which she herself used often, but much more habitually she referred to herself as *prince* . Prince was a generic term for a ruler in early modern Europe. Of course, there was also the female term, *princess* . Queen Elizabeth was called "princess" early in her reign, but in her later years she used the term disparagingly, applying it to discredit female monarchs like Mary Queen of Scots.[44] Elizabeth called herself *prince.* Leah Marcus noticed a change in Elizabeth's use of epithets over the years which suggests a gradual process of masculinization.[45] At the beginning of her reign the official proclamations made specific reference to her gender, in a way that Mary Tudor's proclamations also had done: they began with "The Queen our sovereign Lady". The formula tended to be replaced later by more gender ambiguous ones like "The Queen's majesty' or " Monarch and prince sovereign" substituting for the earlier "sovereign lady". In the later years the proclamations almost never included the term princess. The formula "The Queen our sovereign Lady" lingers on in contexts where the feminine, caring role seems more appropriate, such as when she took measures to protect the population from the plague. When in Parliament she was addressed as "princess" she would deftly underline her authority by referring to herself as "prince". At the very end of her life she would refer to herself as "king". In her famous "Golden Speech" of 1601, which was printed and disseminated throughout England, she explained:

> I know the title of a King is a glorious title; but assure yourself that the shining glory of princely authority hath not so dazzled the eyes of our understanding, but that we well remember that we are to yield an account of our actions before the great Judge.

> To be a King and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it, than it is pleasant to them that bear it. For myself , I was never so much enticed with the gloroius name of a King or royal authority of a Queen, as delighted that God hath made me His instrument to maintain His truth and glory...Shall I ascribe anything to myself and my sexly weakness. I were not worthy to live then; and of all, most unworthy of the mercies I have had from God, who hath given me a heart that yet never feared any foreign or home enemy.[46]

The speech seals the composite nature of her body and identity — she is both King and Queen— yet foregrounds her as "King" and as instrument of God. The self-deprecation that is used when reference is made to her sex and which inscribes her speech in the established discourses on women is followed and superseded by an assertion of the importance and power of her male "body politic". She disclaims that the origins of her actions might be in her weak, female body, their origins are in her transvalued body operating as an instrument of God's will. Her actions are thus doubly sanctioned: first by means of reference to her "body politic", to her role as "king" and secondly by reference to her elect position as God's instrument. In the latter case she once again occupies a "male" position: like in her Tilbury speech she displays the heart of a man. This enables her to fight and defend her throne and country.

Self-contained and controlling virgin, nurturing mother and androgynous sovereign — Queen Elizabeth's complex and fluid body-images made a an efficient power strategy.

[1] Quoted in J.E.Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, 1584 1601*, (London: jonathan Cape, 1965), vol 2, 119.

[2] Cited in Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power. Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 34.

[3] Cited in Berry, 35

[4] On the construction of the Renaissance female body see Thomas Laqueur,*Making Sex. body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud. (*Cambridge, Mass : Harvard University Press, 1990)1-63 and Gail Kern Paster,*The Body Embarrassed. Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England.* (Ithaca, New York : Cornell University,1993) 103-109.

[5] On patriarchal ideology in Tudor-Stuart England, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800.* (NewYork: Harper&Row, 1977), 123-218, Linda Woodbridge, *Woman and the English Reanissance: Literature and the Nature of Mankind, 1540-1620.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983)

[6] Louis Adrian Montorse, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text", *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts,* eds. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press,1986) 308

[7] Catherine Belsey , "Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I." *Renaissance Bodies*, Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (eds) (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1990), 18.

[8] S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne Davies, "'From Myself My Other Self I Turned', Gloriana's Face." *Women, Public and Private in the English Renaissance,* S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne Davies (eds) (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

[9] quoted in Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning. From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1984) 167

[10] Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies* . (London: Royal History Society, 1977), 38 quoted in Montrose, 307

[11] Montrose, 309.

[12] Reprinted in quoted in Montrose "The Elizabethan Subject", 308

[13] Louis Adrian Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Subject." *Literary Theory/ Renaissance Texts* , Patricia Parker and David

Quint (eds) (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 303-341 and Louis A. Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture." *Representing the English Renaissance,* Stephen Greenblatt (ed) (Berkley, Los Angeles : University of California Press,1988) 31-65.

[14] Cerasano and Davies, 25.

[15] Belsey, 18.

[16] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 115, 121.

[17] Douglas, 157-58

[18] Linda Woodbridge,"Palisading the Body Politic." *True Rites and Maimed Rites,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 285.

[19] William Camden, *The History and Annalls of Elizabeth, Queen of England,* trans. Richard Norton (London, 1630) quoted in Montorose, "The Elizabethan Subject", 310.

[20] Belsey, 13.

[21] Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject", 315.

[22] Peter Stallybrass, "Patrairchal Territories: The Body Enclosed." *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe,* Margret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nacy Vickers (eds.), (Chicago and London :The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 123-145.

[23] Stallybrass, 127.

[24] see Stallybrass, 129

[25] Steven Orgel, "Gendering the Crown", in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture,* Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, Peter Stallybrass (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 152-153.

[26] Orgel, 153

[27] Belsey, 22-23.

[28] Belsey, 24.

[29] Philippa Berry, *Chastity and Power. Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 35

[30] cited in Berry, 35.

[31] quoted in Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject", 310

[32] Andre Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, *Journal* (1597), trans. and ed. G.B.Harrison and A.Jones (Bloomsbury, 1931), quoted in Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" , 33

[33] Pasi Falk, "Written on the Flesh", *Body and Society.* (1995),no. 1, 96

[34] Orgel, 160

[35] Cited by Orgel, 160.

[36] Andrew and Catherine Belsey, "Icons of Divinty: Portraits of Elizabeth I", *Renaissance Bodies.* Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (eds) (London: Reaktion Books, 1990) 18.

[37] ibid. 20

[38] Natalie Davis, "Woman on Top", *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* . (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1975)

[39] Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject", 316

[40] quoted in Peter Stallybrass, "The World Turned Upside Down", Valerie Wayne (ed) *The Matter of Difference.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991)

[41] *The Disovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* . (1596) ed. Sir Robert H Schomburgk, Hakluyt Society (1848, New York), quoted, quoted in Montorse, "Shaping Phantasies", 46

[42] The identification with her father was quite obvious in a response Elizabeth made in 1560 to a petition that she marry: "...And though I be a woman, yet I have as good a courage,answerable to my place, as ever my father had. I am your annointed Queen. I will never be by violence constrained to do anything. I thank God am endued with such qualitites that if I were turned out of the realm in my petticoat, I were able to live in any place in Christendom", quoted in Leah Marcus, "Political Uses of Androgyny", *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.* Mary Beth Rose (ed)(Syracuse: Syracuse University Press,1986,) 139

[43] quoted in Paul Johnson, *Elizabeth I : A Study in Power and Intellect* . (London : Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1974) 320.

[44] Leah Marcus, 140

[45] ibid, 140.

[46] ibid, 141

CROSS DRESSING AND IDENTITY FASHIONING IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

I.

Around 1620 King James ordered the preachers of London to

> to inveigh vehemently and bitterly in their sermons against the insolence of our women, and their wearing of broad-brimmed hats, pointed doublets, their hair cut short down, and some of them stillettos and poniards...adding withall that if pulpit admonitions will not reform them he would proceed by another course.[1]

Wearing mannish clothes seemed to have been a practice in early modern England that not only delighted theater audiences but also roused strong feelings on behalf of the authorities. Was it a transgressive practice with a potential for liberation or was this fashion duly normalized, with only puritan moralists complaining against it? Since cross-dressing was crucial to the conditions of the theater of the time, what was the theater's position in this controversy? My paper would like to take up some of these issues and investigate the social and political meanings attached to the fashioning of the body that cross-dressing implied.

II.

Examinations of the Repertoires of the Aldermen's Court in the London City Record Office have shown that between 1565 and 1605 many women were apprehended in men's clothing and

were accused of prostitution.[2] The cases analyzed by Jean Howard in her seminal essay clearly point out to the relation established between cross-dressing and women's "abuse of their bodies" that is sexual incontinence. The women thus apprehended were pilloried or whipped. Dorothy Clayton, a spinster, " contrary to all honesty and womanhood commonly goes about the City appareled in man's attire. She has abused her body with sundry persons and lived an incontinent life. On Friday she is to stand on pillory for two hours in man's apparel and then be sent to Bridewell until further order" .[3]

What can also be gleaned from the text cited by Howard is the relatively high frequency of cross-dressing in the streets of London. Dorothy Clayton "commonly" went about the city. Another case reported in the Records, Johanna Goodman, was whipped and sent to Bridewell for dressing as a male servant to accompany her husband to war. Some women cross-dressed to work for tavernkeepers and tradesmen, others may have done so for protection in traveling about in the city. The reason for women's donning of male clothes might have been various, the accusations, however, invariably referred to sexual promiscuity. Invoking women's honour and chastity was used as an efficient instrument in disciplining patterns of behaviour that were deemed to be threatening to the status quo.

The anonymous pamphlet — *Hic Mulier, or, The Man-Woman* —written in 1620, spells out a major source of anxiety this practice generated in the Jacobean period: "For since the days of Adam women were never so Masculine". Cross-dressing presupposes women's access to and participation in masculinity. The doublet, the broad-brimmed hat and short hair enable women to become men. Clothes and outer appearance, in modern terms one's "look", seem to be invested with formidable power: their

function is not merely semiotic, limited to signifying degree and position, but takes on a demiurgic agency, forging new bodies and new identities.

Manly clothes inflict upon women's bodies a "monstrous deformity", producing a hybridization of their biological self. As can be but expected of a culture which was anxious to preserve traditional distinctions in the face of a bewildering mobility and fluidity, the new shapes were demonized:

> You have made your bodies like antic Boscadge or Crotesco work, not half man/half woman, half fish/half flesh, half beast/ half Monster, but all Odious, all Devil.[4]

The author of the tract operates a conflation of women and language which enables him to mark their "deformity" and deviance linguistically: a new name is coined for the cross-dressed woman — *hic mulier* instead of *haec mulier* — by deliberately violating the rules of gender concord and associating the female gender of the noun with the masculine form of the pronoun. Playing with grammar further helps the writer to make his point about the pervasiveness of the changes produced by transgressive dressing:

> women "are masculine in their genders and whole generations, from the Mother to the youngest daughter; Masculine in Number; from one to multitudes; Masculine in Case, even from head to food; Masculine in Mood, from bold speech to impudent action, and Masculine in tense, for without redress they were , are, and will be still most Masculine, most mankind and most monstrous."

The pamphlet creates the feeling that one cannot emphasize enough what horrible hubris such cross-dressed women committed, namely the erasure of distinctions. Ironically , the conceit used to express this idea actually reduplicates it. The

puns designed to hyperbolize the monstrosity of women in fact create a mumble jumble of logical and grammatical categories, with generations, numbers, the body and behaviour all being put together in a confusing way. The subversion of order and classification seems, indeed, to be a contagious disease "an infection that emulates the plague"; it has spread not only among women "of all degrees, all deserts and all ages", but has affected the author himself.

Cross-dressing presupposes the desire to refashion one's identity and thus temper with God's design. Puritans condemned any attempt at self-fashioning as an offense to God and the order instituted by him. Women who cross-dressed committed a sin comparable to yet infinitely worse than that of the common run of women who, being dissatisfied with the features God had given them, tried to improve on their appearance using cosmetics or elaborate clothes. Arthur Dent was giving vent to frustrations shared by many of the Jacobeans, when rejecting the fashions and the self-fashioning of women:

> it was never a good world, since starching and steeling, busks and whalebones, supporters, and rebattoes, full moons and hobbyhorses [i.e items of women's clothing, our note] painting and dying, ... what say then to painting of faces, laying open of naked breasts, dying of hair, wearing of periwigs, and other hair coronet and top gallants? And what say you to our *artificial women , which will be better than God hath made them*? They like not his handiwork, they will med it., and have other complexion, other faces, other hair, other bobes, other breasts, and other belllies, than God made them....It's God's marvelous patience that the Devil doth not carry them away and rid the earth of them...[5] (my emphasis)

Putting on mannish clothes, women blasphemously imitated God in an attempt to recreate their bodies, their speech and behaviour.

Transcending the difference between sexes may have been more of a transgression in the early modern period than it is perceived now, but it appeared to them more accessible than it may be to us as to the Jacobeans. What the *Hic Mulier* pamphlet highlights is an underlying fluidity of sexes which allows for women to be "upgraded" to the quality of men and men to be degraded to that of women. According to Gallen one-sex model, which prevailed in the early modern period, the differences between men and women were not of kind , but of degree: the bodies of men and women were conceived as having basically the same sex and the same sexual experiences. The differences between them lay only in their respective amount of heat, with women having less heat than men.[6] Lacking in heat, women were imperfect and therefore inferior to men. The biological difference pointed to a hierarchical difference and was adduced as an argument to legitimize men's rule over women.

The very same fluidity, however, was used to contest women's inferiority and their subjection to their husbands in Elizabethan and particularly Jacobean England. *Haec Vir- or the Womanish Man* , the response to *Hic Mulier* , makes a passionate defense of women's freedom and of their ontological equality with men : "we are as freeborn as Men, having as free election and as free spirits; we are compounded of like parts and may with like liberty make benefit of our Creations"[7]. William Gouge s sermon *Of Domestical Duties* which began by refuting " a fond conceit that husband and wife are equal" and spelled out the various ways in which a wife should show her subjection to her husband met with a controversial response. While Gouge delivered his sermon in there was widespread rumour among the women in the church who started moving around, shifting

places or even leaving the church in protest.[8] Puritan women were also looking for ways to assert their voice and justify their desire to preach on an equal footing with men.

The polemic tone of *Hic Mulier* suggests the crisis of the old patriarchal values and the threat which women's participation in masculinity posed. Not surprisingly, cross-dressed women were projected as the embodiment of the cultural and political Other and were associated with the "barbarous" people, living at the margin of society and forever threatening to overturn it. Any failure to exclude these unruly women amounted to an inversion of the legitimate power structure, making "the rude Scythian, the untamed Moor, the naked Indian or the wild Irish, Lords and Rulers of well -governed Cities"[9]. Women's cross-dressing was read in undisguised political terms and judged as as being tantamount to high treason committed against the supreme authorities of God and nature.

III.

The cliches of the time castigated cross-dressed women as whores and prostitutes. Incontinence was indelibly inscribed on their body by the clothes they were wearing. The pamphlet spells out how the various items of clothing reconstruct the female body in a deviant, immoral way. The French doublet "lasciviously embraces" the upper parts of the body and invites to sexual license through the apertures it reveals — "being all unbuttoned to entice". It is opposed to the traditional straight gown that acts like a shield, concealing and guarding the body.[10] The gown alone, that is the genuinely female piece of clothing, can ensure the inviolability of the body of the idealized "good" woman. The opposition between "the good women" and the cross-dressed

ones in *Hic Mulier* closely approximates Stallybrass's analysis of the classic female body, viewed as an "enclosed body", a " patriarchal territory" whose openings are all sealed off, and the grotesque, carnivalesque body, whose orifices fully open up to the world. [11] In *Hic Mulier* the good women "are Castles impregnable, Rivers unsailable, Seas immovable, infinite treasures and invincible armies"[12]. The female body is more than an enclosed territory, it is compared to an assailed fortress whose windows and loopholes have to be safely barred to prevent the unchaste eye or lascivious tongue from gaining a forbidden passage. The metaphor of the fortress echoes the Protestant metaphor of faith conceived of as a strong fortress besieged by the Devil and Antichrist.[13] Whereas the traditional female attire guards the fortress, the manly disguise throws all its windows open and changes the chaste female body into a promiscuous one. Cross-dressing indirectly takes on religious overtones, the fear of religious contamination and possible defeat being thus projected upon the female body.

IV.

The question arises whether we could use a text like *Hic Mulier* or even King James's admonition as an interpretative gloss for a contemporary portrait of Queen Ann, or for the Darnier portrait of Elizabeth I. In both paintings the queens are wearing the much incriminated French doublets. Queen Ann's hair is cut short, she is wearing a broad-brimmed hat, sporting a big plume. These details refer to James's injunction quoted at the beginning of the essay and suggest that the queen may deliberately have wanted to spite her husband.[14] Elizabeth's outfit not only looks

like a doublet but like a breast-plate.[15] It reminds the viewer of her famous speech delivered to the English tropus at Tilburn, before they faced the Spanish Armada, and where she declared that she had the body of a woman but the heart and stomach of a man. The male features could not have been intended as a token of moral degradation, as a weakness liable to endanger the inviolability of Britain. Her austere disciplined and disciplining look in the portrait, subjecting the viewer to her gaze, the way she dominates her own representation, seemed to have ensured its success with Elizabeth I. The message it constructed must have been the one the queen wanted to disseminate among her subjects, since the portrait was released and circulated in the largest number of copies.[16]

It is obvious that there was a plurality of discourses on cross-dressing in both Elizabeth's and in James's time and that *Hic Mulier* can't have been referring to these pictures. The same feature or item of clothing symbolizing a participation in masculinity could function in a radically different way. In the portraits of the royal princes or of other aristocrats the hybridization of gender definitions no longer inscribes degradation onto the female body , or the male body for that matter, but it is a fashion that enhances its idealization.[17] The differences in the meanings cross-dressing constructs in these portraits as opposed to a tract like *Hic Mulier* may have much to do with social considerations: it may be all right for the queen to wear manly clothes, but it is a crime against nature when women from the lower ranks presume to do so. When a fashion for the elite, cross-dressing may be either normalized or may function as a strategy to glamorize the body of the queen (or noblemen for that matter)[18]. When practiced by middle-class women or by women belonging to even lower social strata, it is a transgression to be punished in public. What was really prohibited was the "imitation" by the lower ranks of fashions employed by the upper ranks.

The theater was the very place were such "imitation" occurred in a doubly transgressive way. First the theater violated the sumptuary laws which prohibited the use by the lower classes of fabrics and designs employed by higher classes. Actors often belonging to the lowest social categories wore cast away clothes which used to belong to noblemen. Costumes were the most valuable property of the theater and the use of genuine pieces of clothing often conditioned the success of the performance. Secondly the very theatrical practice of having boys acting female roles presupposed the contamination of gender definitions.

If the fictions enacted on the stage, particularly in some of Shakespeare's plays, worked in a normalizing, a recuperative way[19] the very fact that they highlighted clothes as decisive for the definition of gender identity was quite transgressive. Viola may not be engaged in a process of expanding her sexual identity, hating her disguise, describing herself in the terms of the moral tracts; her insistance , however, to be married in the dress she wore at the beginning of the play, not in her outfit as a page, nor in any other dress that could have been bought for that purpose, foregrounds the dress (the appearance) as containing the very essence of her identity. Gender is therefore not ontologically given, it is largely a construct that can be fashioned at will.

Note

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[1] *Norman McLure, Letters of John Chamberlain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophy Journal, 1939), vol. 2, pp. 286-7, quoted in Stephen Orgel, "Insolent Women and Manlike Apparel", *Textual Practice* vol 9, no. 1 (1995), 5.

[2] see Jean E. Howard, " Crossdressing, The Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol 38. (1988), 417-423.

