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SHAKESPEARE'S DEMONSTRATION OF FAMINISM AND WOMEN CHARACTERS IN HIS TRAGEDIES

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Shakespeare's Demonstration of Feminism and Women Characters in His Tragedies

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Abstract- In this paper we present about Shakespeare's demonstration of women in his tragedies. Titus converts into a temperament of carnival in Shakespeare's "Titus Andronicus." Carnivals behavior includes using disguises, being creative and ridiculing power. The culture is associated with "grotesque" humor that combines the funny and horrifying, usually with issues related to death. Titus is far from a typical carnivals character at the beginning of the play.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Tragedy, Spectacle, Carnival

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INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's earliest tragedy is a play infamous for its gore and spectacular violence. Within the play there are multiple murders and lopped limbs aplenty, but the chief victim of the play – the primary spectacle – is Lavinia. Her ill fate is first conveyed to the reader through the ornate words of Marcus, and from this point on Lavinia is seen, but heard only through the words of the other characters. Indeed, in Titus Andronicus Lavinia is the spectacle of the play, and her manifestation is created only through the words of the other characters. It is through the silence of Lavinia and her reliance on other's words – not her own – that the play is most poignant. Julie Taymore is adaptation of the play to the screen and relationship between words and spectacle changes. On the screen the words fall back into a supporting role, letting the visual horror of Lavinia's torture run unbridled, and become the main focus point.

Titus transforms into a character of carnival in Shakespeare's "Titus Andronicus." Carnival is a concept described by Michael Bristol in his paper "Funeral Bak'd-Meats." In the paper, Bristol describes carnival as a period before the beginning Lent in early modern Europe, characterized by "hedonistic excess and transgression." (Bristol 351) Carnival characters place special emphasis on food, disguise and a reversal of the social order or "uncrowning." The lower classes usually celebrate Carnival and they dismiss rules or decorum. Carnival celebrates the body and practical issues of daily "production and reproduction," rejecting official culture.

FEMINIST AND GENDER-STUDY APPROACHES

Feminist and gender-study approaches to Shakespeare criticism made significant gains after 1980. Feminists, like New Historicists, were interested in contextualizing Shakespeare's writings rather than subjecting them to historical formalist analysis. Turning to anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, feminist critics illuminated the extent to which Shakespeare inhabited a patriarchal world dominated by men and fathers, in which women were essentially the means of exchange in power relationships among those men. Feminist criticism is deeply interested in marriage and courtship customs, gender relations, and family structures. In The Tempest, for example, feminist interest tends to centre on Prospero's dominating role as father and on the way in which Ferdinand and Miranda become engaged and, in effect, married when they pledge their love to one another in the presence of a witness—Miranda's father. Plays and poems dealing with domestic strife (such as Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece) take on a new centrality in this criticism. Diaries, marriage-counseling manuals, and other such documents become important to feminist study. Revealing patterns emerge in Shakespeare's plays as to male insecurities about women, men's need to dominate and possess women, their fears of growing old, and the like. Much Ado About Nothing can be seen as about men's fears of being cuckolded; Othello treats the same male weakness with deeply tragic consequences. The tragedy in Romeo and Juliet depends in part on Romeo's sensitivity to peer pressure that seemingly obliges him to kill Tybalt and thus choose macho male

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loyalties over the more gentle and forgiving model of behaviour he has learned from Juliet. These are only a few examples. Feminist critics of the late 20th and early 21st centuries included, among many others, Lynda Boose, Lisa Jardine, Gail Paster, Jean Howard, Karen Newman, Carol Neely, Peter Erickson, and Madelon Sprengnether. Gender studies such as those of Bruce R. Smith and Valerie Traub also dealt importantly with issues of gender as a social construction and with changing social attitudes toward "deviant" sexual behaviour: cross-dressing, same-sex relationships, and bisexuality.

DECONSTRUCTION

The critical movement generally known as deconstruction centred on the instability and protean ambiguity of language. It owed its origins in part to the linguistic and other work of French philosophers and critics such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. Some of the earliest practitioners and devotees of the method in the United States were Geoffrey Hartmann, J. Hillis Miller, and Paul de Man, all of Yale University. Deconstruction stressed the extent to which "meaning" and "authorial intention" are virtually impossible to fix precisely. Translation and paraphrase are exercises in approximation at best.

The implications of deconstruction for Shakespeare criticism have to do with language and its protean flexibility of meanings. Patricia Parker's *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (1996), for example, offers many brilliant demonstrations of this, one of which is her study of the word preposterous, a word she finds throughout the plays. It means literally behind for before, back for front, second for first, end or sequel for beginning. It suggests the cart before the horse, the last first, and "arsie versie," with obscene overtones. It is thus a term for disorder in discourse, in sexual relationships, in rights of inheritance, and much more. Deconstruction as a philosophical and critical movement aroused a good deal of animosity because it questioned the fixity of meaning in language. At the same time, however, deconstruction attuned readers to verbal niceties, to layers of meaning, to nuance.

Late 20th-century and early 21st-century scholars were often revolutionary in their criticism of Shakespeare. To readers the result frequently appeared overly postmodern and trendy, presenting Shakespeare as a contemporary at the expense of more traditional values of tragic intensity, comic delight, and pure insight into the human condition. No doubt some of this criticism, as well as some older criticism, was too obscure and ideologically driven. Yet deconstructionists and feminists, for example, at their best portray a Shakespeare of enduring greatness. His durability is demonstrable in the very fact that so much modern criticism, despite its mistrust of canonical texts written by "dead white European males," turns to

Shakespeare again and again. He is dead, white, European, and male, and yet he appeals irresistibly to readers and theatre audiences all over the world. In the eyes of many feminist critics, he portrays women with the kind of fullness and depth found in authors such as Virginia Woolf and George Eliot.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we found that Shakespeare's most primitive catastrophe is a play renowned for its spear and spectacular aggression. *Titus Andronicus* Lavinia is the demonstration of the play, and her demonstration is created only during the terminology of the other characters.

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