

Dreamscape and the Carnavalesque: An Intertextual Analysis of *The Tempest* and *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*

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Abstract: *William Shakespeare's tragicomedy The Tempest and Terry Gilliam's surrealist film The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus are narratives that uphold the role of the magician/shaman in relation to art and contemporary culture. By exploring the intertextual connections between the texts, the similarities of such concepts as the Bakhtinian 'carnavalesque' and 'dialogism in language' across widely displaced literary narratives can be found. Most notably, the concept of the Bakhtinian 'carnavalesque,' as it exists in literature and language, is explored through the psychological 'dreamscape' as they are presented in Prospero's Island and the eponymous Parnassus' 'Imaginarium' By equating the dreamscape with the carnivalesque we are able to develop on the Bakhtinian notion of novelistic discourse and the role of the author as an arena or mise-en-scène for dialogue. The paper analyzes the role of masks in both texts as it relates to Bakhtin's concept, and attempts to trace the thematic and archetypal elements of the narrative which have been reinterpreted. Bakhtin and Kristeva's proposal of a dialogic relationship between texts is traced between the playwright Shakespeare and the filmmaker Gilliam in this paper.*

Keywords: *Carnavalesque, heteroglossia, dialogic and novelistic discourse, Jungian archetypes, narrative and narratives, and intertextuality*

The Psychological Dreamscape and the Mythical Carnival

Terry Gilliam's film, *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, makes a simple statement against a world that has become desensitized to laughter and spectacle: magic still exists. He shows us that amidst the labyrinthine alleys of a modern, demythologized London, a benevolent, albeit flawed, wizard continues to lend his "imaginarium," that is, his imagination, to a world which is too drunk, busy, or lost to technology to imagine for itself. The wizard and his troupe in question, however, happen to be modern interpretations of Shakespeare's Prospero, Miranda, Ferdinand, Caliban, and Ariel, all of whom are either mere shades of their former, dramatic selves, or archetypes who struggle to exist in a world that no longer wants to hear their stories.

It is against this background that Gilliam paints his Shakespearean troupe: a world that no longer values myths, magic and storytelling does indeed still have souls who are able to bring individuals away from the mundane and dismal preoccupations of the contemporary world and offer an alternative: a carnival of the imagination, a recreation of

Prospero's dreamscape in *The Tempest* within a foldable-stage operated by vaudevillian vagrants existing on the social periphery. By juxtaposing the dreamscape and the carnival, the film is able to condense a Bakhtinian perspective on the archetypes of dreams and mythology.

The twentieth-century preoccupation with subjectivity in literary criticism has allowed us to, if not anything else, be more conscious about our dreams. While the archetypal tradition in literary criticism has lost most of its proponents, the popularity of such figures as Bakhtin and Kristeva has allowed literary criticism to reinterpret the archetypal tradition along the aspects that are found in Jung and Kerenyi. Bakhtin is regarded today as "one of the greatest theoreticians of literature of the twentieth century," particularly "for his notion of *Carnivale*" (Lechte 7-8). Bakhtin's perspectives on literature come from a sociolinguistic background, particularly a propensity towards language that transcends linguistics: "the word for Bakhtin is translinguistic – the intersection of meaning rather than a fixed point, or a single meaning" and his treatment of genre requires that "we must resort to the translinguistic/semiotic dimension in order to interpret them" (Lechte 11).