[3] Jean Howard, 420.

[4] "Hic Mulier" in Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McMaus, *Half Humankind. Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England 1540-1640,* (Urbana and Chicago:University of Illinois Press, 1985) 266

[5] Arthur Dent, "The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven" (1607) quoted in N.H. Keeble ed., *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman* (London: Routledge, 1994) 83.

[6] see Thomas Laqueur , *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,1990)10-65.

[7] "Haec Vir", in Henderson and McMaus, 284

[8] Aiko Kusonoki, " Their Testament at Their Apron-Strings" in S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Gloriana's Face. Women, Public and Private in the English Renaissance.* (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989)187-189.

[9] Hic Mulier, 269

[10] Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices. Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts. (*London and New York: Routledge,1992) 42- 50.

[11] Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed." M. Ferguson, M Quilligan, N.Vickers (eds), *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe.* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987),106-123,

[12] Hic Mulier , 266

[13] cf. the Lutheran hymn "Eine feste Burg ist unser Glauben".

[14] Stephen Orgel, " Insolent Women and Manlike Apparel." *Textual Practice.* vol 9, issue 1 (1995),6-8.

15Catherine Belsey. "Icons of Royality." *Renaissance Bodies.* (London: Social Reaktion, 1990)

[16] Cerasamo and Wynne-Davies, 9-11.

[17] see Orgel's discussion of the two portraits of Prince Henry and the late portrait of Elizabeth I shown in full armour, defending the Armada. "Insolent Women and Manlike Apparel", 16-17 .

[18] see Orgel's comments on the "feminine" clothes worn by Essex, Devonshire or Dorset. "Insolent Women and Manlike Apparel", 8-13.

[19] Jean Howard's, 428.

" FAIR IS FOUL AND FOUL IS FAIR" - WITCHCRAFT IN MACBETH

I.

Contemporary scholarship has witnessed a renewed interest in witchcraft, demonology and occult powers. Witches in early modern Europe have come in for special treatment, the increased interest in them being partially related to the general trend in today's politically conscious criticism to focus on marginal and potentially subversive groups. The terrain covered by the meanings the witches in *Macbeth* generate seems to be claimed by critics embracing various ideological positions.

Feminist critics were the first to "rethink" the significances the play attaches to the witches: while highlighting the way these significances were inscribed in a patriarchal conservative discourse, demonizing the female voice and maternal power, the critics tried to restore some of the aura witches might have enjoyed in early modern Europe by insisting on their power and on the implicit resistance they opposed to the established social and ideological system. The danger incurred by some feminist approaches, such as Mary Daly's account of the European witchcraze in a chapter of her *Gyn/Ecology*, is to treat witchcraft in a globalizing , monolithic discourse. Witchcraft is seen as an obvious case of the systematic oppression of women throughout history. While the political impact of such an approach is very powerful making for an easy identification and solidarization with the vicitms of male aggression, the historicity of early modern representations is ignored.[1] Furthermore we should not forget

that these representations are the product of a cultural exchange, that they are the site of various often competing discourses and that the conditions of women at that time cannot be simply read off from from historical or dramatical texts.[2]

A different approach on the topical political significances of witches in Jacobean England is adopted in a compelling book *Witches and Jesuits. Shakespeare's Macbeth*, published by Oxford University Press. The book is signed not by a Shakespearean scholar, but by a best-seller writer who in 1993 won the Pulitzer price for his book *Lincoln at Gettysburg*.[3] Garry Wills tries to play down the threatening aspects of the witches female identity first by identifying them with the Jesuits involved in the Gunpowder plot, then by foregrounding Macbeth as a male witch and Malcom as a defiant hero. Lady Macbeth is dismissed as a pseudo-witch whose part is by far shorter, hence less significant, than that of Cleopatra or Portia. Wills' treatment of the witches in *Macbeth* could be viewed as an effort undertaken by mainstream American public opinion to appropriate and incorporate the elements of resistance and transgression in the representation of the *weird sisters*.

What is the significance of witches in *Macbeth* ? Is the presumably oppositional character of their actions and of their identity only a strategy to appropriate subversion in the interest of power? Do they undermine or reinforce the ideological discourse circulated at the time of the performance of the play?

This essay will negotiate between various critical positions and will insist on the overdetermined character of the representation of witches in *Macbeth*. It will identify the multiple popular, religious and political practices that have gone into the making of their representation and will discuss the fears experienced in the early modern society which are projected in

the images of witches. Some of the sources which account for the oppositional thrust inherent in the witches' actions will also be traced. The essay will place special emphasis upon the significances attached to the body in relation to witchcraft.

II.

Around the years 1606-1609 witchcraft seems to have been a hot subject with English playwrights: not only Shakespeare wrote a witch play but so did Marston (*Sophonisba*, 1606), Middleton (*The Witch*, dated 1609), Barnabe Barnes (*The Devil's Charter*, performed during the Christmas season of 1606-07) and Dekker (*The Whore of Babylon*, 1606 and some time later in collaboration with Middleton and Rowley *The Witch of Edmunton*).

Why witches? Why so many witches? A ready answer would be the Gunpowder Plot. The significances of witches at that time were intensely political.

The Gunpowder Plot was hatched in 1605 by a bunch of "papists" who had trundled gunpowder into a vault under Parliament intending to blow it up when the King, in the presence of his heir and all the leading members of the court, would be addressing Parliament. Among the most important figures involved in the plot were Guy Fawkes, a munitions expert and Henry Garnet, a leading Jesuit, both executed in 1606.

The plot triggered off a gigantic political outcry signaling a deep crisis in English society. The grounds for this crisis could be found in the thirty years of religiously inspired paranoia from right, centre and left during Elizabeth's time.[4] The plot was conceived as part of a wholesale conspiracy hatched by foreign (Catholic) powers against England, seen as the bastion of the

Reformation. The investigation conducted by the Earl of Salisbury and the propaganda launched by James conferred an apocalyptic tone upon this event which stirred the London populace to a frenzy. If England could be defeated, Rome could have its way and the kingdom of the Antichrist would be installed. The fact that the King was able to identify the conspiracy in time was a clear sign of the favour proffered by Providence on England.[5] God protected England. This was the reason why previous conspiracies against Elisabeth and James had failed. The special favour the English enjoyed could not obscure the power of the malevolent forces that continued to threaten their country and in particular their Protestant sovereign.

The Gunpowder plotters were depicted as instruments of darkness, " hell's black fiends" of which Guy Fawkes was "the great Devil of all". A torrent of printed matter was loosed on Jesuits who were chased as witches.[6]

The topical context in which the play was performed suggests that the witches in *Macbeth* were associated with a political and religious group that was scapegoated in England, being held up as its most frightening enemy. The propaganda created around the Plot, which whipped up the paranoia against Catholics and Jesuits in particular, transpired in the play in the demonization of the witches. As projections of the Jesuits involved in the Gunpowder Plot the actions of the *Weird sisters* are viewed as leading not only to the murder of the legitimate king but also to the usurpation of the "natural" order in the body politic, to chaos and terror, which further develop into a cosmological disorder (the extended night which displaces the day, the cannibalism of horses and other such disturbances). Witches not unlike the Jesuits are agents of destruction, which, if not contained in time, will jeopardize the welfare and order of the macrocosm.[7]

The very subversiveness and destructiveness of their actions functions as a strategy of power designed to underwrite the discourse on sovereignty. Just like James's own propaganda capitalized upon the Gunpowder plot to bolster his own increasingly tenuous position, Shakespeare appropriates the subversive acts to endorse the official claims of sovereignty.

Macbeth has often been considered the Shakespearean play which comes closest to an ideological text for its dramatizing of the king's full presence.[8] The symbolism of sacrality that surrounds Duncan could be related with James's own mystical medieval notions on the divine right of the king. James maintained that kings were divine because they "are called Gods" in the Scriptures. In 1609 he suggested to his Parliament that "if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of the King". [9]

As sacred terms define the inviolability of the sovereign, they also measure and demonise the enormity of the transgression entailed in the attempt on his life. Taking up the terms and language of the Jamesian propaganda on the Gunpowder plot, Shakespeare defines Duncan's murder in the strongest possible terms: "Most sacrilegious Murther hath broke ope/ The Lord's anointed Tempel" (II,iii, 66-7); and his wounds are said to be no less than "a breach in nature" (II.iii). In no other Shakespearean play are the usurping forces branded so violently as the instruments of the Devil. The emphasis on the scope of the destruction caused suggests that what was at stake was more than the death of a king. It was the collapse of an entire system of values.

Stephen Collins suggested that James might have adopted the conservative theory of the king's divine right to refute Papistry and Presbyterianism, both of which viewed the state as a

handmaid to religion.[10] Papists had been viewed as hostile to the king of England ever since the early Reformation during Henry VIII's rule. In John Bale's *King John* , Antichrist appearing as *Sedition*, plots together with *Dissimulation* and *Usurped Power* (the Pope) to overthrow and murder King John, viewed as a protomartyr of the Reformation. A similar plot is employed by Dekker in *The Whore of Babylon* - the play's title being one of the terms of abuse most commonly used for the Pope/alias Antichrist in Protestant propaganda. Dekker stages the many attempts undertaken by Rome to kill Elisabeth by means of witchcraft. Most of the conspiracies against James were also said to involve witchcraft.

The association of witches with conspiracies against true Christians was not an invention of the Jacobean period. Carlo Ginsburg shows that the cultural and political pattern of scapegoating witches is a very old one, going as far back as the Black Death, the pest epidemics which raged in the 14th century in Europe.[11] The position of the plotter was initially occupied by vagrants and beggars, who were soon replaced by Jews[12], to be followed by heretics and eventually by witches. Ginsburg shows how the othering actions were intensified at times of economic, political or other types of crises when communities felt threatened. The group that was scapegoated was marginal and defenseless. At the beginning it was a limited section of the population (beggars and vagrants who were suspected of having poisoned the waters), in time the group got larger, increasingly permeating society and therefore more difficult to identify and isolate.(This was the case of witches). The pattern of accusations invoked in the scapegoating process developed in time and was heterogeneous as it took over and integrated into a stereotype different elements from the charges that brought against beggars,

Jews, heretics and witches successively. Witches were thus accused of drinking or using the blood of newborn infants - a charge that was initially brought against the Jews who were said to use Christian blood in their rituals. The image of the witches' familiars (i.e. demonic spirits that took the shape of animals, largely of cats, and which witches nourished with their own body) is derived from the indictments brought against the catars who were associated with demonic huge cats (hence the name of cat-ar).[13]

The successive displacements identified by Ginsburgh indicate the close relationship between heretics and witches as projections of anxieties about religious heterodoxy. As religious issues became political par excellence during the Reformation, no wonder that Catholics , with their militant avant-garde - the Jesuits- should be scapegoated as witches in England and Scotland. Historians have proved that the causes that led to the Gunpowder plot were themselves highly political. The Catholic minority was viciously oppressed by a variety of laws, of economic and political practices including torture. In the general paranoia of chasing Jesuits priests suspected of "attempting to destabilize" Protestant England, Jane Wiseman was passed the following sentence in 1598:

> The sentence is that the said Jane Wiseman shall be led to the prison of the Marshalsea of the Queen's Bench, and there naked, except for a linen cloth about the lower part of her body, be laid upon the ground, lying directly on her back: and a hollow shall be made under her head and her head placed in the same; and upon her body in every part there be placed as much of stones and iron as she can bear and more; and as long as she shall live, she shall have of the worst bread and water of the prison next her; and on the day she eats, she shall not drink, and on the day she drinks she shall not eat, so living until she die."[14]

This was for "receiving, comforting, helping and maintaining priests", refusing to reveal, under torture, who else was doing the same thing, and refusing to plead.[15]

The image I have created so far is rather "gender-free" The identification of witches with heretics and Jesuits (in Jacobean England) indicates that witches were chased as subversive members of society and not as women. Furthermore when applied to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* this approach, although it insists on the subversive and destructive potential of the witches, seems to deprive them of agency, and to fall short of accounting for the formidable impact they have both on the hero and on the audience (at least on Shakespeare's initial audiences). The witches' force derives certainly from the communal fears that they are made to embody. The political-religious conflict between England and Catholic Europe, the threat that England could be invaded by the forces of Antichrist must definitely have played an important part in the emergence of these fears. However, if we rely exclusively upon this argument we risk reduplicating the scapegoating strategies employed in the Jacobean period: the source of fears is identified exclusively in an external factor; the "other" is located outside the community. I think that much of the terrifying power of the witches resides in conflicts inside the community as the latter was going through a traumatic period of transition from one set of social, cultural and religious values to another one.

The *Weird sisters* seem to enjoy a considerable power in the play. Their appearance in the first act, first scene seems to frame the action of the play and determine the course it will take. In a way they remind the audience of the presence of the ghost of Don Andrea and of Revenge who frame the action of Thomas

Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and seem to know its outcome. Unlike Kyd's characters the witches also take an active part in the development of action. Their position is not that of informed spectators, but rather of actors. One might even suspect them of having written the script of the role Macbeth will play.

The witches are credited with the capacity " to look in the seeds of time,/And say which grain will grow, and which will not" (I.iii, 58-59). Their power is not merely that of an astrologer. [16] They produce the impression that they can determine the course of action so as to make it fit in with a given plan. Most spectators are left with an uneasy feeling that events should take place exactly as the witches had predicted. We are induced to believe that the witches had a role in making Birnam wood move or in rendering Macduff invulnerable. The end of the play is so engineered as to downplay the individual contribution of Malcom and Macduff and to stress the involvement of supernatural powers. Although "forces of darkness" , the witches seem to be acting towards the restoration of the legitimate, "natural" order. Can they be redefined as instruments of providence? This apparently paradoxical situation is not gainsaid by the Calvinist theory according to which everything is as God wills it. The Calvinist explanation, however, does not fully account for the frisson and the uncanny feeling the witch's mysterious power produce. What other cultural or religious sources were tapped to produce this impact?[17]

I shall argue that the demonized image of the witches reveals fears caused by the repression of cultural and religious practices that had previously been strongly invested and which now constituted a kind of a counterculture.

III.

In his representation of witchcraft Shakespeare drew on popular and elite cultural traditions alike. While the description of destructive force attributed to the witches is reminiscent of Seneca's Medea, many of their features correspond to a cultural stereotype that had emerged in England by the 17th century. Like most of the women tried for witchcraft in Shakespeare's time, the three sisters are revengeful old hags who are likely to use their evil spells out of sheer spite. Having been denied chestnuts by the sailor's wife the witches in *Macbeth* retaliate and ruin her husband.

Another component of the stereotypical image circulated in ballads and taken over in the official indictements against witches are the "familiars", i.e. pets or other animals said to be devils and which witches nourish with their own blood. Shakespeare's witches have each a familiar: Greymalkin, Paddock and Harpier. Next to familiars they display all the paraphernalia that witches were supposed to be equipped with, including a cauldron. They can also travel at sea in a sieve which proves that they can float in water. (Women who were charged with witchcraft were sometimes thrown into water with heavy weights tied round their bodies in order to see if they sink or nor. When they sank and got drowned it meant that either they were not witches or the evil spirits had forsaken them[18]).

What about the ingredients of the *weird sisters'* spells? Besides toads, snakes, lizards, and diverse animals and plants that were supposed to be poisonous, parts of human bodies were invaluable material: a "pilot's thumb" (I.iii. 28), "Liver of blaspheming Jew;...Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips; /Finger of birth-strangled babe,/Ditch-delivered by a drab/ Make the gruel

thick and slab" (IV.i, 29-32) and " grease, that's sweaten/From the murderer's gibbet" (IV.i.65-66). All the parts the witches name come from bodies that were not buried yet (the gallows corpse), or nor buried in consecrated ground (the drowned sailor), or unable to be buried in consecrated ground because unbaptized (the whore's baby). Parts of heathens' bodies (the Jew's liver, the Turk's nose and the Tartar's lips) were even more potent for their spells. These body parts could be seen as blasphemously inverted versions of the relics of saints. As the latter were believed to cure, so were the parts employed by the witches thought to be capable of doing harm.

Witchcraft in Protestant countries recuperated, albeit in a negative, inverted way, the link between the body and the spirit, the divine and the physical which the Reformation had tended to weaken. It opposed the tendency of Protestant faith to evacuate the spiritual from the physical.[19] Bodies and things were once again invested with divine powers, this time, however, with demonic powers. The spiritual world was resomatized. The relics of saints were displaced in a parodic, topsy-turvy, black mass style by fragments from the bodies of criminals, unbaptized or heathen people. These bodily parts still partook of their owner's spiritual power which was further transferred upon other bodies.[20] Such practices ensured the survival in a demonized version of the old pre-Reformation vision of a world where everything was interconnected and interrelated and the objects surrounding people were permeated by divine power.

The link with the body and its spiritual investment were resuscitated by the Counterreformation, particularly in the geographical areas which used to be Protestant and which had reverted to the Catholic religion.[21] This accounts for some of

the anxiety that Catholic priests and Jesuits in particular caused to English authorities. We may presume that what the authorities were afraid of was less the introduction of new ideas or the actual initiation of any subversive political action. The unacknowledged object of their fears may well have been the reinforcement of older beliefs and traditions that had been forced underground relatively recently and that were still lingering on in spite of the Puritans' sustained campaign against them. According to David Underdown the cultural conflict between the Protestant values imposed by an elite and the traditional customs was still raging on during James's reign.[22] For all the attacks against the "heathenish" and popish superstitions and reveling, May games and Whitsun traditions survived well into the 17th century. Some times they even enjoyed the support of the local elite, as it happened in Stradford upon Avon where friends of Shakespeare prevented the officers from taking down the maypole in 1619. A riot followed but the May games with Morris dancing and a Robin Hood play were still being held in 1622.[23]

The involvement with the body which traditional English pastimes and witchcraft practices shared caused much reformist indignation, such as the one expressed by the Cheshire Puritan, John Bruen:

> Popery and profaneness, two sisters in evil, had consented and conspired in this parish, as in other places, to advance their idols against the ark of God, and to celebrate their solemn feasts of their popish saints... by their wakes and vigils, kept in commemoration and honour of them; in all riot and excess of eating and drinking, dalliance and dancing, sporting and gaming, and other abominable impieties and idolatries.[24]

Notice among other things the stress on conspiracy.
Witchcraft nevertheless could never be claimed to be as innocent as May games. *The Witch of Edmonton,* a play written sixteen years later by Dekker, Ford and Rowley establishes a clear link between witchcraft and the morris dance. Mother Sawyer - the major candidate for witchcraft in the play -and Cuddy Banks - a morris dancer - are both tempted and assisted by the devil, appearing as a dog. Both of them converse with him and ask for his help. The play clears Cuddy of all guilt and hangs Mother Sawyers as a confirmed witch. This would suggest the distinction often operated at that time between the "harmless" survivals of ancient rituals such as May games and the morris dance and the "harmful" dabbling in "the old religion" by witches. The play slightly holds both remnants of older traditions up to ridicule and evinces an "enlightened" scepticism towards rural superstitions and customs: Cuddy is the village idiot and Mother Sawyer is more of a satirist and a victim of community conflicts than a frightening witch.

