The Daughters in Shakespeare's Plays

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Abstract: This paper is a study of the daughters' choice of husbands in Shakespeare's plays in relation to their fathers' reaction. I've shown that in Shakespeare's plays his heroines in tragedies and comedies are given a freedom to choose their lovers-to-be-turned-husbands, but when it comes to seeking the consent of the parents (the father actually), in most plays, the father disagrees, and then complications arise with dire consequences for the daughter in tragedies and forced solutions in comedies. Bringing into discussion a number of plays where a daughter's choice of a lover/husband clashes with the father's prerogatives, I've indicated that Shakespeare has supported the larger male paradigm in which a daughter can be said as most happily married when her father gives his consent to her marriage.

In pursuing the topic of my paper, I had to go by an act of omission. For example, when we speak of the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare, we cannot but also think of the other types of family relationships, such as the father-son (*Hamlet:* between Hamlet's father's ghost and Hamlet on the one hand, and Polonius and Laertes on the other; between Gloucester and his sons, Edgar and Edmund, in *King Lear*), and mother-son (Coriolanus and his mother in *Coriolanus)* and mother-daughter (Lady Capulet and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*) relationships. I have omitted those three types of relationship from my discussion because the kind of reading I have done of Shakespeare and information collected, I have seen that the father-daughter relationship, particularly in the context of love and marriage, is the area wherein lies Shakespeare's preoccupation.

As it will be seen, in my discussion I have stuck to a feminist critical paradigm, and, in doing so, I had to greatly ignore the genre discussion related to the plays' unique categories. One advantage or disadvantage of putting an argument in a particular critical discourse is that the genre or classification categories have to be quite often sacrificed in order to erect the critical scaffolding, or at least it seemed to me to be the case. That is why I have not brought into discussion the aspects that relate to comedy or tragedy as a genre, because that kind of discussion would easily take out the bite from my argument. Say, for example, if we consider Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* as a singular example of a shrew tamed who becomes at the end of the play a rather unduly and unjustly dominated wife, that is one thing, but if we know that not only Shakespeare's sources derived from the native English tradition had been crowded with the

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presence of such women similar to Kate, or for that matter the likes of Petruccio as dominating husbands, and that the classical sources—the Plautine and Terence comedies—also had Kate-like heroines, then Kate's potentiality to be an individual becomes subsumed under the genre conventions of comedy. That is her generic identity overwhelms her individual identity. Similarly, the themes of elopement of the daughter, the daughter's father's being duped, or the father-in-law's property being a motivation for the future bridegroom's seeking a bride, and the pair confusions due to likenesses and mistaken identity all happily belong to the comic genre; and I have ignored this generic perception deliberately in order to solely focus on the "Father-Daughter Problems," which is the title of a review of a book Michael Dobson has recently published in the May 8th issue of *London Review of Books.*[1]

Given the context of his age, treating the father-daughter theme with greater attention was actually an obvious choice for Shakespeare, because, as Constance Jordan reports, Shakespeare must have belonged to the group of writers who were asking for redefining the role of women in society. In her essay, "Feminism and the Humanists: The Case of Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women,*" Jordan claims that the Renaissance humanists including Elyot were trying to create a positive image of women against a tradition of degraded portraiture of them that started since the time of Aristotle, who considered women as "worke of nature unperfected" (Ferguson 1986: 248), a view which later on was incorporated in the biblical myth of Eve's getting tempted by Satan, thus proving herself weak. Hamlet's now (in)famous utterance, "frailty, thy name is woman" *(Hamlet,* 1.2.146),[2] is a proof of how both the classical and biblical literatures combined as an imperative force on the Elizabethan psyche to establish the fact that women were the weaker gender, and, therefore, vulnerable to corrupt and evil influences, and that they needed protection from their male counterparts for physical and spiritual survival. Aristotle's misogynistic view and St Paul's antifeminist perception that women had little role to play in the public domain, however, held sway for a long time, and, despite their awareness about women's being unjustly treated, Shakespeare and his contemporary male writers still viewed women largely to be ideal only in their domestic subservient roles as daughters/wives/mothers to sons, husbands or fathers, who will hold the power of dominance over them (Ferguson 1986: 249).[3] Elyot puts Aristotle's definition of women in the mouth of Caninius whom he has created as a neo-Aristotelian misogynist:

> They be weaker than men, and have theyr flesshe [flesh] softer, lasse heare [less hair] on theyre visges [visages], and theyre voyse [voice] sharper . . . And as cocenynge [concerning] the soule, they lacke hardynes [lack hardiness], and in perleys [parleys] are timerouse [timorous], more delicate than men, unapte [unapt] to paynfulnesse, except they be thereto constrained, or seryd [served] by wylfullnesse:

> And the wytte [wit] they have, is not substantial but apyshe [apish]...
> (Ferguson 1986: 249)

Women's physical weakness was (un)naturally considered as a ground for their intellectual incompetence, too. So Caninius speaks, on the authority of Aristotle, that women were unfit for the public world: "In the partes of wysdome and civil policy, they be founden unapte, and to have litell capacitie" (Ferguson 1986: 249).