The word to consider here is semiotic, because Bakhtin's works on language, the carnivalesque, and the literary discourse of the novel correspond to the Jungian consideration for archetypes in dreams and, by extension, in art. Mikhail Bakhtin developed the concept of the "carnavalesque" against the political backdrop of twentieth-century Russia: the carnivalesque is a term used by Bakhtin for "those forms of unofficial culture that resist official culture, political oppression, and totalitarian order through laughter, parody, and 'grotesque realism'" (as cited in Leitch 187). In historical terms, "a carnival is an occasion or season of revels, of merrymaking, feasting and entertainments ... in times past there were carnivals which were symbolic of the disruption and subversion of authority; a turning upside down of the hierarchical scale;" this historical carnival is coined by Bakhtin on a linguistic and literary level to "describe the penetration or incorporation of carnival into everyday life, and its shaping effect on language and literature" (as cited in Cuddon 113). The carnival was therefore a cultural phenomenon, which Bakhtin reintroduced to literary criticism as an example of linguistic dispersion. As the carnivalesque exists outside of the social and political hierarchy, it is able to criticize it and break it down due to multiple voices speaking at the same time, which Bakhtin terms "the dialogism of language" (as cited in Leitch 187).

This is synonymous with the concept of the carnivalesque. What Bakhtin calls the "polyphony" or "multiple-voices" apparent in language, is an extension of the carnivalesque. As Lechte points out, "polyphony is multiple, not singular; it includes what would be excluded by a representation of it" (10). In other words, due to the inherently critical nature of carnivalization, there exists a dialogical relationship that conveys a multitude of meaning. This diversity of meaning is possible because there are distinct and individual verbal modals that are speaking at the carnival. For Bakhtin, the literary genre of the novel is analogous to the historical carnival; therefore the novel, an arena for dialogical language, is itself carnivalesque: "the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its 'languages.'" (as cited in Leitch 192). This sort of "dialogism" between multiple voices within a single literary form or genre is what Julia Kristeva calls "intertextuality," a term that denotes "the interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it" (as cited in Cuddon 424). And it is this intertextual, polyphonic dialogue between Shakespeare and Terry Gilliam that we see in the film.

Kristeva's dialogical consideration for literature carries Bakhtin's concept of polyphonic language further by insisting that any text is an "absorption and transformation of another" and challenges "traditional notions of literary influence" as "one kind of discourse overlaid with meanings from another kind of discourse" (Cuddon 424). In other words, Gilliam is able to craft a narrative such as *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* and imbue it with multiple forms of meaning because of the dialogue he shares with Shakespeare on the timeless and historical tradition of art – much like Bakhtin's carnivalesque – which is possible due to the relationship in meaning between Gilliam's text and Shakespeare's text.

However, Gilliam carries such notions of the carnivalesque and intertextual meaning further than both Bakhtin and Kristeva. He displays it through his presentation of characters. It is as though Gilliam posits that intertextuality is possible due to the existence of archetypes in literature, a notion that echoes Jung's psychoanalytical theories of the "collective unconsciousness" and "psychological archetypes" ("Archetypes").

Jung's definition of archetypes comes from an analysis of recurring psychological images in dreams. He posits that "in addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche" – that is, in Bakhtinian terms, the monologic voice – "there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is present in all individuals" (43). The collective unconsciousness, additionally, is the threshold within which archetypes exist, and therefore they are recurrent in dreams. It is through these archetypes that Gilliam's "Imaginarium" connects to Shakespeare's island. The dialogical nature of the collective unconsciousness is due to the fact that these archetypes are not developed individually, but part of a psychological inheritance, or as "archaic remnants" – mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind" (Jung, "Man" 57).

In Bakhtinian terms, the collective unconsciousness of a dreamscape would be carnivalesque, where there is a struggle between the ordered consciousness and the seemingly disordered unconsciousness; this multiplicity of inherited archetypes within that dreamscape governs a polyphonic struggle. According to Robert Stam, who uses Bakhtinian principles for film analysis, this is done on both the linguistic and the psychological level:

Bakhtin audaciously recasts the Unconscious/Conscious distinction as one [that is] not between two orders of psychic reality but rather between two modalities of verbal consciousness. Official consciousness refers to that which social and ideological structures allow one to express openly, while unofficial consciousness expresses that which deviates from socially accepted norms ... a kind of mental carnival. (4)

Such a psychological distinction is apparent in both Gilliam and Shakespeare's texts, where the "imaginarium" of Parnassus acts as the psychological carnival and the "dreamscape" of Prospero on the island exude various mythological archetypes. We see that an intertextual connection is made possible because of archetypes that Jung characterizes as psychological, which Bakhtin characterizes as literary, and which Gilliam and Shakespeare appropriate as mythological.