Witchcraft practices involving the body were perceived as most threatening. For all their persecution these practices were fairly widespread. In 1605 King James had to pass a decree of death for those who

> take up any dead man, woman, or child out of his, her, their grave, or any other place [like a battlefield] where the dead body resteth - or the skin, bone, or any other part of any dead person - to be employed or used in the manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment.[25]

The need to introduce a law punishing such acts suggests that foraging the graves must have been a practice in those times.

Even the associate of Queen Elizabeth's astrologer, John Dee, was given to digging up freshly buried bodies.[26] Battlefields were ideal places to collect the needed bodily parts from. This is why the witches fix their next appointment "when the battle's lost and won", presumably in a place close to the battlefield.

Witchcraft trials reveal the link between such practices and women. In early modern Europe it was women who were entrusted with the care of the body: be it to take care of the newly born children (the lying-in-maids), or the final preparation of the body before it was buried. It was further women who took care of pairing nails, of washing and massaging peolpe's bodies at communal baths. Women had the skills to set broken limbs right and to cure different ailments by means of herbs, the knowledge of which had been handed down from generation to generation. Their intimate contact with bodies entailed people's great dependence upon them. The magic and religious significances attached to bodies conferred great power upon these women. Their ambiguous position of being both marginal and mysteriously powerful made them the object of fears and anxieties. Historians have discovered that this group of women was a frequent the target of witchcrazes.[27] This became particularly the case when barber-surgeons, physicians and apothecaries started marginalising the women in their trade and when regulations were passed expressly forbidding "women and other untrained persons" to practice medicine in any way.[28]

The witches in *Macbeth* could be said to be compromise figures (to use a term Freud coined in his interpretation of dreams): they are at the same time projections of scapegoated popular traditions and religious beliefs, and representatives of a category of women whose intimate relations with the body were a source of fears and anxiety.

One of the uses dead bodies were put to was to enable man to see into the future . The art to do so was called necromancy, prophecy by the dead (*nekromanteia*). The witches' capacity to "look into the seeds of future" could be connected with this art. The above mentioned Edward Kelly was reported to be able to make dead bodies speak "who delivered strange predictions".[29] The three apparitions (the armed head, the bloody child and the child crowned with a tree in his hand) which appear in act four might have been read by Shakespeare's audiences as dead bodies who predict the future. Janet Adelman reads the apparitions as devils, superior to the witches. Adelman takes this as a proof that the witches' power is limited, that they cannot actually be held responsible for the denouement of the action, as they only take orders from their masters.[30] Yet Adelman is not interested in the witches and would like to diminish their importance. Significantly she leaves Hecate out of the picture. What connection could there be between the apparitions and Hecate?

The appearance of Hecate in the play is a controversial one. Macbeth mentions her earlier in the play — "witchcraft celebrates/ Pale Hecate's offerings" (II.i.52) and "ere to black Hecate's summons" (III. 2.41.) The two songs in the Hecate scenes, however, are considered to be interpolations from Middleton's *The Witch* . Kenneth Muir uses very strong language when commenting on this "vandalisations" which "contaminate " and "spoil" the Shakespearean text[31] . Nevertheless the Folio edition which Muir himself reproduced in the Arden edition does include Hecate's appearances in act III, scene V and in act IV, scene I. Their inclusion in the Folio suggests that *Macbeth* was

performed with Hecate in these scenes and we presume that her presence on the stage must have enhanced the theatricality and hence the general appeal of the play.

Postmodern Shakespearean critics no longer resent interpolations ; they no longer share the desire of earlier generations of critics to cleanse the canonical text of "impurities". The fact that the songs are interpolated can be read from a new perspective which suggests that Hecate, the witches and the predictions must have made part of a larger set of popular traditions which both Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights could draw from. This would plead against dissociating Hecate from the witches and against discarding the scene with her intervention.

In act IV Hecate is attended by three other witches suggesting the existence of a "court". The songs make reference to a retinue which includes the elves and fairies. Puck and Robin Goodfellow, familiar to us from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are among the names mentioned by Hecate.

Though not a witch, Hecate calls herself "the mistress of their charms/ the close contriver of all harms" (III.v. 5-6). She further claims the major role in the prediction scene, planning to "raise such artificial sprites,/As, by the strength of their illusion,/ Shall draw him on to his confusion" (III.v.26-30). The two interpolated songs depict the spirits' (witches or elves?) flight high up in the air to some kind of a Sabbath. What has this got to do with Macbeth? An interesting clue to the significances of Hecate and her attendance can be found in Carlo Ginzburg's investigations.[32]

Ginsburg seeks to find common features of the various images representing the mistress of the witches, the patroness who, according to the confessions made by women charged with

witchcraft or heresy, presided over the Sabbath. The patroness of witches was called lady Oriente, Herodiana or Richella in Italy. She was also known as the goddess Diane; she was *die Unholde* or *die selige Fraw* in Germany, or the Queen of Elves in Scotland. In all her appearances she taught her followers various medical practices, the use of herbs, and the skills of doing and undoing spells. Underlying the stereotypical descriptions of this patroness of witches, descriptions that were often added by judges or torturers, Ginsburg could detect the presence of an ancient cult of fertility. The very name of Richella, for example, signified richness and abundance. The fertility goddess was initially a Celtic one and had later been assimilated with the image of the Roman goddess Diana.

Ginsburg discovers interesting relations between this goddess and the three *Matrons (Matres*), symbols of fertility and wealth. The *Matrons* were further associated with the *Parcae,* also called the *Fatae*, - the Roman goddesses of fate - ruling over the world of shadows and the dead. [33] In their account of the Sabbath women invariably mentioned the vast retinue of their mistress, most of it being made up of shadows. There is a certain indeterminacy in the images of the attendants to the witches' mistress: now they were an army of the dead[34], now shadows, now elves or fairies, now witches. Interesting relations are established between a) an ancient goddess of fertility, access to whom could only be obtained via the world of the dead or in an encounter with the dead, b) the three *Matres* alias the three goddesses of fate, and c) Hecate, a former fertility goddess, often represented with three heads, or three bodies, now a deity of the night, assimilitated with the cult of the moon.[35] Hecate was another name mentioned along with Diana and Oriente, all of them being described as "the good lady".

Ginsburg concludes that an old Celtic cult of a fertility goddess that integrated in its myth a voyage to the world of the dead was assimilated by Roman cults and integrated in Christian pre-Reformation quasi heathen practices. During the 15th and 16th century the cult was increasingly distorted and projected as a demonic practice. In this latter form it was incorporated in the demonological myth which provided the basic script for charges of witchcraft.

Viewed from this perspective the three *weird sisters* are demonized and degraded versions both of the Parcae and the Matrons. At the same time they can be considered as projections of Hecate herself. Their mysterious force derives from their origin in fertility cults and from their association with fate and the world of the dead.

The witches both tempt Macbeth to criminal, destructive acts and anticipate and/or promote the regeneration of the country in their predictions. The tactics adopted by Macduff to cover his movements by having each soldier carry a branch has been identified as a reenactment of fertility rituals performed in England during the May games. What has not been established is the link between the witches as demonized versions of fertility goddesses and the ritual underlying the movement of the Birnam wood. The existence of this link would prove that the movement of the play is not entirely absorbed by the denial of malevolent maternal forces. Janet Alderman is right considering that what Macduff's men perform in the end of the play when they carry branches is rather a martial ritual, leading to war and involving men only than a fertility rite as it has commonly been regarded.[36] At the same there lingers the uncanny feeling that this action had all been anticipated if not actually predetermined by forces that were originally maternal godesses. Even if they no longer

appear on the stage in the final act, the *Matrons* indirectly seem to supervise the end of the play. Roman Polanski's filmed version of the play reintroduces them, reinforcing however their destructive, demonic side: they will now tempt Malcolm's brother, Donalbein.

The *weird sisters* can see into the future, their predictions cover the long period of history stretching practically from the beginnings of Scottish history to James's rule. They control the life of mortals and determine their fate. At the same time, however, they are no more than "bubbles of the earth" as Banquo calls them, or grotesque images of the real women tried for witchcraft in Shakespeare's time. Their indeterminate gender (women wearing beards) rendered them monstrous (masculine women) to a Renaissance audience. One could assume that their gender indeterminacy functions as a trace of their initial paradoxical nature (as fertility goddesses and at the same time goddesses of the night). It is also the product of subsequent layers of demonic significance added to their representation as witches.

What about Hecate, their mistress? The interpolated songs clearly identify her as the goddess cherished at the Sabbath. She is the Diana, the Oriente as well as the dark goddess of charms and spells. Her numerous attendance of spirits and elves associates her with the Queen of Elves, who, according to Ginsburg, dwelled in Scotland,.[37] The Hecate in *Macbeth* could be a more sinister and at the same time a much more powerful version of Titania in a *Midsummer Night's Dream.* The witches that accompany Hecate suggest the community of women invested with mysterious powers created around this goddess. It is this sense of a community of women fostering a counterculture that rendered the witches particularly fearful and frightening to the Jacobean patriarchal society.

I think that the three witches and Hecate embody the ancient cultural and religious practices that had managed to survive well into the Reformation period and which had come under a vicious attack during James' rule. The evil power and subversive intentions attributed to them, the processes of redefinition that they had been subjected to, all testify to the original strong investment in such practices calling for an equally strong repression. Far from being identified with a benevolent Queen of Fairies or fertility goddess, the *weird sisters* and their mistress Hecate had become the instruments of evil. The transformations English culture had subjected Hecate and her attendants to in the 16th and 17th century is similar to the transformations that subversive desires are subjected to in our dreams. In his essay on negation Freud showed how repressed yet strongly invested desires could find their way to our consciousness and escape the latter's censorship provided they are negated and labelled as unacceptable. Freud's dream analysis could well be applied to account for the fascination and terror the witches produce in the play. Their representation on the Jacobean stage clearly signaled that the cultural conflict between ancient customs and beliefs and the Protestant censure of such "heathen" practices was not over yet, not by a long shot.

IV. V.

What about Lady Macbeth? Is she a witch? Wills thinks that she is only a pseudo-witch, who falls short of her husband's transgressiveness: she does not properly conjure spirits so as to carry on a dialogue with them, nor does she express her willingness to make a bond with the devil; she cannot bring herself to murder Duncan; she falters and eventually collapses pitifully.[38]

Janet Alderman takes the opposite view and sees in her a formidable malevolent maternal power. Alderman reads the action of the play as the enactment of a fantasy of male escape from the dependence of female forces represented by the Witches in alliance with Lady Macbeth.[39]

It is a fact that Lady Macbeth does not communicate with the witches and that any alliance between her and the witches is based merely on textual associations. At no moment is there any suggestion that Lady Macbeth would be included in the community represented by the *weird sisters*. Without in the least denying the features she shares with the witches, we shall insist on the ways Lady Macbeth differs from them. (Let us remember that the *weird sisters* themselves depart from the stereotypical pattern which was employed in witchcraft trials.)

Like the witches , Lady Macbeth is an agent of disorder. As her advice and instigation take up and develop the prompting of the witches, the three of them could be held responsible for unleashing "a female chaos"[40]. Her deviant behaviour adds to the monstrosity of the crime committed by Macbeth. The misogynist arguments invoked thereby add more emphasis to the symbolical vandalism and profanation of the couple's action.

The ambition, the activism and the individualism that prompted Macbeth to seize power are all the more easier demonized when it is a woman - Lady Macbeth - who gives expression to them. Lady Macbeth has grasped the potential for remaking time, for transcending the present and shaping the future in a quasi modernist way [41] "Thy letter has transported me beyond/ This ignorant present, and I feel now/ The future in the instant" (I.v. 56-8). Lady Macbeth expresses the modernist activism that urges man to transcend the established limits and shape conditions so as to suit his/her purposes. Against

Macbeth's hesitations to transgress these limits —" I dare do all that may become a man;/ Who does do more, is none" (I.vii.46-7), she presses to seize time and make it fit . She reminds him that "Nor time , nor place./ Did then adhere, and yet you would make them both" (I.vii. 51-2). By making time and place further their purpose Lady Macbeth transgresses against the prevailing political and moral laws and produces a discontinuity in the received system of values. Her secular, individualist view clashes with the medieval sacrality that surrounds Duncan.

As this powerful Renaissance discourse on individual action is uttered by a transgressive woman, it is actually rejected and even demonized. The play also questions the ideology promoted by James's view on kingship: the position of the figure of order - the king - is revealed to be flawed and untenable. The beginning of the play makes it clear that Duncan may be the ideal king, he may enjoy legitimate authority, yet he lacks the power that should go with it.[42] What both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth intend to do is to couple authority with power, an attempt made by several of Shakespeare's heroes (e.g. Bolinbroke in Richard II). In *Macbeth* this action is shown to entail disruptive changes in both the political and the ethical assumptions of the time.

Lady Macbeth disturbs the political action both on a macro and on a micro level, the latter being her "unwomanly" intervention in politics, her "masculine" ambition and behaviour. From this point of view she is just as monstrous as the witches who wear beards. Her husband perceives her "male" hardness, but rather than being put off by it he praises her "mettle" (meaning both courage and metal) that renders her fit to give birth to hard, invulnerable sons :

> Bring forth men-children only!
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males (I.vii.73-75)

Lady Macbeth is ready to commit the murder herself and contemplates doing it single-handedly. ("That my keen knife see not the wound it makes", I.v.52). Later on she joins Macbeth in a vision of malevolent omnipotence: "What cannot you and I perform upon/ Th'ungarded Duncan?" (I.vii. 70-71) Her plans against the king - a father figure - are profoundly antiauthoritarian and antipatriarchal. In this respect she resembles most of the women tried for witchcraft.[43] Her actions, however, seem to fall short of her words: she fails to kill the king because he resembles her father when he sleeps. The play denies her the position of a full (even if destructive) agent.

For all her limited access to real action, Lady Macbeth can qualify as a masculine woman, a *hic mulier*. Unlike the heroines in the comedies who simply don a male apparel and adopt a male identity, Lady Macbeth feels that major changes deep inside her "nature" are requisite in order to perform her role properly. She has to be "unsexed". It is only by placing herself outside the scope of the natural that she can act. It is only from there that she can seduce and fortify her husband. The play does not allow her any other space in which to assert herself.[44] What does the "unsexing" entail?

> Come, ye spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe , top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse;
> That no compunctious visitings of Nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th'effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,

Whereverin your sightless substances
You wait on Nature's mischief! (I.v.40-50)

The invocation of the spirits associates the act of "unsexing" with an alliance with demonic powers. Sexual indeterminacy brands Lady Macbeth as a demonic witch. Her similarity to the *weird sisters* is obvious. To a Renaissance audience the very act of summoning occult powers signified the fact that she had already crossed a boundary and was in the process of becoming a witch.[45] The Arden edition signals that the first line in Lady Macbeth's invocation echoes the opening lines of Seneca's Medea: "Come spiteful fiends, come heaps of furies fell,/ Not one by one, but all at once"[46] Medea, the famous witch of classical tradition, who had killed her father and her children, serves as a point of reference for Lady Macbeth.

The image that Lady Macbeth's invocation projects is that of a woman ready to be possessed by the devil: she simply wants to be invaded ("filled from top to toe") by demonic forces. The invocation dwells on the inscription on her body that such an invasion would produce. In her investigation of acts of exorcisms in Reformation Germany Lindal Roper identifies several bodily changes that possession was reputed to bring about: the possessed woman's silhouette became warped and distended; she spoke in two voices — one, her normal voice — "natural, small and vaginal" and another "coarse, unnatural, heavy, masculine, snuffling and rasping" . Along with her voice her entire behaviour was subjected to a radical change resulting in a caricature of hypermasculinity. In her other "masculine" voice the possessed woman started "swearing, cursing God, singing ribald drinking songs, spewing forth a torrent of insults"[47] The disturbance in the religious realm - concludes Lindal Roper - was

expressed somatically. As we mentioned above magic and witchcraft practices represented a form of resistance against the desomatization of the spiritual brought about by Protestantism. Is Lady Macbeth speaking in another, more "masculine" voice? The hoarse raven that is mentioned at the beginning of her soliloquy would suggest that much.

Lady Macbeth desires the inversions extending in the possessed women to the point of their gender inversion. She actually wills her "unsexing" which as mentioned above would lead to the adoption of a hypermasculine pattern of behaviour. For Lady Macbeth "unsexing" means the undoing of her female reproductive functions. We can talk about an internal transvestitism. The thickening of the blood and the stopping up of its access and passage that her speech describes was read in Renaissance England as attempts to stop the flow of menstrual blood. Menstruation, because it is involuntary bleeding, signaled women's vulnerability, their inability to control the workings of their bodies.[48] Lady Macbeth wants to discard the weakness inherent in her female nature and hopes that contact with demonic powers will enable her to acquire a male mastery over it. Changes in female physiology are expected to bring about psychological changes: the flow of blood should be stopped in order to suppress her female feelings of compassion and pity — "the compunctious visitations of Nature" — that would deflect her from her purpose.

In her attempts to recast her identity Lady Macbeth adheres to a construction of ideal masculinity which presupposes a single mindedness of purpose, an indivisible unity between the mind (reason) reaching for a goal, and the willpower necessary to perform the intended action. All affects, remorse or doubts which might disrupt the unity between purpose and action have to be erased. — "that no compunctious visitings of Nature/ Shake my

fell purpose, nor keep peace between/The effect and it". The definition of successful masculinity that Lady Macbeth subscribes to involves a radical excision of feelings. The play does not really find faults with this ideal of ruthless manliness; it is only its appropiation by a woman that rendes it terrifying. Lady Macbeth's gender subversion only reinforces and aggravates the patriarchal male -female dichotomy.

Her aversion to her gender identity makes Lady Macbeth turn against the other fluid that defines her as female - her milk. The ideal she cherishes is binary opposed to the fluidity (read instability) associated with female physiology and psychology as well as to the female capacity to nurture. The milk in her breast should turn to gall or be exchanged for gall. The breast with the infant were a central icon of devoted maternity in the Renaissance; the negation of this image projected the image of an evil mother or a witch. Witches were women who failed in their fundamental function to feed, to nurture the baby. Evil (step)mothers in fairy tales give their children poisoned food. Lady Macbeth's desire to turn her milk into gall does not so much get across the fact that she resents conceiving herself exclusively in female terms, which to her imply vulnerability and incapacity ot act. It rather projects her as a kind of witch mother. The reason why the play favours the latter reading may lie in the anxiety associated with nursing in early modern Europe.

Birth and suckling were the privileged sites of ambivalent fantasies on rejection and return in early modern Europe[49]. Maternal milk had ambiguous significances. On the one hand it stood for food— the only alternative available in feeding infants. Consequently maternal milk was synonymous to health and life. On the other hand milk, like the other fluids in a woman's body, was subject to misogynist taboos. The milk a woman produced

soon after child birth (this involves the colostrum and the milk she has in the first week) was viewed as polluted by the blood of her womb. The blood of the afterbirth (including that of the placenta) was considered the waste of the waste, utter filth, requiring complete purgation of both the child's and the woman's body. It inevitably contaminated the mother's milk. " A great sympathy was thought to exist between the womb and the breast...Breast milk was[thought to be] concocted from uterine blood."[50]

The injunctions against the colostrum made it necessary that the infant should be fed by another woman for two days at the very least. Most of the time the new mother had to wait for eight days or so before nursing her baby.[51] Both the taboo and the cases when breast infections occurred rendered maternal milk extremely unstable: it could be a life preserver but it could just as well be poisonous or at least harmful.