Jordan also points out a dilemma that the Renaissance humanists could not tackle which is that the women they were exemplifying as noble, superior, powerful or monarchical all came from the upper strata of society, a position that afforded them to be assertive of their rights. In both fiction and reality, these monarchical women behaved more like men and less like women. As Queen Elizabeth was an absolute monarch so she could rise above her sex, and so could the humanist models of women who "logically prove[d] the worth of their sex by denying it" (Ferguson 1986: 252). The humanists' ground, thereby, concerning the ennoblement of the female characters was thus compromised, as Jordan says: "The regularity with which these exemplary women are labelled 'manly' finally undermines their rhetorical purpose" (Ferguson 1986: 252). Catherine Belsey likewise, in her essay, "Finding a Place," concludes, as we will see later, that Shakespeare's heroines are most independent when they are discontinued from their traditional female roles (Drakakis 1992: 211).[4]

Another perception that we cannot ignore while developing our idea is that though Shakespeare's was a patriarchal age but in the first half of his dramatic career (1590-1603) his monarch was a queen, and a very powerful one at that. How does this paradox get resolved?

Louis Adrian Montrose deals with this question in his essay, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form," suggesting that though Elizabeth was a woman but she was more powerful than a male monarch could ever have been, and it largely became possible by virtue of her remaining unmarried (Ferguson 1986: 80). He says she was a "cultural anomaly," and thereby, paradoxically, more "powerful and dangerous," and relying on an assessment of Elizabeth by Francis Bacon he concludes that her maidenhood helped her to be different from common women in the sense that she transferred the domestic duties to national duties, and thus readily conformed to the patriarchal codes rather than violated them: "Because she was always uniquely herself, Elizabeth's rule was not intended to undermine the male hegemony of her culture. Indeed, the emphasis upon her *difference* [sic] from all other women may have helped to reinforce it. . . . The royal exception could prove the patriarchal rule in society at large" (Ferguson 1986: 81).

Montrose further points out that Shakespeare maintains the patriarchal paradigm in the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* not only in the human society but even in the fairy subplot of Oberon and Titania where the fairy queen is disciplined and made to hand over the page boy to the king: "Oberon . . . [devises] . . . to reassert male prerogatives. Thus, in the logic of its structure, Shakespeare's comedy symbolically neutralizes the royal power to which it ostensibly pays homage" (Ferguson 1986: 84).

Thus Elizabeth, in spite of all her shows of uniqueness, such as remaining unmarried, posing as the virgin queen and announcing herself to be married to England only, and addressing the troops gathered at Tilbury on the eve of the Battle of Armada, 1588, herself wearing a male soldier's tunic, was still at core a product of the very patriarchal age in which and over which she ruled. She was contained, not in physical reality, but in a cultural sense, by a male paradigm, and made conformable to fit into a male code by writers like Sydney, Ralegh, Forman, Shakespeare and others.

> This being said, it must be added that the queen was as much the creature of her image as she was its creator—the creature of images fashioned by Sidney and Ralegh, Forman and Shakespeare—and that her power to shape her own strategies was itself shaped by her society and constrained within the horizon of its cultural assumptions. (Ferguson 1986: 86)

Elizabeth nurtured England like a mother, but she was in turn nurtured, protected, defined by the male kingdom she was a monarch of.

I

Though it is not proper to seek to understand the Shakespearean texts by drawing analogy between his life—which, in spite of so many near accurate findings about it, remains largely conjectural, and thereby a risky premise to base on—and his work, it still seems relevant for our thesis to find out how Shakespeare felt about or what he did for his daughters. Having done it, we will be able to respond more properly to Shakespeare's treatment of father-daughter relationship in his plays so far as the daughter's marriage is concerned.