This association is most apparent in the literary works themselves: in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, we witness the sort of Renaissance-Carnival that Bakhtin speaks of in his works, only unlike Bakhtin, Shakespeare's carnivalesque occurs amidst the imaginative arena of a dreamscape; a sentiment that is reflected nearly 500 years later by Terry Gilliam. The intertextual connection between Shakespeare and Gilliam is an unlikely one: Shakespeare writes from an age when classical mythology is merely intelligent fodder for an audience, whereas Gilliam shoots his scenes against a cinematic audience more versed in psychological thrillers and a glorified rendition of Freud and Jung's psychoanalyses. But what we see in Gilliam's film is the story of Prospero, Miranda, and Ariel, indeed of the entire cast of *The Tempest*, in a world where their magic is no longer relevant. It is a breakdown of Shakespeare in modern London.

In *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* we see how the eponymous "Imaginarium" is a magical passage, through a mirror, into the imagination itself. The mirror comprises the entire traveling-stage and acts as a carnivalesque – indeed one of the very first scenes of the film begins at a roadside fair – a carnival – where Parnassus' troupe is initially stationed. The Imaginarium is equivalent to Prospero's Island, which is under his magical grip and is, as he mentions in the epilogue, "the stuff dreams are made on" (Shakespeare, trans. Epilogue). The dreamscape of Prospero and the Imaginarium of Parnassus offer a carnivalesque where the polyphony of voices represented by different characters and participants are shown to interact, struggle, and ultimately engage in dialogue. As both are quite literally the dream-space of the magicians, we witness in both texts a propensity to represent something as communal and multifaceted as the carnival within a very personal and subjective space: within the mind of a single person. It is as though both Shakespeare and Gilliam reflect the Bakhtinian principle of a novelistic language that eventually shapes not only the festivals and rituals of our culture, but also the psychological processes through which we dream up those rituals.

The mythological, literary, and psychological aspects of these three perspectives are all intersecting in the play and the film with two commonalities: it is not linguistic voices, but rather linguistic and mythical archetypes that are present in all three dimensions and are able to address the nature of narratives through such archetypes.

They are able to reflect Bakhtin through polyphonic dreaming; in other words, through dream-dialogue, at least as it is represented by the narratives.

The Magician Father and the Maiden Daughter

Characters in Gilliam's film have intertextual cognates to Shakespeare's troupe, but the most notable one is that of Parnassus and Prospero, both of whom are aged wizards who have fallen from grace but continue to use their magic as a way to supply the world with myth-making. They are also both extremely caring fathers who are not above manipulating the wisdom of their magic to secure a future for their soon-to-be-sixteen-year-old daughters, a point which becomes the central driving force of the narrative. To this end, Prospero and Parnassus are both exceedingly protective of their daughters, as evident in Prospero's opening lines, when he assures his daughter Miranda that the "suffering" she witnesses of a sinking boat from a tempest he has created is all for her sake: "No more amazement: tell your piteous heart there's no harm done. . . I have done nothing but in care of thee, Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter" (Shakespeare, trans. 1.2.). Parnassus, on the other hand, shares his personal time with Valentina, his daughter, by playfully boxing with her; his over-protectiveness is represented by an ankle-bracelet he forces her to wear so that he would hear her if she is ever to run away (Gilliam).