Nursing offered a rich source for witchcraft accusation. A large percentage of the women charged with witchcraft were nurses or maids in lying, taking care of infants. Many of the fears of the young mothers helplessly witnessing their babies grow sick and die, many of their anxieties or feelings of depression caused by post-partum and a difficult lying-in period were projected onto these women. [52]

Lady Macbeth's fantasy shows her as an evil nurse whose milk is poisoned. Another possibility of suggested by her invocation of the spirits is that she may be suckling demonic spirits - her "familiars". As Janet Alderman has shown, the line "And take my milk for gall" could be read literally: the spirit is called to take her milk.[53] At this moment Lady Macbeth and the witches fuse, and they fuse through the image of perverse nursery.

The ambiguity of maternal milk , its capacity to do good or harm, further surfaces in relation to Macbeth. Lady Macbeth fears that her husband is "full of the milk of human kindness" which will prevent him from committing the necessary murder and consequently from attaining the greatness predicted to him. In this case milk is viewed as effeminating and debilitating. It signals delayed maturation because of prolonged dependence on nursing and on the maternal body. Lady Macbeth's phrase could be related to a proverb " his mother's milk is not out of his nose " (similar to the Romanian "are ca[la gur\"). It is interesting that in both languages the proverb is gendered and only applies to a male person (there is nothing wrong with a young woman if her mother's milk is not out of her nose). The attainment of manhood is seen as conditioned by radical "weaning", involving a brusque, if not violent, separation from the maternal body,[54]. The culturally accepted need for such a separation could provide us with some of the reasons which determined Lady Macbeth's other most horrifying expression of maternal malevolence:

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have plucked the nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
> As you have done to this (I.vii. 54-59)

Janet Alderman thinks that by means of this image of murderously disrupted nurturance Lady Macbeth secures her control over Macbeth; that " it is the psychic equivalence of the witches' poisonous cauldron.... Through this identification Shakespeare in effect locates the source of his culture's fear of witchcraft in individual human history, in the infant's long

dependence on female figures felt as all-powerful."[55] I cannot but agree with Alderman's compelling analysis of the malevolent maternal forces in Macbeth, and I think that the horror of Lady Macbeth's imagined infanticide definitely seals her portrait as that of a mother-witch. This image was probably a projection of what James and his contemporaries conceived Mary Stuart to be like.

There is another aspect of this imagined infanticide that has less to do with witchcraft and much more with the Jacobean norms of masculinity described above. What Lady Macbeth is trying to do by "the valour of her tongue" is to harden Macbeth so as to make him behave like a "real man". This act is understood as an act of traumatizing but necessary weaning, of outgrowing and overcoming the child and the woman in himself. She wants to erase in him the very affects — the "visitings of Nature" — that she tried to suppress in herself. Considering the strict gender dichotomy upheld by the play, does Macbeth's nature "full of the milk of human kindness" suggest the crossing of gender boundaries and the appropriation of aspects of the female identity?[56] Could Lady Macbeth's attempts to enforce his masculinity, could her violent "weaning" be considered as an action which reestablishes the norm?

In a paradoxical way Lady Macbeth's "unnatural" attempt to repress any trace of "soft" femininity in herself and in her husband coincides with the thrust of the plot of the play as a whole. As Janet Alderman has argued, the action in Macbeth enacts the fantasy of the suppression and eventually the excision of the female, maternal forces in the world. In the political and natural order that is restored in the end women are conspicuously absent.

The suppression of feelings and moral judgments in Lady Macbeth could also be viewed from a non-gendered perspective. It could be read as an initiation in the art of "Realpolitik" where power has to disregard personal feelings or sympathy with individuals in order to be efficient. The role Lady Macbeth urges Macbeth to adopt is not essentially different from that of Henry V who has to ignore "all those legs and arms, and heads, chopped off in a battle" (IV,i. 132-133) that Williams reminds him of.[57] The major difference appears to lie in the way the act of violence is sanctioned and valorised. According to Sinfield this depends upon whose interests it promotes: in *Henry V* the chorus glorifies and ideologically legitimates the acts of violence committed by the king since they serve to bolster the authority of the Eglish state. In Macbeth's case violence is demonized because it is directed against the head of the state.[58]

Lady Macbeth is severely punished for her transgressions. Although she only imagines the infanticide and it is her husband who actually performs it when ordering the slaughter of Macduff's children, she is the one who is made to suffer from guilt feelings. Lady Macduff keeps haunting her in her sleep walking scene. We should bear in mind that the boy actor playing Lady Macbeth doubled Lady Macduff's role[59]. An indirect relationship is established between the self-violative mother and the cruelly violated one.

Lady Macbeth's last appearance is that of a penitent witch. The stage direction in the Folio edition is " Enter Lady Macbeth, with a taper" . The punishment of a penitent witch involved her parading her crime by holding a taper. Walking about barefooted in a nightdress, Lady Macbeth was to Shakespeare's audience the very image of "the repentant sorceress". Wills thinks that the imaginary spot which she keeps rubbing off is not an ironic echo

of her brazen confidence in act II, scene ii — "A little water clears us of this deed: /How easy is it then!". The spot is the inscription of the devil upon her body; it is the very mark that irrevocably incriminated a witch.[60]

The greatest punishment that the plot administers to Lady Macbeth is her psychological collapse, marked by the loss of her powerful voice. The defeated Lady Macbeth reproduces partially the stereotypical image of women who were exorcised of the devil. Like them she resumes her "natural" womanly voice and hence her weak, vulnerable position. The exorcised Lady Macbeth is decentered and dispossessed of her subjectivity since as Catherine Belsey puts it " To speak is to possess meaning, to have access to the language that defines, delimits and locates power. To speak is to become a subject"[61]. In Renaissance England ,however, to speak from a place of independence that is usually associated with the subject was to personate masculine virtue. The major transgression both Lady Macbeth and the three witches make themselves guilty of is the employment of discourse which in women was perceived as threatening the system of differences which gave and still gives meaning to patriarchy.

VI.

The transgressiveness of witchcraft is as much inscribed on the body as it derives from its perverted treatment of the body. The very foregrounding of the relationship between the body and supernatural powers in witchcraft practices renders them subversive. The analyses of both the *weird sisters* and of Lady Macbeth has shown that the issue of gender is central and cannot be bracketted. Although the object of scapegoating seems to have been a gender-neutral "other" - previous to the witches there

had been the beggars, then the Jews, the heretics or political enemies, the ancient rituals and beliefs underlying witchcraft practices presupposed the witches' gendered bodies. After all it was the ancient godesses' fertility that got later demonized as perverted motherhood.

The witches' transgressive bodies were perceived as threatening. Their sexual indeterminacy could bridge the gap established by the established sexual and gender dichotomies (the bearded witches, Lady Macbeth's fantasies of male invulnerability). Or the other way round, the witches' bodies could function destructively. from within the very sexual identity constructed for women (the evil mother suckling demons or killing the infant). The transgressiveness of the witches cannot, however, be reduced to their sexual identity but reveals the complex ways in which cultural and political conflicts were projected upon gendered bodies. The witches' deviant features were often a locus of deep seated fears and frustrations of a culture grappling with difficult and traumatizing changes.

Note

[1] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*. The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (London: The Women's Press, 1978) For a reevaluation of witches in new historicist terms see Catherine Belsey in Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*,(London and New York: Methuen, 1985)149-192,

[2] For a very interesting analysis of the various factors converging in the construction of the representation of witches see Katheleen McLuskie "Women and the Cultural Production : The Case of Witchcraft" *Renaissance Dramatists* (London, New York : Harvester Wheatsheaf,1989) 57-87

[3] Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits. Shakespeare's Macbeth* , (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995)

[4] see Robert Hardin," The Early Poetry of the Gunpowder Plot Myth in the Making", *English Literary Renaissance,* (1992) no.22, spring. , 70.

[5] The myth of the Gunpowder plot, designed to shore up James' position by creating a sense of religious and political identity for England, insisted on the intervention of Providence to protect both Elizabeth and James from the countless conspiracies hatched by the Whore of Babylon, that is the Pope. The king arranged for recurrent liturgical celebrations of the delivery from the Powder which are at the heart of the Guy Fawkes Day.

[6] Garry Wills, 15-17

[7] Garry Wills stresses the language of destruction employed in the accusations brought to the plotters in the texts circulated at the time, a language whose apocalyptic overtones was further amplified in Shakespeare's play.

[8] see Frances Barker,"The Information of the Absolute" *The Culture of Violence* (Manchester:Manchester Univ.Press, 1992) 58-60.

[9] quoted in Stephen L. Collins, *From divine Cosmos to Sovereign State. An Intellectual History of the Consciousness and the Idea of Order in Renaissance England.* (New York, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989) 110.

[10] Collins, 110.

[11] Carlo Ginzburg, "Everii.si vrajitoarele", *Istorie nocturna* (Iasi: CEU Press-Polirom, 1996) 69-97.

[12] see the massacres of entire Jewish communities charged with poisoning the waters and spreading death among the Christians discussed by Ginzburg, Ginzburg, 73-74.

[13] Ginzburg,86.

[14] John Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan* , trans. Philip Caraman (London:Bodley Head, 1965), 18, quoted in Alan Sinfield, "Macbeth: History, Ideology and Intellectuals", *Faultlines. Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 98.

[15] Sinfield, 98.

[16] Although Calvin had banned all activity that involved devination into the future, no king, the King of England included, could do without a court astrologer. see Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London: Routledge,1993) 213-223

[17] Alan Sinfield estimates that the insistance on the supernatural is ideologically motivated: Macduff's action against Macbeth could be viewed as an act of rebellion against a king; furthermore it involves the invasion of the country by a foreign army. The involvement of the supernatural is needed to sanction the campaign against Macbeth and to relieve Macduff and Malcolm of much of the responsibility entailed by this action. Sinfield. 100.

[18] Alexandrian, *Istoria filozofiei oculte*, (Bucuresti : Humanitas) 412-423

[19] Lindal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil. Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe,* (London and New York: Routledge. 1994), 181-187. see also Alexandrian's comment on witchcraft practices and the Protestant campaign against it "Ceea ce c\utau s\ dezr\d\cineze era pl\cera, revolta p\gin\ a corpului strivit de dogmele puritane", Alexandrain, 387.

[20] see Roper's comment "Just as the bodies of the dead saints often had to be protected against relic hunters, so here the exhibited corpse had become a collection of magic talismans, the pieces invested with supernatural power akin to the healing potential which relics contained" in Lindal Roper, 189.

[21] Roper, 183.

[22] David Underdown, "Cultural Conflict", *Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660,* (Oxford, New York: Oxford Univ. Press,1985)

[23] Underdown, 56-57.

[24] Underdown, 59.

[25] *I James I*, c. 12 (1604) quoted in Wills, 40.

[26] Wills, 40-41.

[27] Roper, 210-213.

[28] Mary Wiesener, "Women's Defence of their Public Role", *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,* Mary Beth Rose (ed), (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986) 8.

[29] John Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (1631) quoted in Wills, 41.

[30] Janet Adelman,"Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in Macbeth and Coriolanus", *Suffocating Mothers.* (New and London: Routledge, 1992), 136

[31] Kenneth Muir, "Introduction" *Macbeth - The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1962)xxxvi

[32] Ginzburg, 98-101.

[33] Ginzburg, 113-114.

[34] Ginzburg,109,

35 Victor Kernbach, *Dictionar de mitologie generala* (Bucuresti: Editura Albatros), 1983, 256-257.

[36] Janet Alderman, 145.

[37] Ginzburg, 105.

[38] Wills, 75-91.

[39] Alderman,130-165.

[40] Alderman, 134.

[41] see Barker, 63

[42] Alan Sinfield talks about a split between legitimacy and actual power in Macbeth's Scotland and identifies this as a potential malfunctioning in the development of the absolute state. sinfield, 101-103.

[43] Lindal Roper, shows that women accused of witchcraft were taken seriously by the authorities when their rage turned against paternal figures -the head of the family, the authorities and ultimately God. In her chapter "Oedipus and the Devil" Roper discusses witchcraft in terms oedipal conflicts between father and daughter. Roper, 226-240. For the antiauthoritarian stance witches adopted see also Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, (London and New York: Methuen,1985) 179-181.,

[44] see Catherine Belsey "Afterword: A Future for Materialist Feminist Criticism?" in *The Matter of Difference. Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* , Valerie Wayne (ed) (Ithaca : Cornell Univ. Press, 1991)

[45] There was a widespread view that cursing alone sufficed as an invocation of the devil. In *The Witch of Edmonton* the devil explains to Mother Sawyer that when he finds someone cursing and swearing he already has power to touch him. (II.ii,118 and 163-164)

46 *Macbeth, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare,* Kenneth Muir (ed), (London: Methuen & Harvard Univ. Press1953) 30.

[47] Roper, 176.

[48] Paster, 82.

[49] Paster, 194

[50] Paster. 194

[51] see Joubert, Popular Errors, quoted in Paster, 202

[52] see Roper's discussion of nurses accused of witchcraft, 212, 206-207.

[53] Alderman, 135.

[54] This is the thrust of Janet Alderman's reading of Macbeth.

[55] Alderman, 134

[56] This idea is suggested by Catherine Belsey in her essay "Afterword: A Future for Materialist Feminist Criticism?" in *The Matter of Difference. Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* .

[57] see Catherine Belsey's analysis of this passage in" Making History Then and Now", *The Uses of History,* Frances Barker (ed) , (Manchester and New York: Manchester Univ. Press,1991) 37-43.

[58] for the way violence is considered to be legitimate or not, see Sinfield, 97-100.

[59] Wills, 85

[60] "The bloody spot most feared by those suspected of witchcraft was the devil's mark left on them when they sealed their compact....Such spots were evidence of the devil's ownership", Wills, 87.

[61] Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, 191.

POLITICAL MEANINGS OF RAPE: SHAKESPEARE'S *RAPE OF LUCRECE*

I.

The story around the rape of Lucretia has functioned as a major political myth about the destruction and foundation of a political system. Like the *Aeneid* and the *Illiad*, even if it is much shorter than these, Lucretia's story is "one of the founding myths of patriarchy, in which rape authorizes revenge, revenge comprises revolution and revolution establishes legitimate government."[1] The massive cultural investments in the story can be traced to the complex way in which public and political behaviour is interrelated with private and sexual behaviour and to the way these two kinds of behaviour bear on the issue of liberty. As Ian Donaldson puts it, the story of Lucretia "is a story about the nature of liberty: liberty for the state and liberty for the individual."

Renaissance rewritings of the myth in the 15th and 16th century often employed it as a kind of political weapon. Salutati's Florentine version of the story and in particular the German dramatic or iconographic reworkings of the myth served as disguised forms of expressing resistance to an invasive political and military power.[2] In the heady 1520s the Lucretia story could serve as a way of promoting the Protestant revolution[3]. As I have shown elsewhere[4] the myth of Lucretia was used by Protestant artists and authorities alike to signal their opposition to the catholic emperor Charles V and to qualify his threats of invasion as totally illegitimate. The story was reread in terms of

the theory on the legitimacy of resistance to temporal authorities that Protestants thinkers (such as Melanchton and Bucer in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland and Mornay in France) were working on at the time.

In contradistinction to the politicized continental versions, Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece,* the best known English treatment of the motive, has often been described as focusing on the private aspects of sexual behaviour at the expense of the public and political ones. Although the political implications of the narrative are powerful and seemingly ineradicable, "the poem appears - considers Donaldson - to have virtually no political dimension, concentrating instead upon questions of individual psychology and private moral choice."[5] Shakespeare seems to have deliberately neglected the subversive meanings entailed by the overthrow of the king.

It is a fact that Shakespeare was not interested in Brutus, the initiator of the action against the Tarquin kings. Unlike Bullinger, the Swiss reformer, who clearly shifted the emphasis on the changes produced by Brutus and limited the treatment of the rape of Lucretia to a third of his play, Shakespeare devoted almost the entire poem to this moment. Does his decision to concentrate on the sexual transgression indicate Shakespeare's dismissal of the political issues raised by the story ? Or worse even, can it be regarded as evidence of political orthodoxy? Is Shakespeare simply paying lipservice to Tudor ideology on monarchy and reinforcing its view on rebellion as a sin against nature and against God?[6] Is it possible that the rape should be invested with meanings that can convey an indirect political message? Could this message be much more subversive than most of the critics have suspected? Is the very focus on the

sexual and individual aspect of the story in Shakespeare's poem but a smoke-screen to escape Elizabethan censure? These are some of the questions that the essay is going to tackle.

II.

A useful way to detect the new meanings injected into a well known material is to identify absent elements, aspects that have been bracketed out or glossed over. In order to spot what has been elided in Shakespeare's version of the Lucretia story, it might not be amiss to outline the major moments of its plot as it was handed down by Livy in *Ad Urbe Condita*, published between 27 and 25 BC. Renaissance writers tapped other sources on this subject, such as Ovid's or Plutarch's narratives or the one of the Greek rhetorician Dionysius of Halikarnassus.

During the siege of Adrea (509 BC) the noble soldiers get into an argument over which wife is the most worthy of praise. Collatinus, Lucretia's husband, suggests going home that night to see what their wives are up to. All of the wives are found reveling but for Lucretia who is found spinning. Lucretia wins the chastity contest.

Lucretia's chastity makes a deep impression upon Sextus Tarquinus, the son of the tyrant, who decides to return soon and rape her. A few days later he goes to Lucretia's house and is put up in the guest's chamber. In the middle of the night he comes to Lucretia's room and tries first to seduce her. As she will not yield to him, Tarquin has to threaten her that, if she resisted him, he would still rape her and also would kill her together with a

slave, that he would place the slave beside her bed and claim he has discovered them in adultery. Fearing the loss of her reputation Lucretia gives in.

The next morning Lucretia summons her husband and her father, tells them what has happened and, before giving out the name of the rapist, has them promise to revenge her. Her kinsmen try to convince her that although her body has been tainted, her mind is still pure. But Lucretia stabs herself to provide the ultimate proof of her chastity.

Brutus takes the knife from her breast and swears by it to revenge her. Her body is taken to the forum where Brutus urges the people to vindicate her honour by expelling the Tarquins. Rome is liberated from tyranny and a new law is instituted forbidding any monarchic rule. Brutus and Publius Valerius become the first consuls of the republican Rome.

While leaving out some important moments, such as the chastity contest or Tarquin's attempts to seduce Lucrece by promising to marry her, omissions to which we shall come back later on, Shakespeare included in the Argument to the poem the wider political context of the story. The Argument emphasizes the general lawlessness of the king's rule, who is described as a usurper and a murderer. Sextus Tarquinus' father, Lucius Tarquinus (surnamed Superbus for his excessive pride), had caused his father-in-law to be cruelly murdered and had "possessed himself of the kingdom" without receiving the people's suffrages, thus grievously violating the Roman law. The information provided in the Argument shifts the centre of interest from the sexual transgression to the political context that has led to the overthrow of the king.

The foregrounding of the political, public issues was recurrent in the Renaissance approaches to this subject.

Machiavelli considered that the reasons for the expulsion of the Tarquins had little to do with the sexual crime and everything to do with the disregard of ancient traditions and customs. The reason

> ....was not that his son, Sextus, had ravished Lucretia, but that he had violated the laws of the kingdom and ruled tyrannically....Hence, if the Lucretia incident had not occurred, something else would have happened and would have led to the same result. Whereas, if Tarquin had behaved like the other kings, when his son, Sextus, committed his crime, Brutus and Collatinus would have appealed to Tarquin to avenge it, and not to the Roman people."[7]

Sir Thomas Elyot also insisted on the Tarquins' bad leadership rather than on the rape. He was keen to emphasize the political lesson that contemporary rulers could draw from the story.

> The pride of the Tarquin, the last kyng of the Romanes, was more occasion of his exile than the rauysshinge of Lucrecia by his sonne Aruncius, for the malice of the people by his pride had longte gathered, finding valiaunt capitaynes, Brutus, Collatinus, Lucretius, and other nobles of the cities, at the last braste out and takynge occasion of the rauisshment, all though the kynge were no partie, they utterly expulsed him for euer out of the citie. These be frutes of pride, and that men do cal stately countenance.[8]

The Argument to Shakespeare's poem insists on the king's excessive pride, on the violation of the Roman laws and customs. Though the significance of the rape is not belittled, the center of interest of the frame of the poem seems to lie elsewhere.

There arises the obvious question as to the difficult relation between frame and the bulk of the poem. Does Shakespeare's exclusive concentration on the rape in the poem indirectly refute

the perspective adopted in the Argument which comes closer to the views held by Elyot and Machiavelli on the apparent irrelevance of the sexual transgression? For Heather Dubrow, the Argument and the poem have completely different agendas:

> the Argument...implicitly responds to the query, " Why were the Tarquins banished?"" while the inquiry behind the poem might be phrased as "What happened to Lucrece?" In short the concerns of the Argument are more political, those of the poem itself more personal"[9]

Dubrow further points out the "unresolvable contradictions between the argument and the text of the poem, such as their varying accounts of the events before the rape" (161-162). Such contradictions have led some critics to the conclusion that the Argument might not have been written by Shakespeare himself, although more recent criticism tends to recuperate the Argument and reclaim it for Shakespeare.[10]

I do not believe that Shakespeare's insistence on the rape in the poem represents a strategy of avoiding the political issues raised in the Argument. I would rather insist on the function of the Argument to set the action in the poem in a certain perspective, one which is more radical than what Shakespeare would publicly have liked to admit, considering the strong censorship applied in the Elizabethan period. The relationship between the Argument and the poem invites to a strategy of reading between the lines, a practice adopted by Annabel Patterson, but which Western contemporary critics are less familiar with. Patterson quotes Empson : "..it is curious that the scholars of our age...are unable to imagine living under a censorship or making an effort to avoid trouble with Thought Police; these unpleasant features of current experience were

also familiar in most historical periods, so that the disability must regularly prevent scholars from understanding what they read"[11]. Romanian scholars, rather unfortunately one would add, have a long tradition in oblique reading, hunting for concealed political meanings in apparently "harmless" texts. The pleasures derived from this kind of reading have accounted for much of the popularity of Shakespeare's plays on our stage during the communist regime.

Annabel Patterson highlights words such as *suffrages, consent, tyranny, general, with one consent* which are employed in the argument and in the last stanzas. She identifies them as part of the vocabulary of early republicanism in England. Brutus is described as "staying for the people's suffrages", a law that Tarquin had abrogated in his tyrannous rule. Brutus does not make the decision to overthrow the king on his own, it is the people who " with one consent ... all vowed to root out the whole hated family of the Tarquins". This phrasing suggests the republican intentions of the poem which must have been obvious to Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, and to his friend the second Earl of Essex. "Was it merely by coincidence that the two editions of the poem appeared in 1600, the year when Essex was under house arrest and formal investigation for disobedience or worse?" wonders Patterson.[12] She concludes that the verbal luxuriance surrounding the rape is nothing but a "smoke of words" (as Lucrece describes her own lamentation) designed to conceal the subversive republican message.

Annabel Patterson is right, I think, to argue against Donaldson's assumption that Shakespeare would have been inhibited from" *questioning, even in a very indirect way,* the system of monarchical government under which he lived and to which he owed allegiance" [13]. At the same time I would reconsider

Shakespeare's treatment of the rape and try to identify the ways in which the monarchy is indirectly questioned by reinforcing the political meanings of the rape. The poem, as I shall argue, though focusing alms exclusively on a transgression in the private space, does not altogether discard the political message centred on the public space as it was expressed by Machiavelli and Elyot. The poem can be said to veer toward the more subversive views of the radical Protestant opposition on the legitimacy of resistance to a lawful monarch, if he is proved a tyrant.

III.

The political symbolism of the poem is self-evident: Lucrece is not simply Lucrece but the figure of violated Rome, which Shakespeare's contemporaries identified with England.[14] Nor is Tarquin merely the perpetrator of a sexual crime. He lays siege to her in the same spirit as he besieges Adrea; he is described as a conqueror, an invader, a thief and a usurper.

The act of rape is seen as an invasion "now he vows a league, now an invasion" (287) " His hand.../Smoking with pride. marched on to make his stand/ On her bare breast, the heart of all her land" (438). It is a siege: "this siege that hath engirth his marriage" (221) , "Under that color am I come to scale / Thy never conquered fort" (481-82).

Lucrece's body is equated with a city or a fortress conquered by the enemy, or it is associated with a house or a temple that is penetrated in a unsanctioned way. William Heckscher notes, "The woman who had been dishonoured was equally equated with a city or fortress that had been conquered by the enemy...From the classical antiquity onward, cities and fortresses had been considered to be of the feminine sex..."[15]

The analogy of the human body with society has a long history; it was already a commonplace in Plato's time and Renaissance England "saw the heyday of the anthropomorphic image of the commonwealth".[16] Anthropological notions of the body and society often emerge in Shakespeare's plays. In *Titus Andronicus, Cymbeline* and of course *Lucrece* the image of women's bodies connotes a society threatened.

Tarquin's hand upon her breast is a "rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall" (464), breaking through and destroying it. The emphasis placed on the battered walls discloses an anxiety about margins or boundaries which are perceived as endangered.

The anthropologist Mary Douglas considers that in the dialectic relationship established between the actual physical body and the socially defined body "... the human body is always treated as an image of society... interest in apertures depends upon the preoccupation with social exists and entrances, escape routes and invasions. If there is no concern to preserve social boundaries, I would not expect to find concern with bodily boundaries."[17]

The poem dramatizes the way Tarquin brutally violates boundaries, unlocking the gates leading to Lucrece' s chamber and eventually breaking open the gates of her own body. Lucrece's body symbolically maps out England as well as the New World which England was including in its empire. Lucrece's breasts as she lies sleeping are compared to

> ivory globes circled with blue
> A pair of maiden worlds unconquered
> Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew. (406-409)

Although an island and envisioned as a natural fortress, a moated castle, England was conceived of as a besieged city. England

sense of itself as a beleaguered city was largely determined by the fact that its Protestant sovereign, queen Elisabeth was not acknowledged as a legitimate monarch by the Catholic European states. In the post-Armada context in which the poem was written, Tarquin battering the walls of Lucrece's city could easily be identified with the Spanish, forever threatening England and in particular Elisabeth. The poem expresses the paranoiac fears of an invasion, of papal takeover or Jesuit infiltration of the time. It ends with an image that must have struck horror amid Shakespeare's contemporaries: Lucrece's body "like a late-sacked island, vastly stood/ Bared and unpeopled in this fearful flood [of Lucrece's blood]" (1741-42). The island is England imagined after a possible invasion which would leave it totally devastated. Linda Woodbridge finds the poem to be expressive of the siege mentality of Elizabethan England, which perceived itself as endangered and vulnerable at the margins.

IV.

The body's orifices figured as symbols of the bour daries of the body politic which explains why societies guarded them zealously by means of different taboos. The women's hymen served as the physical or sexual sign for the limen or wall defining the city's limits. Like the ground beneath the walls of Athens or Rome, the woman's chastity was surrounded by prohibitions and precautions. Both were protected by political and ritual sanctions; both are sacred. Any unsanctioned penetration - breach of chastity, - involves a pollution and is credited to affect the very identity of the system.

Lucrece's experience of the rape is that of a violent invasion and of painful pollution. She is obsessed with the idea of her very blood being defiled and foul (1029). The narrator fully shares her convictions on the pollution of her blood which has now become abject: "some of the blood" spurting from the wound she inflicts on herself in the end of the poem is described as looking " black, and that false Tarquin stained". This blood is further qualified as "corrupted" and "putrefied". Her body is not only a "mansion battered by the enemy" but a "sacred temple spotted, spoiled, corrupted"(1172) and "a polluted prison" where her soul breathed (1726).

It is this overwhelming experience of inner pollution that determines Lucrece to think of suicide. Lucrece's act of taking her life was condemned by Augustine who insisted on the dichotomy of the soiled body and pure soul. If her soul stayed pure Lucrece had no right to commit suicide, an act which would ultimately condemn her. Most of the rereadings of Lucrece vindicated her act and indirectly emphasized the fact that the pollution could not be confined to the body only, that paradoxically her soul had also been contaminated. Augustine himself could be quoted in this respect as the one to advance the idea that the original sin was transmitted by male genitals during intercourse, that sexual penetration was linked with the admission of evil to the human interior.[18]

What was stained or robbed was her honour, or to be more precise her husband's honour which it was her duty to preserve intact. Initially rape was defined as an act of taking away by force, violent seizure (of goods), robbery. After 1481 it was understood as the violation of a woman. having been robbed of her chastity which embodied her "perfection", Lucrece was deprived of her honour. As her honour was not actually her own

but was her husband's, the wife being solely its recipient and guardian, the theft involved a crime against Collatine's property.

> If Collatine, thine honour lay in me,
> From me by strong assault it is bereft;
> My honesty, lost, and I, a drone-like bee
> Have no perfection of my summer left.
> But robbed and ransacked by injurious theft.
> In thy weak hive a wand'ring wasp hath crept
> And sucked the honey which thy chaste bee kept (834-840)

As Catherine Stimpson points out "men rape what other men possess". The lines do not only emphasize the identification of the act of rape with one of theft, but also dramatize the amplitude of the loss as experienced by Lucrece. Although Lucrece's body is only a site for a male competition, the loss of her chastity — the prize of the competition — involves an ontological loss for her. She can no longer function socially as Collatine's wife; she perceives herself as a kind of an outsider, a pariah. She has lost all her qualities. Lucrece is convinced that there is nothing worthy of respect and admiration left in her. Her belief echoes a view expressed by Vives, the Spanish humanist who wrote one of the most influential conduct books for women:

> *...because shee that hath once lost her honestie, should think there is nothing left.* Take from a woman her beautie, take from her kindred, ries, comelynesse, eloquence, sharpness of witte, cunning in her craft: giver her, and thou hast given her all things. And on the other side, giver her all these thinges, and call her a naughtie packe, with that one word thou hast taken all from her, and hast left her bare and foule.[19] (my italics)

Vives was widely quoted on the subject of chastity, which was given philosophical meaning to underpin the ideology promoting it.

> First let her understand that chastity is the principle virtue of a woman and counterpoiseth with all the rest: if she have that, no man will look for any other, and if she lack that no man will regard other.. And as the Stoic philosophers reckon that that as goodness standeth in wisedom, and all ill in folly, inasmuch that they said only the wise man to be rich, free, a king, a citizen, fair , bold and blessed: and a fool, poor, a thrall, an outlaw, a stranger, foul, a cowherd, and wretched; likewise it is to be judged of chastity in women, that she that is chaste is fair, well favoured, rich, fruitful, noble, and all the best things that can be named: and contrary, she that is unchaste is a see and treasure of all illness.[20]

Lucrece seems to have been deprived of the very justification to exist. Ruth Kelso's dictum in *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* is "let a woman have her chastity, she has all. Let her lack her chastity and she has nothing". We might add she is nothing.[21] The narrator comments that Lucrece " hath lost a dearer thing than life" (687)

Paradoxically a raped wife was in a worse position than a merely unchaste one as she no longer fitted any categories the Elizabethans could operate with, and which were maid, wife, widow and whore. Lucrece, having been corrupted against her will, straggles the opposition between chaste and adulterous wife in a most unsettling way. She inhabits a liminal zone, she is the excess, the "supplement" that is profoundly threatening. The threat is once again viewed in terms of pollution : her story, if she survives, might be contaminating to other women, who might "catch the disease" and find excuses for what is an unpardonable crime. Lucrece is determined to die and make an example of herself:

'No , no!' quoth she, 'no dame hereafter living
By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving' (1715-16)

Lucrece's situation of in-betweenness shows that margin is itself subject to alteration and change, a fact which, as Mary Douglas observes, explains why "all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. "[22]. Like anything that blurs boundaries and confounds the line between categories in a world that is obsessed with making and preserving distinctions between categories, Lucrece, the raped chaste wife, is abjected.[23]

The possibility that she might have been left pregnant further stresses the threat of confounding boundaries. In patriarchal terms such a possibility has disastrous consequences as it threatens to pollute Collatine's lineage. It is only her death that can avoid confusing the patrilinear line.

This bastard graff shall never come to growth
He shall not boast who did thy stock pollute
That thou art doting father of his fruit. (1062-1065)

What is most disturbing about Lucrece's response after the rape is her feelings of guilt. David Wilburn thinks that she actually identifies with the rapist' sense of guilt and her invocation of the night to conceal her crime, her blushes when she talks with the maid, all indicate a contaminated spirit.[24]. As Coppelia Kahn points out, Lucrece seems to have forgotten the resistance she did oppose to Tarquin.[25] She holds herself guilty of the loss of her honour ("guilty of my thy [Collatine's] honour's wrack", 841). She seems to take over responsibility for the rape, which she repeatedly calls "*my* loathsome trespass" (812, 1069), "*my* cureless crime' (771) (my italics). In this context she judges her self-inflicted death to be a just punishment for her crime:

'Poor hand, why quiver'st thou at this decree?...
Since thou couldst not defend thy loyal dame,
And was afeared to scratch her wicked foe,
Kill both thyself and her for yielding so.' (1029, 1033-35)

What could induce these guilt feelings into Lucrece? One answer to this question should make reference to the definitions of the female body circulated in the Renaissance. Women's bodies were considered to be particularly vulnerable to penetration and pollution due to their increased porosity - they were looked upon as "leaky vessels". Not only the fluids issuing from their bodies were suspect and provided evidence of their ontological inferiority to men but so were the vulnerable orifices of their bodies (the vagina, the mouth, the ears). A woman's body was naturally "grotesque". As Stallybrass points out, using Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque body, it was "open to the outside world", "unfinished, [it] outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits"[26]. Consequently women's bodies were the object of constant surveillance and policing by fathers and husbands.

The ideal held up to women was that of the classical body, which Stallybrass calls the enclosed body. This ideal presupposed chastity, silence and hardly any mobility beyond the boundaries of the house (with these features often overlapping and standing for each other). At the beginning of the poem Lucrece seems to be the very embodiment of the ideal of enclosed body. Unlike most of Shakespeare's heroines she is modest, silent, never leaves her house. She comes closest to the Renaissance ideal of the snail women, that is of a women who is always within the bounds of her house.[27]

The aspiration towards a body that would be sealed off acquired further political meanings in the cult of virginity employed by Elisabeth. The inviolability and impermeability of her body,

suggested by symbols such as the sieve, ribbons, pearls or the *hortus conclusus* — the enclosed garden , ensured the inviolability of the country. Stallybrass helps us establish interesting relations between the topos of the enclosed garden, Lucrece and Queen Elizabeth:

> When women were themselves objects to be mapped out, virginity and marital "chastity" were pictured as fragile states to be maintained by the surveillance of wives and daughters. But paradoxically the normative "woman" could become the emblem of the perfect and impermeable container, and hence a map of the integrity of the state. The state, like the virgin, was a *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed garden walled off from enemies. In the Ditchley portrait, Elisabeth I is portrayed standing upon a map of England. As she ushers in the rule of a golden age, she is the imperial virgin, symbolizing, at the same time as she is symbolized by the *hortus conclusus* of the state.[28]

Linda Woodbridge argues that a siege-obsessed country like England, struggling under the fear of a potential invasion actually needed as Virgin Queen.29 The obsession with virginity in a Protestant country like England, which went against the theological and social thrust of the Reformation, could only be accounted for by the paranoiac fears which Elisabeth herself had fueled.

A perfectly enclosed territory at the beginning Lucrece had fashioned her body so as to measure up to ideal embodied by the Virgin Queen. Her vulnerability, however, questioned the ideology underlying this ideal and indirectly undermined the post Armada myth Elisabeth created around the mystic relationship between her virginity and England's inviolability. Like Lucrece, England was not proof against invasions. But are we to locate her enemies only outside its boundaries? Are not the most dangerous foes the ones closest to the throne?

IV.

Can we state that when Lucrece considers herself guilty she is not only referring to her condition as a woman who is inevitably weakness and frail? Or is she rather assuming someone else's fault as well? Could it be her husband's guilt as he was the first to "unlock this treasure", to open up the enclosure and expose "the priceless wealth the heavens had him lent" (16,17)?

Nancy Vickers has made an interesting analysis of Collatine's description Lucrece. She stresses the fact that Shakespeare's poem omits the chastity contest, thus suggesting that it wasn't Lucrece's chastity but her beauty as praised by her husband that had induced the desire in Tarquin to rape her. Vickers proves how the description is similar to a blazon, the representation on a shield.[30] What is most intriguing about the blazon is not only that it indicates that Lucrece is the mere object of the rivalry between two aristocrats and that the rape has little to do with her actual person. Vicker's analysis suggests that the description presupposes the subjection of Lucrece's body to Collatine's gaze, which dominates, fragmentizes it and indirectly takes violent possession of it, symbolically raping her.

But his major fault is, as I think, that he takes her out of the "enclosure" and thus breaks the walls that should have protected her. Shakespeare insists on Collatine's foolishness in exposing her beauty to foreign eyes: he "unlocked the treasure of his happy state", a line that anticipates Tarquin's later action of unlocking doors and intimates the similarity between the two men. Collatine is also "the publisher/ Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown/ From thievish ears, because it is his own". Nancy Vickers

associates the verb "publish" used by Shakespeare with the blazon and the French verb "blasoner" which means to praise. To publish may also mean to make publicly known. What Collatine unwittingly did by describing his wife was to expose her to "Tarquin's thievish ears" who symbolically took possession of her, only to rape her subsequently.