Miranda and Valentina are both intertextual cognates of the magician's daughter, and they share certain characteristics in the beginning of Gilliam's film. Miranda's opening monologue lamenting the loss of those in the shipwreck is echoed by Valentina's concern over the man they encounter hanging by his neck over London bridge on a stormy-night who is fittingly the "prince charming" figure who acts a cognate to Ferdinand. When Parnassus is relating the story about his past and how the father and daughter pair had come to where they are today, Valentina, like Miranda, displays a youthful impatience towards her father's preaching: "I need to explain something before it's too late, one winter morning –" to which Valentina sighs "Is this going to take long?" (Gilliam). On the other hand, both characters are extremely fond of listening to their fathers' stories once they start; Miranda complains to Prospero how he has "often begun to tell me what I am, but stopp'd and left me to a bootless inquisition" (Shakespeare, trans. 1.2.). The same complaint is echoed by Valentina when her father's story about their past is interrupted and she screams "Why do you always do this? Why do you always stop in the middle of your story?" to which Parnassus merely responds "another time" (Gilliam).

The strongest characterization of Shakespeare's Miranda is in supplying the play with a female voice, but it is also a youthful voice and is perhaps the only one which has grown wary of the ostentations of Prospero's Island, as seen in her impatience towards her father's preaching. However, Miranda retains her youthful wonder towards the ordinary and the real, rather than the theatrical; she empathetically cries to have "suffered with those I saw suffer" in the opening storm; it is youthful curiosity that defines her as she continues to mistake Prince Ferdinand as "a sprite" and near the end of the play, to the shipwrecked citizens of Naples as "O wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in't!" (Shakespeare, trans. 5.1.). While Valentina is not prone to such hyperbole, she names the Ferdinand-cognate "Tony" without knowing what else to call him, and secretly keeps an "Ideal Home" catalogue with pictures of beautiful mahogany furniture and a handsome man, something that her childhood friend Anton jokes about: "do you really think you'd be happy in a place like that?" as though finding wonder in the mundane world and letting go of the magical life of the Imaginarium is ridiculous (Gilliam).

Additionally, both characters are shown to be vocal about their burgeoning sexuality. Miranda, in a rare indication of character growth, declares to Ferdinand her demand of marriage, with a note of sexual innuendo: "The bigger bulk it shows. Hence, bashful cunning . . . I am your wife, if you will marry me. If not, I'll die your maid . . . whether you will or no" (Shakespeare, trans. 3.1.77-86). We see that despite her almost frantic forcefulness, Miranda has matured beyond her role as a passive girl who relies on her father's ideas to guide her, and while she becomes subservient to Ferdinand, it is one of those rare moments where she talks openly about what she wants. Valentina, upon escaping into the Imaginarium with Tony, says that "I think I may love you Tony, we should lie here more often. Get married. Make babies." The scene corresponds with Valentina declaring her sexual liberty and consummating her relationship with Tony: "there doesn't have to always be a choice, those are my father's rules. Now we're free" (Gilliam). It is a rare moment where we see that both Miranda and Valentina have learned to express their desires and give voice to their needs in a carnival that is dominated by male figures.

The neatly-placed equivalents for Valentina and Miranda stop there. As Desmet and Sawyer report: “According to Frye’s ‘Argument of Comedy,’ while the blocks to young desire are overcome, the transgressors are also reintegrated into society, usually through marriage ... Shakespeare’s comic heroines accommodate themselves to a society in which the husband’s role replicates that of the father [and the girl] subordinates herself to the male authority of her husband” (184-187). This is true of Miranda, whose entire narrative is designed around her choice between her father Prospero and the lover her father chooses for her in marriage, Ferdinand. Shakespeare’s portrayal of Miranda concludes with the blessings she receives at the grand spectacle of her wedding ceremony, and the audience celebrates her passage from Prospero’s Island into a society that is less magical. Despite her uniqueness Miranda’s narrative ends with marriage, in a story reflective of a conservative view of female sexuality and identity.

In contrast to this, we have Valentina who retains her youthful rebelliousness and matures through the patriarchal forces that oppress her; to her father who infantilizes her constantly, she at first helplessly protests when he says: “Why does everybody want to live forever? Immortality is a bloody curse” to which she responds: “So is pretending to be a 12-year-old child! Look at me! Nobody’s fooled! I want this ridiculous thing off my ankle” (Gilliam). Whereas Miranda’s story ends in marriage, Valentina’s story tells us the implications of her fate beyond marriage.