Lucrece's beauty is associated with a "treasure", a "jewel". The very vitality and erotic energy of her being, her very autonomy, are thus denied as she is turned into an object of desire as well as of exchange. Her own personal feelings and desires are never taken into consideration: they do not count in Tarquin's hesitating moments, nor do they surface in Lucrece's own laments. All that counts in both instances is the loss Collatine's honour incurs. In a way Lucrece's chastity functions as a metonymy for Collatine's honour, for his status and fame of possessing something unique, invaluable:

> In the possession of his beauteous mate;
> Reck'ning his fortune at such high proud rate
> That kings might be esposed to more fame
> But king nor peer to such a peerless dame (18-21)

But if Lucrece's body stands for Rome and indirectly for England, her "treasure" should amount to much more. Tarquin's rape is conceived of as breaking a taboo , as a horrendous transgression defiling something sacred, a deity. In his struggle with his desire, Tarquin voices the magnitude of his crime:

> Fair torch, burn out thy light, and lend it not
> To darken her whose light excelleth thine,
> And die, unhallowed thoughts, before you blot
> With your uncleanness that which is devine,
> Offer pure incense to so pure a shrine (190-194)

Coppelia Kahn proves that the deity alluded to here is an embodiment of Vesta. Shakespeare must have become familiar with the Roman cult of Vesta from his readings of Ovid's *Fasti,* where he also found the version of the Lucretia story he relied on in his poem.[31] This cult replicated Roman family rituals on a national scale and centred on the maintenance of the sacred altar fire by the vestal virgins. The Vestal cult lay at the heart of the Roman family, of the domus, of the state. "The very existence of the Roman state was made symbolically dependent on the confinement of women's bodies within the institutional boundaries of marriage, family and domus" [32] Vesta is the virgin identified with the hearth fire, she is the prime symbol of family life. Lucrece is associated in the poem with hearth and home,(the argument mentions how she is found spinning at home).

Tarquin's crime is therefore against the very sanctity of family life, which lies at the heart of the state as well. We have already mentioned the comparison that is made between the rape and usurpation. Tarquin's moments of hesitation, his moral struggle anticipate the ordeal Macbeth goes through. In his famous soliloquy "Is this a dagger which I see before me..." (II,ii 34 61) where Macbeth imagines himself going to Duncan's room to kill him, he identifies with "wither'd Murder" who "...with his stealthy pace,/ with Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design/ Moves like a ghost" (54-55). Macbeth's and Tarquin's image as they are heading to their victims overlap.

Like Macbeth, Tarquin is a usurper. The invader of the city, of the island, comes actually from within.

> "These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred,
> Who like a foul usurper went about
> From this fair throne to heave the owner out " (411-413)

Janet Alderman has suggested the further analogy between Lucrece and Duncan, insisting on the king's androgynous (and therefore weak, vulnerable) nature. [33] The description of his murder recalls Lucrece's rape and her death in the end.

> .....Here lay Duncan,
> His silver skin laced with golden blood,
> And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature
> For ruin's wasteful entrance...(II,iii, 94-97)

The rape of Lucrece, very much like the murder of Duncan is described in terms of a sacrilegious crime:

> "Most sacrilegious Murder hath broke ope
> Tle Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
> The life o' th' building (*Macbeth,* II, iii, 50-53)

> Her sacred temple spotted, spoiled, corrupted,
> Grossly engirt with daring infamy (*The Rape of Lucrece*, 1171-73)

What is therefore ruined is far more than a woman or even a royalty. What the rape involves is the desecration of Vesta, a deity that represents the very essence of the organization of the community at both family and gorvernmental level.

Kahn quotes Jean Joseph Goux's remarks on how Vesta's virginity is closely connected with her unrepresentability. Vesta was the only deity of the Pantheon images of whom were forbidden.

> Vesta's virginity and her unrepresentability are both protected at once. A man *(vir)* should neither penetrate, nor see, nor imagine. The inviolable virginity and the strict unrepresentability are identical, as if there were a complicity, on some opposing plane, between "rape" by manly sensual desire (the Priapic appetite) and visualization which would be a phantasm and an impious fraud.[34]

The unrepresentability of the Vesta explains why Shakespeare directed so much energy against Collatinus' act of praising and representing Lucretia's beauty?. When Collatinus and Tarquin subject Lucretia's body to their gaze, they are guilty of desecrating the deity, of breaking the taboo against Vesta as goddess of *domus* and *civitas*. Collatine's gaze divides her body into parts and Tarquin (as well as the narrator adopting Tarquin's perspective) identifies with his gaze and retraces the fragmentation previously effected by Collatine. Kahn considers that "No female character in Shakespeare is more decisively inscribed than Lucrece in a scopic economy that makes her an object for the purpose of control and domination"[35] This comment sounds all the more shocking considering the political symbolism underlying the poem, in which the woman/ land trope suggests the equation between on the one hand Lucrece/ Vesta, and Rome and between Lucrece/ the Virgin Queen and England.

V.

What is highly intriguing about *The Rape of Lucrece* is that much of the story is told from Tarquin's perspective, who gains the reader's interest as the actual agent, if not the hero of the story. As Lucrece is identified either with a fortress, a house or a temple she is not given much of a voice. As was noticed above she is either the object of male gaze or the prize in an agonistic competition between Collatine and Tarquin. If Lucrece is an embodiment of Vesta or of its Elizabethan equivalent, than it is Tarquin who is once again inscribed in a heroic discourse: his transgression testifies to his heroic potential of challenging the limits. Coppelia Kahn beautifully sums up the way Tarquin is represented as an agonistic competitor:

> Even as Tarquin reverences the sacredness of the Roman community, the Vesta principle, he is driven to desecrate it in obedience to a principle equally strong and just as central, though not symbolized so coherently in a single deity — the principle of *virtus* , which depends on rivalry, agon, and conquest. His dividedness as a subject makes him heroic in the tragic terms that Shakespeare, of all English poets, has decisively established for our culture.[36]

That Tarquin is an early version of Macbeth and that he commands the same mixture of sympathy and horror has been commented on above. What is equally striking is that Tarquin compares himself with Youth in the early Renaissance interlude with the same name. ("My part is Youth and beats these from the stage" 278)

Youth is a later treatment of the morality theme of man's choice between evil, represented by flesh and the world and truth, indicating the path leading to redemption and to God. Should Tarquin, the rapist, the usurper and invader, be viewed as another version of the generic figure of Mankind?

From a political perspective the powerful voice that Tarquin is given in the poem is problematic. In most Renaissance treatments of the subject (excepting the parodical ones such as Machiaveli's and Heywood's plays) it is Brutus who commands the reader's/spectator's attention, as he is the one who brings about the most significant political change.

Is the displacement of Brutus by Tarquin as a center of interest a further proof that Shakespeare avoided the radical, republican significances of the story? Or does the foregrounding of Tarquin's transgression rather align the poem with the opposite political view held by the radical Protestants and theorized in Scotland by John Buchanan? According to the latter whereas a

king gains power by popular consent, rules by the law, and is subject to the law, a tyrant seizes power unilaterally and claims that he need not be bound by laws. (In this context we can fully grasp the political undertones of terms such on "peoples consent" used in the Argument, on the importance attached to abiding by laws and customs.) Buchanan argues that since the rule of a tyrant is not legitimate, he can be deposed. Resistance against him is not only legitimate but it is actually a duty. A tyrant can be removed by legal action, leading to imprisonment or exile. A tyrant can be resisted by military force. A tyrant can even be assassinated, if that is the only way to dispose of him[37]. The endorsement of tyrannicide made the theory more radical than the other theories on resistance developed by the continental Calvinists and provoked a storm of protest.

Tarquin and his father fit the description of a tyrant provided by Buchanan. Tarquin's sexual transgression reduplicates his father's political one. As I have been arguing in this essay, the terms in which the rape is described fully reinforce this correspondence and establish clear links with the indictment against the violation of the law in the Argument.

VI.

The morality structure underlying the plot in the poem requires that Tarquin's powerfully negative position be countered by an equally strong positive one. As Brutus is allotted only a marginal role, the only figure left is Lucrece.

Most of the time, however, Lucrece is placed in a an object and not in a subject position: she is a blazon to her husband, she is the prize of an agonistic competition between Collatine

and Tarquin, she is the besieged city. Her identification with the Troy sacked by the Greek in the latter part of the poem seems to reinforce her position as victim rather than as agent.

As she is identified with a battered house, a spotted temple, she seems to be merely the protective shield that shelters the jewel, the treasure, the deity. The above quoted lines describing Tarquin's action " Who like a foul usurper went about/ From this fair throne to heave the owner out" (412-413), reiterate the reification that she is subjected to: Lucrece is equated with the throne, not with its owner. Her rape foregrounds her body, almost to the point of reducing her to it.

For all her object position she is allotted the space of almost half of the poem to express her suffering. Many critics found this to be rather boring, as her laments are not really challenging and exhibit a verbiage which is sometimes excessive.[38] Feminist critics have been disappointed to see how her voice is reinscribed in the patriarchal discourse, reasserting rather than contesting its values. Unlike Tarquin, who evinces the dividedness of a genuine tragic hero, Lucrece has been described as "superbly unified" — nothing she does or says contradicts the values she stands for— and consequently she is hopelessly untragic. [39]

The Lucretia motif was often chosen in the Renaissance for her circumscribed agency: Lucretia can only act by committing suicide; justice has to be done by the ones who have the authority to do so, that is male members of her family: her husband, her father and her kinsmen. It is for this very reason that Lucretia was often preferred to Judith who took action herself and was often represented holding the tyrant's head in her hand. The Lucretia motive enacted a moderate version of the idea of resistance. According to this "moderate" view, and unlike the one upheld by Buchanan, opposition to the ruler is not legitimate

if initiated by the population itself and in particular by those segments that are not looked upon as rightful agents (women or other marginal figures such as peasants, apprentices, the lower middle class, that is categories of population which were responsible for much of the social turmoil in the 16th century, starting with the *Peasants' War* and ending with the food riots in Elizabethan England in the 90s). Resistance is legitimate if it is opposed by representatives duly invested with authority (the inferior magistrates). *Du droit des magistrats,* written by the Calvinist reformer Beza, excluded the possibility that resistance should be opposed by private individuals and insisted that it should be led only by an institution that represented the general population. The political action envisioned at the end of the poem comes closer to Beza's position and departs from Buchanan's theory which was much more radical and encouraged a general revolt. [40] It is initiated by Brutus in his capacity of "inferior magistrate" and therefore precludes any disorderly reversal of the political and social hierarchy.

There are, however, some echoes in the poems which connect Lucrece with alternate forms of women's political agency, forms that were judged as disruptive and which traditional criticism have tended to ignore.

Lucrece mentions the word revenge several times. The reason why she does not commit suicide immediately and is determined to go through the traumatic experience of making her crime public is to take action to be revenged. Unlike Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* , Lucrece does not participate herself in the act of revenge. She does not usurp the male position as the avenger of the rape victim.[41] But by making her husband take an oath, she does make sure that the fact that her rapist is the king's son will not prevent Collatine from revenging her. In an

indirect way she initiates the king's overthrow. Brutus urges the population to rebellion using the knife Lucrece stabbed herself with. He could be said to be Lucretia's imitator, who redirects the knife against the rapist. [42]

The poem echoes a more radical line of action, the one taken by Philomela, raped and mutilated by Tereus. Lucrece thinks of embracing this model:

> Come, Philomele, that sing'st of ravishment,
> Make thy sad grove in my dishevelled hair.
> As the dank earth weeps at thy languishment,
> So I at each sad strain will strain a tear
> And with deep groans the diapason bear;
> For burden-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still,
> While thou on Tereus descants better skill (1128-1134)

Philomela, who together with her sister Procne committed infanticide in order to revenge herself on the rapist, belongs to and represents the countertradition of vengeful and violent women associated with Bacchic legend. "This tradition is replete with images of different, more direct forms of political agency for women , images that in fact challenge the fundamental organization and distribution of power in the Western, patriarchal state".[43] Jane Newman argues that the myth of Philomela haunts the margins of Shakespeare's sources as well as those of his poem.

Like Philomele, Lucrece makes sure that she is revenged by disclosing the name of the rapist. Her imitation of Philomele, however, is selective; it leaves out the violent acts and does not include the cruel punishment that Philomele and her sister Procne administered to Tarquin. Lucrece's self-sacrifice in fact reverses the acts of the Greek myth as it was described by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. Lucrece does not turn the sword against the rapist but against herself. When Lucrece identifies with her , it is

with the self-violating Philomela, who, having been turned into a nightingale, presses her body against a thorn to add a dramatic note to her singing:

> And whilst against a thorn thou bear'st thy part
> To keep thy sharp woes waking, wretched I,
> To imitate thee welll, against my heart
> Will fix a sharp knife to affright mine eye; (1135-1338)

For all the repression of the Bacchic violence in Shakespeare's poem, some lines recall the alternative action of female reprisal represented in the Philomela's story. Lucrece begs Time to perform the very acts of violence she virtuously refrains from:

> Let there bechance him pitiful mischances
> To make him moan, but pity not his moans;
> Stone him with hard'ned hearts harder than stones
> And let mild women to him lose their mildness
> Wilder to him than tigers in their wildness. (976-80)

Lucrece does not lose her mildness, nor does she turn wilder than tigers. Does Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* ,who helps her father grind her two rapists into food to be offered to their mother, undergo the change Lucrece only fantasizes about ? We cannot tell.

VII.

Lucrece does not act like a vengeful, violent woman, threatening by her act the very basis of the patriarchal system, but kills herself in the high Roman fashion.

It is interesting how the faults that her critics have found with her self-inflicted death reveal their own ideological position: Agustine accused her of not behaving like a true Christian who

should bear her/his cross, feminist critics qualify it as a self-defeating act, some male critics (David Wilburn) who are more interested in the ordeal Tarquin went through, describe it as a self-rape.

An engraving by Lucas Cranach juxtaposes Lucrece's rape and her suicide and stresses the similarity between the two acts by having Lucrece use a dagger that looks identical with Tarquin's sword and by placing it in the same position and the same angle. The text itself does some justice to the description of her death as self rape:

> Then let it be not called impiety
> If in this blemished fort I make some hole
> through which I may convey this troubled soul (1174-1176)

Lucrece's "classical", perfectly self-contained, impermeable body is thus perforated a second time and turned into a grotesque body that is paraded in the market. Her gaping wound only visualizes the unlawful penetration she has previously suffered and brings forth forcefully parts of her body never named in the poem — the genitalia. The people gazing at her body replicate in grosser terms the gaze Tarquin subjected her body to while she was sleeping. Just like Collatine had "published" her beauty, unlocking a treasure and turning it into a blazon, Brutus "publishes" her "bleeding body thorough Rome"(1851), and turns it into a flag for male action. Once again it is her kinsman who breaks the enclosed space protecting Lucrece's body and betrays it by exhibiting to foreign eyes. This time, however, her body is taken into the streets of Rome, into the plaza, the perfect location for grotesque, carnivalesque exposures. Opened up, with doors and windows wide agape, raped and perforated, Lucrece's body becomes more public than ever.

The image of "blood bubbling from her breast" (1737)could be looked upon as an abject one. The inability to stop bleeding was one aspect of womanly incontinence. The blood gushing forth appears to belie Lucrece's reputation as chaste. "The bleeding body"(1851) shown throughout Rome calls up misogynist arguments against the impure blood that women's bodies leak. As we have seen Lucrece is the first to call her blood impure, stained corrupted. Brutus also mentions its pollution which he tries to recuperate for his political interests. He swears "by this chaste blood so unjustly stained"(1835) to see justice done and the king's family expelled. The narrator is more precise and distinguishes two strands of blood: some of it is still pure and red, "and some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained" (1743). The two types of blood do not seem to mix; the pure one stays uncontaminated.: "the blood untainted still doth red abide,/ Blushing at that which is so putrefied" (1749-1750)

What accounts for the existence of some pure blood flowing from the wound next to the corrupted one? Is this blood a tangible proof, that Lucrece's body has not been totally "corrupted"? Lucrece is convinced that after the rape it is only her mind that is pure:

> Though my gross blood be stained with this abuse
> Immaculate and spotless is my mind. (1655-57)

Lucrece anticipated earlier that her self-sacrifice would have a purging effect:

> For in my death I murder shameful scorn;
> My shame so dead, mine honour is new born (1189-90)
>
> My blood shall wash the slander of mine ill;
> My live's foul deed, my life's fair end shall free it. (1207-08)

Gail Paster Kern has pointed out the distinction operated in the Renaissance between the "corrupt" blood produced by involuntary acts such as defloration, rape and the monthly cycle and the pure blood that is shed in a voluntary act. The latter is associated either with blood-letting, valued as an important purgative remedy against a large number of diseases, or with the act of suicide. According to the Roman ethic principles suicide conferred the greatest possible dignity upon man, as it provided evidence of his autonomy and complete control over himself and his fate.[44]

Shakespeare has Lucrece vacillate between the Christian and the Roman ethical systems. Judging by Christian values she is afraid that a suicidal act might pollute her soul:

> 'To kill myself', quoth she, 'alack, what were it
> But with my body my poor soul's pollution?
> They that lose half with greater patience bear it
> than they whose whole is swallowed in confusion.
> That mother tries a merciless conclusion
> Who, having two sweet babes, when death takes one,
> Will slay th' other and be nurse to none'. (1156-1162)

"Honour" prevails over the Christian injunctions. It is to save her honour(an idea reinforced by the patriarchal conflation of her own honour with that of her husband), her fame, that she feels bound to take her own life.

> My honour I'll bequeath unto the knife
> That wounds my body so dishonoured.
> Tis honour to deprive dishonoured life:
> The one will live, the other being dead.
> So of shame's ashes shall my fame be bred,
> For in my death I murder shameful scorn;
> My shame so dead, mine honour is new born. (1183-1190)

Lucrece's attachment to the value of honour inscribes her in a heroic discourse and confers upon her the dignity of an acting subject. She is no longer merely her husband's invaluable possession. Acting, she rises to a status where she can place herself on an equal footing with him, as both his friend and foe, and definitely as one who is entitled to demand revenge:

> Myself thy friend will kill myself thy foe,
> And for my sake serve thou false Tarquin so (1196-97)

The terms in which she defines her position mark her departure from the conventional circumscription imposed on female behaviour. Lucrece no longer refers to herself as merely Collatine's wife. She considers herself mistress of her fate and seems to enjoy full freedom of action.

> For me, I am the mistress of my fate,
> And with my trespasss never will dispense
> Till life to death acquit my forced offense (1069-1071)

In her identification with the code of chivalry Lucrece reconstructs her identity and adopts "male" features. The determination in her voice has a phallic ring. The Lucrece talking in this section sounds like a third party in a manly combat vying with Collatine and Tarquin for honour and fame. In fact she identifies with male heroic figures such as Priam.

> As Priam him [Sinon] did cherish
> So did I Tarquin, so my Troy did perish

Lucrece imperceptibly slides from an object position to a subject position of a responsible agent: she no longer defines herself merely in terms of her corporeality, she is no longer merely the sacked city of Troy. Lucrece also identifies with the ruler, the king of Troy who fought the treacherous Greek.

Like Portia's self-wounding in *Jullius Caesar,* Lucrece's suicidal act will efface the gender difference that separates her from her husband and who makes Brutus reluctant to confide in her. If looked at from this perspective, her gaping wound no longer signifies grotesque femaleness, but the reverse. It is a substitute phallus. Many visual repressentations of Lucrece's suicide present the knife she stabs herself as having a phallic value.45 It is no accident that it is by this knife that Brutus swears revenge and urges the Romans to action.