In Shakespeare’s play, Miranda survives an attempted rape by a drunken Caliban, but her only objection to the entire episode is that “’Tis a villain sir, I do not love to look on” and it is Prospero who deals with Caliban by verbally putting him down (Shakespeare, trans. 2.1). Valentina, on the other hand, is attacked by a similarly drunken spectator; in one of her very first lines, Valentina tells the repulsive man to “get off the stage.” Valentina survives the attack, and the drunken man becomes one of the first characters in the film to lose his soul to the Devil in the Imaginarium; subsequently however, Valentina’s father reprimands her for breaking their cardinal rule to “never go into the mirror” – the gateway into Parnassus’ mind. Valentina objects “but he was chasing me” but still gets scolded; later on, when Anton, the boy-performer in the show, has to enter through the same mirror, Parnassus commends his heroism, a fact that Valentina objects to Anton: “You go through the mirror and he’s all over you. I do it once and he serves me my head on a plate” (Gilliam).

The inherent subjugation of the female voice throughout the story is not only highlighted by Gilliam, but made into the central narrative: she longs to escape for a better world after her 16th birthday, which she playfully says is “the age of consent.” However, linked to this birth date is her father’s terrible wager against the Devil itself: Mr. Nick, who acts as one half of the pragmatic, materialistic clan as represented by Miranda’s “false uncle” Antonio, and to a larger extent to the King of Naples himself. The wager between Parnassus and the Devil is one that had granted Parnassus his immortality in lieu of his daughter’s soul on her sixteenth birthday.

Gilliam exposes the inherent chauvinism in Prospero’s story by showing that the Wizard exploits the soul of the unsuspecting female child in order to gain immortality; an act of patriarchal greed that he now regrets. Prospero’s exploitation of the female gender is apparent when he uses Miranda’s marriage to Ferdinand as a means to regain his former status as the Duke of Milan. But under Gilliam’s retelling, Miranda/Valentina’s story does not end with her union with the patriarchal world of Ferdinand/Tony/Antonio/The Devil, but continues the story.

Midway through the film as Valentina learns of her fate, we see that the central conflict, despite being told through the eyes of Parnassus, is not between the two patriarchs, but between Valentina and the entire patriarchal system. Her father frantically mutters that “all is not lost, if I win you are mine again!” but by now all sympathies towards her father are lost as she says “listen to yourself – I don’t know who you are anymore. All my life you’ve filled my head with dreams! Your dreams!” (Gilliam). The last line, of the father being the life-long supplier of “dreams” to his younger daughter, echoes Prospero’s role as a magician who deals with “stuff dreams are made on” (Shakespeare, trans. Epilogue). A line for which Prospero has been exulted for centuries as a poetic narrator is immediately subverted by the presence of a voice that was silenced in the original text.

Conclusion

By placing the Dreamscape as the *mise-en-scène* of the Carnavalesque, the stories of *The Tempest* and *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* are able to reflect Bakhtinian concepts of the carnival that is associated with the

role of the author. By building on the archetypes presented by Shakespeare, Gilliam is able to retell the story of Prospero and Miranda by completing those aspects of the story that Shakespeare himself could not address. The ending to the narrative is again similar: the daughter completes her psychological individuation and is able to integrate herself into society, but while for Prospero the story ended with Miranda's integration to a patriarchal culture without due recognition of that culture, for Parnassus and Valentina those aspects of the patriarchal culture are directly addressed. Under Gilliam, the daughter is able to attain a deeper maturation where she is now a mother and Prospero the magician returns to his dreamscape; Miranda's marriage gives no advantage to Prospero beyond the contentment of a father seeing his child finding happiness. Gilliam shows that by relying on the Bakhtinian philosophy of the carnivalesque, the narrative of Shakespeare's nearly 500 year old play remains not only emotionally and imaginatively fulfilling, but also very much present to us today due to the archetypes that continue their timeless dialogue.

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