Lucrece's suicide is presented as a moral triumph, an act that establishes her superiority not merely to fate and the ravisher, but also to her husband. Her quasi-masculine strength empowers her to die like a later Shakespearean hero. Her manly courage enables her to set herself free. The stream of blood that surrounds her body and maps it in the shape of an island functions like a liminal zone buffering a defended territory. Her body may be a devastated island but the image also suggests the restoration of the boundary and hence of the safety and protection of the island. England's enemies, invaders from without and from within, are safely kept at bay.

This image, however, invites questions whose answers are left pending. Considering the political significance of the restoration of boundaries, to what extent is Brutus's insurrection necessary, to what extent is it redundant?

Note

[1] Coppelia Kahn, " Lucrece. The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity', Lynn Higgins (ed) *Rape and Representation, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)* 141

[2] on the reatment of the Lucretia motif by the italian humanists see Stephanie Jed's excellent study *Chaste Thinking . the Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* . (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989). On the treatment in Germany during the heady days of the early Reformation see Kristin Eldyss Sorensen Zapalac, *"In his Image and His Likeness". Political Iconography and Religious Change in Regensburg, 1500-1600.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990)

[3] on the description of the Reformation as the "Protestant revolution" see Steven Ozement's *Protestants. The Birth of a Revolution.* (New York and London: Doubleday, 1992)

[4] see my work on *Fronda si Propaganda. Teatrul reformat din Anglia si Germania in secolul al XVIlea.* (Bucuresti: Editura Universitatii Bucuresti, 1996)

[5] Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia.* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1982), 115

[6] For the most powerful expression of Tudor views on rebellion see the famous "Homily against Rebellion and Willful Disobedience" which was mandatory in all churches and had to be preached once every month.

[7] *The Discourses of Niccolo Machiavelli,* trs. Leslie J. Walker (London, 1950) bk.iii, ch.5

[8] Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour.* (London, 1907), bk.2, ch 5, 131.

[9] Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* .(Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987) 160

[10] see Michael Platt, "*The Rape of Lucrece* and the Republic for Which It Stands", R*ome and Romans According to Shakespeare,* (Lanham, Md. 1983) 13-51.

[11]Annabel Patterson, "Sleeping with Enemy", *Reading Between the Lines,* (London:Routledge, 1993),309.

[12] Patterson, 306-307

[13] Donaldson, 43-44

[14] On the identification of England with Rome see Robert Miola, Shakespeare's Rome (Cambridge, Mass. : Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Linda Woodbridge "Palisading the Body Politic", in Linda Woodbridge and Edward Berry. *True Rites and Maimed Rites. Ritual and Anti-Ritual in Shakespeare and His Age* .(Urbana and Chicago : University of Illinois Press, 1992)

[15] William Heckscher "Shakespeare in His Relationship to the Visual Arts" , *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 13-14 (1970) quoted in Linda Woodbridge, "Palisading the Body Politic", Linda Woodbridge and Edward Berry, *True Rites and Maimed Rites (*Urbana and Chicago : University of Illinois Press, 1992)

[16] Leonard Barkan, *Nature's Work of Art: The Human Body as Image of the World* .(New Haven : Yale University Press, 1975)

[17] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, (1966), 121.

[18] Woodbridge, 279.

[19] Juan Louis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman,* published in 1592 in Richard Hyrde's translation, quoted in A. robin Bowes, " Iconography and Rhetoric in Lucrece", *Shakespeare Studies,* (1981), 5.

[20] Juan Louis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, quoted in Kate Aughterson, *Renaissance Women. Constructions of Feminity in England* (London and New York : Routledge,1995) 70

[21] Ruth Kelso,*Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* . (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1956) 24, quoted in Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety. Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama.* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 25

[22] Douglas, (1966), 121.

[23] On the obsession to mark the man beast dividing line in Elizabethan England, see Woodbridge, 289-290

[24] David Wilburn, "Rape, Writng, Hyperbole: Shakespeare's *Lucrece* " in *Compromise Formations: Current Directions in Psychoanalytic Criticism,* Vera Camben (ed)(London: Kent SUP, 1989) 187-189

[25] Kahn, 150.

[26] Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed" in *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* , Margret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nacy Vickers,(eds) (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 126

[27] Maria Müller. "Schneckengeist im Venusleib. Zur Zoologie des Ehelebens bei Johann Fischart", *Eheglück und Liebesjocj. Bilder von Libe, Ehe und Familie in der Literatur des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts.* (Wienheim und Basel: Beltz Verlag, 1988) 155-207.

[28] Stallybrass, 129

[29] England needed a virgin queen. Woodbridge also comments on the relation that was established at the time between Elizabeth's sanctified chastity and the providential destruction of the Armada. Woodbridge, 281.

[30] Nancy Vickers, " This Herarldy in Lucrece's Face" in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *The Female Body in Western Culture* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1986) 210.

[31] Coppelia Kahn, Lucrece:" The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity", Lynn Higgins and Brenda silver (eds), *Rape and Representation* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991), 144-1446.

[32] Kahn, 146

[33] Janet Alderman, "Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in Macbeth and Coriolanus", *Suffocating Mothers* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 137-138.

[34] Jean Joseph Goux, "Vesta, or the Place of Being", *Representation* (February, 1983) 1: 91-107, quoted in Kahn,147.

[35] Kahn, 145-46

[36] Kahn, 147

[37] Quentin Skinner, "The Right to Resist. " *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. vol 2. The Age of the Reformation* . (Cambridge and London : Cambridge University Press, 1978) 302-360. and Robert Kingdon, "Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550-1580" , in J.H.Burns

The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 217

[38] Patterson, 302-303.

[39] Kahn, 147

[40] Kindgon, 217-218.

[41] Direct involvement in an act of revenge might have associated Lucrece with unruly women or with witches, whose primary reason for making an aliance with the devil was thought to be the desire for revenge.

[42] Jane Newman, "'And Let Mild Women to Him Lose Their Mildness': Philomela, Female Violence and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*", *Shakespeare Quarterly,* (1994) vol. 45, Fall, no. 3, 310.

[43] Newman, 304.

[44] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed. Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, New York : Cornell University,1993)103-109.

[45] A. Robin Bowers, "Iconogrphy and Rhetoric in *Lucrece*", *Shakespeare Studies* (1981) 7

POSSIBILITIES FOR POSTMODERN STAGINGS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS IN A POSTCOMMUNIST CONTEXT

I.

The possibility of postmodern stagings of Shakespeare in a post-communist context is, I think, a moot question. Jameson's definition of postmodernism as a cultural dominant of late capitalism tends to marginalize East European countries like Romania which find themselves excluded from Western mainstream culture. For all that the circulation and dissemination of postmodernism does encounter considerable difficulties in this part of the world.[1] For one thing, the majority of Romanian intelligentsia is skeptical, if not downright hostile, to postmodern trends in arts and philosophy. Their position could more readily be associated with what Jürgen Habermas has called the modernist project.[2]

There is the pervasive feeling that the process of modernizing Romanian society was dramatically interrupted by the communist period. Having been but a fake or a distorted version of modernity,[3] the communist period is thought to have reintroduced a more or less feudal type of social and political relations. Consequently the task ahead of the present generation would be to take up and complete what was left unfinished before the second world war. There is a strong investment in a teleological vision of history in which Western modernity is postulated as an ultimate goal, and which makes difficult all effort at rewriting modernity. Postmodernism, understood as a

radical revisioning and deconstruction of the system of values underpinning the modern project, [4] is still a long way off in Romania. There is a reluctance "to abandon a global reconstruction of the space of human habitation" inherited from modernity.[5] Mainstream post-communist culture tends to adopt the values of Western liberal (right-wing) modernity, unreservedly celebrating the capitalist market-based system.

No homogeneity of vision and discourse can, however, be ascribed to the present period of change and "transition". Concepts such as pluralism, fragmentation, decentralization and heterogeneity, which used to be banned as politically subversive in the previous regime,[6] are beginning to gain ground. There is an increasing awareness of the significance of the margin as opposed to the center, even if alternative voices are still largely suppressed. The desire to catch up with Western culture, often determines the intellectual and political elite in Romania to accept and even adopt values which they may not wholeheartedly approve of. Such views, however, are strongly opposed by nationalistic appeals to purity and unity, to the rejection of the "decadent" Western way of life.[7] Feminism and postmodernism are dirty words, fads that our culture should best keep away from.

Theatrical performances of Shakespeare - a cultural icon, yet foreign enough to allow for daring experiments [8] - can provide a map of the cultural clashes and of the competition of various discourses in present day Romania. The paper will consider rewritings of Shakespeare in recent performances (autumn 1995). It will focus on non-canonical uses of the Shakespearean text and on the way postmodern aspects are employed as a comment upon Romanian post-communist society[9]. The paper will examine the way these features are negotiated to reconcile them with values, traditions and expectations still dominant in Romania.

II.

Not unlike the Shakespeare performances in the previous communist period, which were largely enjoyed for their oblique political criticism of the political reality, [10] the representations after 1989 have inscribed topical relevance in the playtext. Reinventing Shakespeare in post-communist Romania still means appropriating him for political purposes. In 1991 Andrei Serban, one of our foremost directors who has worked with Peter Brooks and has made himself a name in the United States, staged *The Twelfth Night* in a highly topical vein. His performance addressed "the ambiguity and confusion pervading the life of most Romanians" while still viewing "these old comedies as eternally valid"[11]. Serban's attitude towards the canonical text was of both respect and disrespect[12]: clichés of the communist jargon displaced well-known cues in the Shakespearean text without, however, altering the basic structure of the play. Costumes and mise-en-scene were wildly eclectic, with topical references disrupting a sometimes over-sophisticated and sometimes overconventional Renaissance background. The performance could be described as mildly post-modern: the acting combined a variety of parodied styles; the subjectivity of leading dramatis personae, such as Orsino, was decentered and deconstructed into a series of roles, acting out various political fantasies (from the dictator surrounded by bodyguards to the pleasure-seeking consumer of Western goods). The overall impact was that of a colourful *bricolage*, delivering a poignant political reading of the immediate political context. What was deconstructed was the theatrical traditions of representing Shakespeare in Romania rather than the text itself.

More radical alterations of the Shakespearean text occurred in Silviu Purcarete's performances. Purcarete transgressed against the "purity" and unity of the text and effected a collage combining sections from *Macbeth* with fragments from Jarry's *Ubu Roi* to project a stunning image of our former dictator. The relevance of the political subtext, which had hitherto provided the relish of Romanian performances of Shakespeare, receded in favour of a more postmodern handling of the Shakespearean text.

III.

A new trend in present-day Romanian performances of Shakespeare is to part with politics and concentrate upon the production of pleasure. Whether the emphasis on pleasure could be viewed as an insinuation of postmodernism as opposed to a previous (modernist?) period of almost exclusive concern with politics, is still a difficult question to answer. A representation of *Romeo and Juliet*, staged in the biggest hall of the National Theater in Bucharest, proved a great box office success as a result of parting with the tradition of the political reading of Shakespeare. The production went out of its way to please the public and avoided anything that could be disturbing or that could interrupt the projections of fantasies usually associated with the Romeo and Juliet "love story". The director, Beatrice Blont, felt proud about having managed to draw young people to her production and of having been able to elicit responses comparable to those recorded at rock concerts.[13] The proximity of the theater to mass culture, its possible contamination with

entertainment industry— a phenomenon that could possibly be described as postmodern — did not fail to produce considerable shock waves. While some critics hailed its novelty as a sign of the revigoration of our theater, students from the English Department of Bucharest University studying Shakespeare , were outraged at the way the performance flouted the established elitist definitions of the theater and of Shakespeare in particular. Other voices further disapproved of the "hedonist" orientation of the performance which seemed to betray and even snub at the "civic and educational" role traditionally ascribed to the theater.[14]

Another controversial aspect of the *Romeo and Juliet* performance was its casting which put top professional actors next to amateur ones, in a striking *melange* of theater and reality. This hybrid form, however, was not valorized for its "postmodern" novelty, but was construed as a strategy capable of recapturing the " unaltered essence" of the Shakespearean text. The very lack of professional skills of the amateurs playing the roles of the lovers was deliberately read as a move back to "genuine" human passion whose crude expression could cut through all the layers of "artifice" generated by a history of acting conventions. The overall aim was not so much to critique or parody conventions but rather to restore the "original" freshness and energy of young love.[15] The paradox between artifice and claims for "naturalness" was glossed over and suppressed by the prevailing nostalgia for "purity", for the "real thing" among the Romanian public and artists alike. This could be read as symptomatic of al guilt-ridden community eager to cleanse itself of the previous complicity in the totalitarian rule. Consequently it should not come as a surprise that theatrical devices and strategies, capitalizing upon a postmodern "contamination" of styles and genres, should have to refashion themselves and accommodate a demand for purity, a nostalgia of the "origin".

IV.

In September 1995 a highly non-conventional *Troupe on Barrels* performed a highly unorthodox collage in the very cultural and political center of Bucharest —the University Square. The performance mixed with gusto a pastiche of commedia dell'arte, parodied fragments from Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and excerpts from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Anthologized verses delivered in the high style of acting were jumbled with gags, Renaissance music was performed *a cappella* in costumes of shocking synthetic colours reminding the audience of video-clips on MTV. The performance relied upon strong theatrical effects produced by exaggerated histrionics, heterogeneity and contamination of styles and registers, by intertextuality and the play of signifiers. The atmosphere was at times gripping, with tragic overtones — such as the enactment of Mephisto's description of hell, transposed in choral music sung by the actors themselves. At times it was playful, apparently pursuing nothing but the production of pleasure in a genuine postmodern vein.

Unlike the representation of *Romeo and Juliet* discussed above, the collage staged by *The Troupe on Barrels* was less interested in vying with mass culture in the production of pleasure. One could venture to put this aspect down to the *Troupe's* singular indifference to commercial success as the production was entirely sponsored by the municipality and access to the performance was free. The manifest goal of the performance seems to have been to engage with heterogeneity and plurality of styles and particularly, to bring the elite theater closer to its popular traditions. At the heart of this playful experiment we can detect an educational, emancipator concern.

Apparently re-inventing medieval and Renaissance popular theatrical traditions, the troupe brought the theater (back) into the streets, or to be more precise, into the market place. Mention should be made of the fact that in Romanian popular culture, however, theatrical performances in the market place were only marginal. In a stunning postmodern spirit, the *Troupe* was re-creating past traditions our theater did not actually have.[16] No wonder that the bill of fare included Italian, English and German plays. The gist of the representation was to perform canonical authors in the interesting, non-canonical guise of popular culture. Performing Renaissance theater in the market place, *The Troupe* re-created and re-wrote the beginnings of a prestigious theatrical tradition in a foreign, displaced cultural and political context.

The performance was conceived as a carnivalesque moment that interrupted the daily life of the city. The choice of the *Piața Universității* (the University Square) as a location conferred "civic" relevance and political centrality upon the theatrical performance. *Piața Universității* has a rich "revolutionary" history: it is here, in front of the buildings of the Bucharest University, that the rebellion against Ceausescu first started, that the first barricade was organized against his militia and *securitate* troops. It is here that the shooting started on December 21st, i.e. the eve of the dictator's downfall. This was the place of the students' month long sit-in against the neo-communist government in May-June 1990 — a Romanian version of the Tien-an -Men anti-Communist protest, organized in a highly theatrical manner, with political and musical shows staged every night. *Piața Universității*, which had by then turned into a symbol of political and cultural resistance, was the major target of the miners' repressive action in June 1990. Their acts of violence

and of vandalizing the university not only put an end to the students' anti-Communist show, but also added new meanings to the place itself. It is still here that people rally whenever any oppositional action is initiated.

All events staged in *Piața Universității* smack of carnival and rebellion. A theatrical performance delivered in this place inevitably reactualizes and interacts with the traces of previous political and cultural actions. The very inscription of the *Troupe's* representation in the political geography of the town, the intertext with other practices and events staged here, has contributed to the construction of a memory of the place and indirectly to the constitution of Romanian post-communist cultural identity. Although the performance was allegedly meant to merely please and entertain passers-by, its covert political dimensions could not be missed.

The representation ended with the Prospero's speech in Act IV, scene1, "Our revels are now ended..." (146-158) and the epilogue (lines 325- 335). It was delivered by Ion Caramitru, a prominent actor who had played an important figure in the political events that took place here in December 1989 and in May - June 1990. The words "our revels" were associated with several referents belonging to different contexts: the "insubstantial" pageant in *The Tempest* that the text refers to, the popular theater representation performed by *The Troupe* and the various political carnivalesque-like actions staged in this place.

What was the function allotted to the Shakespearean text in this instance? On the one hand it was employed as a quotation, its canonical authority thereby legitimizing transgressive theatrical experiments and/or political actions. Mention should be made of the fact that unlike Marlowe's text, the fragments from *The Tempest* were not parodied. On the other hand, they were

used in a non-canonical context, as part of a collage, and were no longer treated as elite but as popular culture. The fragments were not framed, the transition from pastiche to the Shakespeare text was barely perceptible; the public crowding in the square to attend to a free performance were hardly aware of the "origins" of the texts.[17] The performance was remarkable for deconstructing the institution of the author and for erasing cultural boundaries.

For all the non-canonical treatment , the Shakespearean text itself was not deconstructed.[18] The fragment from *The Tempest* was, however, delivered as a kind of an epilog which tended to undercut all the cultural and political efforts (to be subsumed under the umbrella term of "our revels") that the performance had referred to directly or indirectly: not only the *Troupe*'s own representation but also to all the previous carnivalesque-like events that had been organized in *Pia]a Universit\]ii* were re-defined as "insubstantial pageants", dissolving and "leaving not a rack behind". Was the Shakespeare performance inscribed in a political space only to deconstruct the political significances of the latter?

IV.

The performance of *Julius Caesar* mounted by the Bulandra theater for the Fourth Festival of the European Union of Theaters was not designed in a post-modern key. It stood out in striking contrast to the fragmented, de-centered, multi-cultural and highly histrionic performance of a *Midsummer Night's Dream* delivered

in several languages by the international cast of the Dusseldorf Theater. The director, Alexandru Darie, insisted on what might be described as its "modernist" features, such as:

- the avoidance of eclectic costumes (which were all vaguely reminiscent of Roman clothes, yet being of a non-descript dark gray colour; there were two obvious exceptions — Caesar was dressed in black while Brutus was initially clothed in white),

- the insistence on symbolic depth ;

- the search for a "theme" or motif that would confer coherence and unity on the performance. The stage was bare with only two water pools divided by some reddish gravel, the stage props were minimal. The background was therefore abstract and indeterminate, meant to foreground the actors' own performances. The representation, however, excelled neither in physicality nor in a colourful display of a plurality of acting styles. Postmodern theatricality was apparently restricted to translating into contemporary theater language the uncanny atmosphere produced by coincidences foreboding Caesar's death.

The most conspicuous element of the performance was the sound track (which Darie confessed to be the major, "unifying" strand of the representation). Archaic sounding songs as well as a multitude of often indistinguishable voices suggested the presence of the crowd, which was nevertheless invisible on the stage. The device of creating presence through absence by means of obsessive rhythms and disembodied voices lent an unexpected dramatism and pathos to the performance, which otherwise reasserted traditional views on the unity of the subject. Focus was placed on the unpresentable suffering of the population caused by the manipulative actions and struggle for power of a political and military elite. If the performance refrained from overt topical allusions to present history (the acts of violence

performed during the Romanian "revolution" or during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia), this political message was conveyed in a rather subliminal yet extremely powerful way by means of the sound track.

In a talk given to the students of the English Department, Oana Pellea, a leading actor at the Bulandra Theater, confessed that Romanian actors were sick and tired of political representations of Shakespeare. They wanted to be appreciated for their craftsmanship, for theatrical art freed from politics.[19] The same trend of opinion re-asserting the autonomy and consequently the artistic purity and gratuity of the theater has been reinforced in the leading theater journal *Teatrul Azi* [20]. Romanian theater is not an isolated case in this respect, this seems to be the prevailing attitude in other former communist countries as well.[21]

The performance of *Julius Caesar* , however, has proved that not only is it practically impossible to fully bracket the political subtext but that it continues to provide a space for theatrical experiment and innovation even if this is not fully acknowledged. Furthermore aspects echoing postmodern aesthetics and/or politics insinuate themselves, even if not as a consequence of a deliberate assumption of postmodern positions on behalf of directors or actors. They make their way in the production , are instrumental in the process of commenting upon Romanian recent history, a process which is inevitably entailed by any rewriting of Shakespeare for our post-communist public.

As could be but expected, the theatrical representation of the overthrow of Caesar is immediately associated with the dramatic events that took place in Romania in December 1989. The representation text performs multiple readings: the event in the Roman history, which had already been refashioned by

Shakespeare's reading of Plutarch, is read from the perspective of our own "revolution"; in its turn our "revolution" is read and partially re-written following the script provided by Shakespeare's text. In the attempt to gear the two readings the Bulandra theater operates important changes in Shakespeare's playtext.

The performance amplifies the theatricality of power in the play[22]. The director Alexandru Darie insists on the concern exhibited by all the characters in the play to influence public opinion by means of the construction of public appearance. To begin with, Caesar's power relies heavily on his public self-fashioning. The Romanian performance actualizes and exaggerates the description of Caesar's physical weakness which Cassius employs in his attempt to stir Brutus to rebellion[23]. The actor cast in Caesar's role is shown to be fat and bold; he is brought on stage asleep (or unconscious? dying?) gasping for air and covered with a black veil. As soon as he starts speaking the veil (the curtain?) is taken off. There is nothing heroic about Caesar. His power is not intrinsic to his embodied personality but resides in the skillful stage-managing of his public appearance. The impact of Caesar's speech " I am constant as the Northern Star" (III,i, 65-75) is enhanced by having the speech delivered off-stage and amplified by powerful loudspeakers. His repulsive physical presence is thus prevented from undermining the effect of power.

In an attempt to gear the two texts — Shakespeare's playtext and that of the Romanian recent history — the Bulandra performance capitalizes on the capacity of images to deconstruct and eventually to displace the real. The dramatic climax is surprisingly shifted from Antony's speech to the previous one which Brutus delivers in the Forum in act III. scene iii, lines

13-30. In the Romanian production it is Brutus' speech and not Antony's that is constructed as a masterpiece of mass manipulation.

The Bulandra theater correctly stresses Brutus's concern to fashion the image of his act and rewrite the murder in terms that would confer on it an aura of necessity and legitimacy. This concern can be traced back to his desire to perform the crime as an act of sacrifice (II, I, 175-180) and later on to his intentions to frame Antony's speech and thereby turn it to the advantage of his own party. The manipulation of the significances of reality is not Antony's preserve alone. The presence of the latter is unexpectedly low-keyed, his speeches are deflated. The Romanian representation changes the style adopted by the majority of performances where Brutus's speech, conspicuously lacking in rhetorical sophistication, is designed merely to anchor his act in a set of values which he is confident every Roman citizen shares. The Romanian Brutus laboriously stage-manages his statement in overt theatrical terms. The audience get the clear feeling that at the very moment of publicly defining the reality of his act, Brutus is actually fabricating it. What the masses respond to is a mere simulacrum , only to be further displaced by another simulacrum created by Antony. The play seems to be enacting Baudrillard's radical postmodern vision of the present world as a hyperreality of simulation.

The stage is transformed in the backstage of the political action. Brutus and his team are shown manufacturing the effects that sway the public. The Romanian public, which has recently turned rather paranoiac about manipulation, discovers Brutus's speech to be nothing but a masquerade designed to manipulate a confused crowd. The insistence on rhetoric and theatricality in the performance, the absence of genuine commitment on behalf

of Brutus and his supporters generates the feeling that there is nothing else behind the masquerade but another masquerade. The distinction between truth and fiction is thus canceled off. The presence of the Caesar's body during the delivery of both Brutus' and Antony's speeches does not provide an objective point of reference. The presence of the body on the stage highlights the degree to which it can be submitted to manipulation as it fails to signify anything beyond the images Brutus and Antony project of it. Images thus take precedence over and displace the real.

The scene is given a further twist by the physical absence of the crowd.[24] When delivering his speech, Brutus is facing a hypothetical crowd and standing with his back to the public in the hall. The crowd could thus be imagined as symmetrically opposed to the real public in the auditorium, as a kind of mirror image of the public. The identification between the crowd and the public is driven home by the similarity between the crowd's responses to Brutus' exhortations and the "revolutionary" slogans addressed against the totalitarian system in December 1989. The world of simulacra in the fictional universe of Shakespeare's play is thus used to recall and comment upon the simulacra of our own "revolution". The resulting intertext expresses the prevailing disappointment and skepticism about the very possibility of instituting real political change in Romania.

The abandonment of hope in the future is further conveyed by casting Octavius as an old man. The Shakespearean text is modified correspondingly: it is not Antony who, boasting of his military and political experience, advises Octavius (Octavius, I have seen more days than you... IV,i, 21), but the other way round. The performance inscribes a departure from the established understanding of history as a linear progression in

which the future marks a moment of discontinuity with the present and the past. The Bulandra representation re-writes this notion of temporality in the Shakespearean text and defines the future as the return of a repressed past. Octavius' late appearance in the plot is read as the return of an obscure past. The performance thus skillfully uses the Shakespearean plot to project prevailing fears in Romania about the possibility of change as well as a sense of despair about our history whose movement seems to be a perpetual relapse into the past.

The notion of masquerade that governs the Bulandra performance of *Julius Caesar* further touches on issues related to gender identity. The role of Brutus' servant, Lucius is played by a leading actress, Oana Pellea. The representation focuses on the tenderness Brutus displays towards Lucius, within a relationship that is presented as overtly homoerotic. Lucius clearly displaces Portia in Brutus' feelings, a contest is acted out between the two and Portia is shown to be the loser. The fact that Lucius is actually played by a woman mitigates the impact of the stage-images suggesting erotic relations between two men and renders them more palatable to a very traditionally-minded public that fully approves of criminalizing homosexuality.

What should the sexual disguise at the level of the theatrical text of the representation imply? Is Alexandru Darie turning the conventions of the Renaissance theater upside down or is he elaborating on the subversion of sexual boundaries in Shakespeare's comedies?[25] There are definitely metatheatrical hints in these respects. At the same time the performance questions the dualistic views entrenched in the Romanian patriarchal society and engages in an exploration of the fluidity of gender and sexual identities. Nevertheless, as indicated above, the performance is ambiguous in being both subversive,

challenging taboos in Romanian culture, and recuperative in its attempt to negotiate these challenges to a Romanian public.

Oana Pellea is playing the role of a man who further adopts positions traditionally coded as feminine. Although denying her embodied gender by masquerading as a man, Oana Pellea recuperates her female identity in the pattern of her behaviour: Lucius is continuously being protected by Brutus; in her/his turn Lucius takes care of Brutus as a woman might be expected to do. Oana Pellea's performance of an overdetermined sexual identity can still be qualified as "the masquerade ....that women do... in order to participate in man's desire, but at the cost of their own".[26] There is no trace of the masculine woman, particularly as promoted by the egalitarian communist rhetoric, nor can one describe Lucius as an effeminate man. The sexual identity enacted by Oana Pellea is disturbingly indeterminate. One could read her "masquerade" in the sense developed by Joan de la Riviere and subsequently by Judith Butler, as enacting both the woman's "wish for the masculine" (understood as the discursive position of a subject) and the anxiety for the reprisals this would involve. Isn't this masquerade also meant to interrogate, by analogy, the "essential" masculinity of the "heroes" in the play: Brutus, Antony and Caesar? The latter perspective echoes the dissatisfaction often shown in the Romanian press with the lack of "masculinity" in the performance of the leaders of both the government and the opposition.

Lucius' subordinate position (as a servant, as a woman) goes unquestioned, yet for all its marginality, it is foregrounded and given a central position. Although Lucius' part is quite limited in Shakespeare's text, Oana Pellea as Lucius is a constant presence on the stage always accompanying Brutus, playing the roles of other servants or indirectly commenting on the events by

means of a grin or a glare. One could go so far as to describe her function as a Derridean supplement deconstructing gender oppositions, at the same time transgressing and preserving the taboos in the Romanian patriarchal culture.

V.

Postmodern features do insinuate themselves in the Romanian performances of Shakespeare's plays. The theater proves to be more recepetive to radical views than the Shakespeare scholarship or criticism. The innovating aspects are on the one hand reconciled to more traditional values and patterns; more often than not they are associated with oppositional political meanings which the performances enact and disseminate. New perceptions, however, regarding theatrical pleasures are emerging. A Shakespeare designed for consumerist entertainment is "threatenening" to displace the more serious, educational and political Shakespeare. On the other hand heterogenous, deconstructing performances of his plays insiduously undermine many of the established values, once more projecting the theater as a subversive avant-garde.

Note

[1] Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Capitalism", in *Postmodernism. A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty (New York and London : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 65-67.

[2] Jurgen Habermas. "Modernity. An Incomplete project" in *Postmodernism. A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty , 103-104.

[3] Matei Calinescu ," Modernism, modernitate, modernizare" (Modernism, Modernity, Modernizing), *Viața românească* 10-11 (October- November, 1993): 1-15.

[4] See Jean Francois Lyotard , "Rewriting Modernity", in *The Inhuman* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford Univ. Press, 1991), 24-36.

[5] Jean Francois Lyotard , "Note on the meaning of 'Post'", in *Postmodernism. A Reader*, ed. Th. Docherty ,47.

[6] Postmodernism itself was suspected of fomenting subversive action and was largely forbidden from the curricula for graduate studies during Ceause[cu's time.

[7] It is not only extremist right- or left-wing parties that have developed a nationalist discourse. Nationalist, anti-western positions have been taken by leading figures of the intelligentsia such as the formerly dissident poet Ana Blandiana, or by the major publication of the opposition, the daily *Romania Liber*l.

[8] Unlike in Germany, Shakespeare has not been totally appropriated by Romanian culture. See Lawrence Gunter, "Brecht and Beyond: Shakespeare and the East German Stage" in *Foreign Shakespeare. Contemporary Performances*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 109-159.

[9] Michael Hattaway, Boika Sokolova and Derek Roper (eds), *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 19 .

[10] D.Kennedy points out that it was only Shakespeare's time that performances of his plays were as political as contemporary East European representations. D. Kennedy , *Foreign Shakespeare*, 9.

[11] Andrei Serban, *Teatru azi* , 10 (1991): 9

[12] Andrei Serban, "Respect or Disrespect? A Little of Both", *Teatrul Azi*, 10 (1991). For a detailed analysis of the performance see Odette-Irenne Blumenfeld, "Shakespeare in Post-Revolutionary Romania: The Great Directors are Back Home" in Michael Hattaway, Bika Sokolova and Derek Roper, eds., *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 230-240.

[13] *Teatrul azi* , 9-10 (1995): 3.

[14] Dumitru Solomon, "Avem sau nu criz\" ("Is there or isn't there a crisis") , *Teatrul azi*, 7-8 (1995): 2

[15] *Teatrul azi* . 9-10 (1995): 4.

[16] Similar experiments were previously undertaken by a troupe called *The Masc* performing medieval and commedia dell'arte texts in the major parks of the capital.

[17] Most of the spectators were totally unaware about the "author(s)" of the playtexts and could only find out about them by reading a review in a high-brow literary journal.

[18] It was not deconstructed in the way German productions of Heinrich Muller deconstructed the text. See Lawrence Guntner's analysis of Heinrich Muller "Brecht and Beyond", in *Foreign Shakespeare. Contemporary Performance*, ed. Dennis Kennedy, 129-137.

[19] Talk given at the English Department, University of Bucharest, on March 20, 1995 .

[20] Nicolae Solomon, in *Teatrul azi* 7-8 (1995), 2-

[21] Marin Hilsky , "Shakespeare in Czech: an Essay in Cultural Semantics" in *Shakespeare and the New Europe* eds.Michael Hattaway et al, 58.

[22] William Scott, "Problematic Self-Knowledge in *Julius Caesar*" in *Shakespeare Survey* 40 (1988): 23.

[23] Shakespeare himself departed from Plutarch by emphasizing Caesar's weakness, thereby enhancing the negative image. See Robert Miola "Shakespeare and His Sources" in *Shakespeare Survey*, 40 (1988): 74.

[24] Another experiment of staging the two speeches on an empty stage was performed in 1979 at the Stradford Festival Canada.

[25] See Catherine Belsey " Disrupting Sexual Differences: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies" in *Alternative Shakespeare* , ed. John Drakkakis (London and New York : Routledge, 1988), 168-191.

[26] Luce Irrigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'est pas un* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), 137, quoted in Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York :Routledge,1990), 47.

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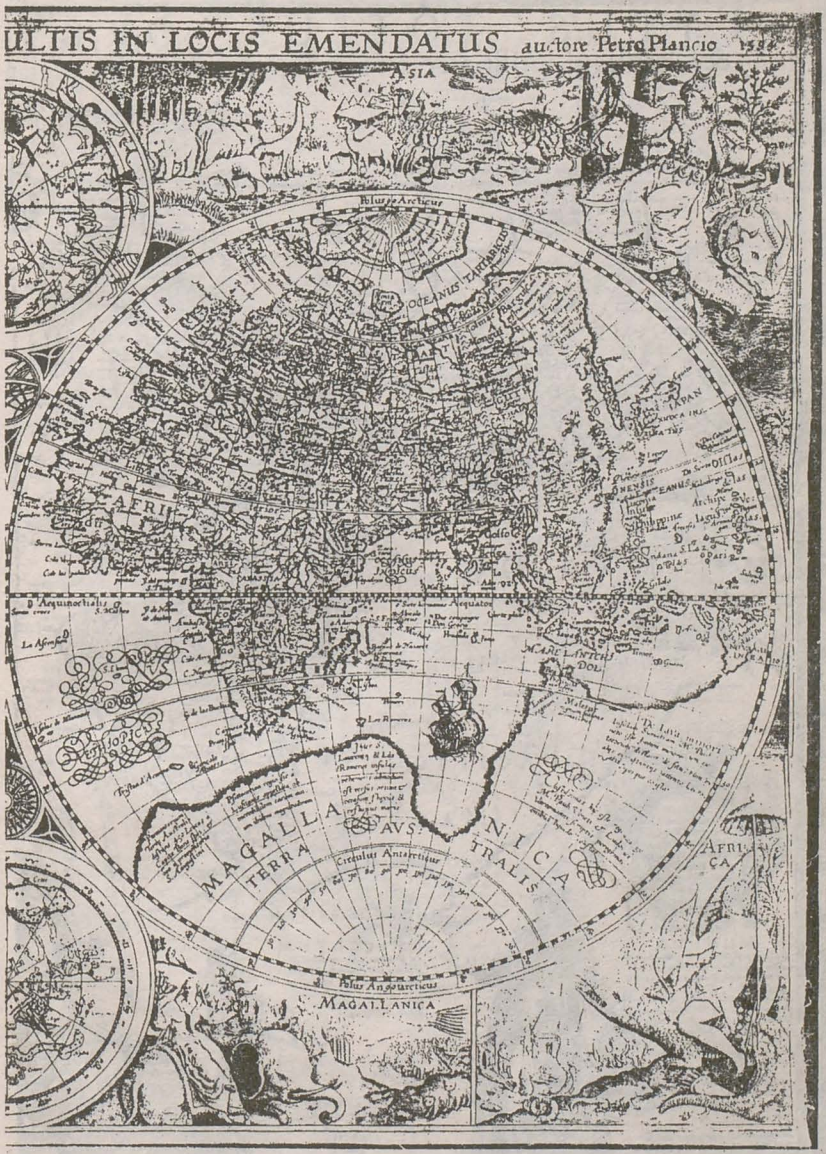
Woodcut map of Utopia from the March 1518 edition.

World map: Petrus Plancius's *Orbis Terrarum Typus, Amsterdam, 1594.*



World map: *The Christian Knight Map of the World*, Amsterdam, c. 1597, by Jodocus Hondius

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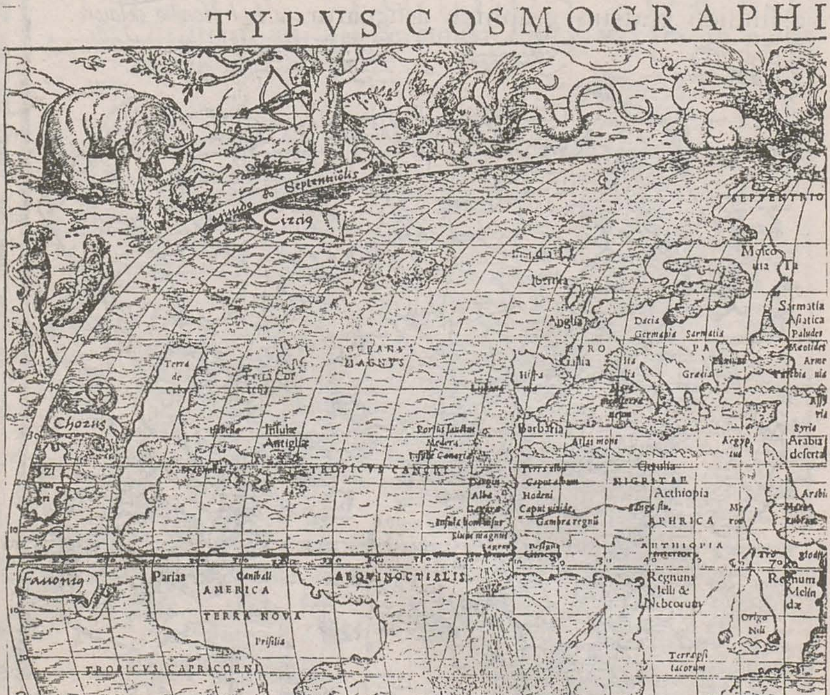

World map: Sebastian Münster's *Typus Cosmographicus Universalis* from the *Novus Orbis Regionum,* Basle, 1532, by Johann Huttich and Simon Grynaeus.

Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex*, c. 1596. The Duke of Bedford. Reproduced in Strong, *The Elizabethan Image*, no. 157.

Elizabeth I – the 'Darnley' Portrait, unknown artist, c. 1575.
National Portrait Gallery, London.

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