Shakespeare's only son Hamnet (1585-96)[5], who was born as a twin with Shakespeare's younger daughter Judith, and who echoed the name, Hamlet, the character he would create fifteen years after, died at the age of ten. So Shakespeare, the most prosperous dramatist of the nation and the wealthiest man in Stratford-upon-Avon, was left without a male heir.

Male children were obviously the more coveted ones as against female children. They assumed power and position, control and greater mobility in society. According to the rule of primogeniture the first child or often the eldest born son

inherited the father's property, and so in order to continue the family legacy a male child was looked upon as the more prospective one. In the royal context, a first-born heir-apparent was always expected to be a male. Anyway, Shakespeare worried over not having a male child which may be seen echoed by Macbeth, who, realizing that he has futilely usurped the throne for Banquo's children ("For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind," 3.1.66) asks Lady Macbeth to give birth to male children: "Bring forth men-children only" (1.7.72). Not having a male child (presumably not a female child either), Macbeth, as W. Nicholas Knight humorously says, "goes about killing the sons of others" (Knight 1977, 2007: 23)

From patrimony's point of view Shakespeare was not a happy man. He could not inherit his mother's property, who was the richer parent, because his father, John Shakespeare, had already mortgaged her property at Wilmcote to her brother-in-law Edmund Lambert. Shakespeare's father couldn't redeem the mortgage, so Lambert retained possession. Lambert died in 1587 (Dobson and Wells 2001: 250), and the property went to his son John, who finally won the suit in 1599 (Knight 27).

Shakespeare had two daughters: Susanna Shakespeare (1583-1649) and Judith Shakespeare (1585-1662). Susanna was married to Dr John Hall, a brilliant physician and distinguished citizen of Stratford, on June 5, 1607, and, as in the previous year Shakespeare had already composed *King Lear*, where the distribution of the father's patrimonies amongst his daughters is a prime question, it can be assumed that after being deprived of a son Shakespeare was preoccupied with the question of how to ensure smooth succession of his rather considerable property to his daughters (Knight 27).

By then the Shakespeares were an influential family, and Shakespeare had to be naturally sensitive about his daughters' reputation. But the first attack of obloquy came in 1613, when John Lane (Jr), son of Shakespeare's friend Richard Lane, spread the scandal that Susanna had contracted the "running of the reins" disease (gonorrhea) by having illicit sex with Ralph Smith. Susanna pressed charges in the consistory court at the Worcester cathedral. John Lane did not turn up to defend, and was, therefore, excommunicated, and Susanna's reputation was preserved as is Hermione's in *The Winter's Tale* (1609-10).

Shakespeare's younger daughter Judith was thirty-one when she married Thomas Quiney who was twenty-six, nearly replicating her parents' marriage situation. As Shakespeare was forced to marry Anne Hathaway because she got pregnant before marriage, so it was suspected that Judith's marriage was hurried because of a similar reason. Quiney was a vintner or innkeeper and the son of Shakespeare's friend Richard Quiney. Their marriage took place in February 1616. By January, Shakespeare had already written down his will. But on March 15, 1616 a woman called Margaret Wheeler died at childbirth with the child dead

too, and it suddenly came to light that Quiney was the man who had impregnated her.

Quiney was a disreputable character, and Anthony Burgess, as quoted by Knight, suggests that Shakespeare could not have been happy with such a match: "Marriage to a tavern-keeper was scarcely what Will would have chosen for his younger daughter, especially as it was –like his own—a marriage conducted in suspicious haste" (Knight 27).

Shakespeare, with the help of his lawyer friend, Thomas Greene, who was to officialise his will soon after, brought the matter to law and Quiney confessed his guilt receiving a punishment.

Thus, Knight rightly suggests, Shakespeare fought at the court to defend his daughters' reputation and discipline the offending young men who were also his friends' sons (Knight 30).

> All his fears had come upon him and the blows had come across the generation from sons of friends. But the legacy survived, with judicious alterations. Shakespeare's estate, through his use of law, was to have gone to his son Hamlet [sic]; he protected his daughters to receive it by legal means, and kept it intact for some future male heir by the reach of law through time. (Knight 31)

In spite of all the initial setback Judith's marriage was a successful one, she becoming the mother of three sons, all of whom, unfortunately, dying young. Shakespeare had no way of knowing about Judith's motherhood because he died on 23rd April 1616, even before Quiney had completed his punishment, and, fearing that Quiney might squander his property, he drastically revised his will leaving very little for Judith, and bequeathing the major share of his properties to Susanna, including the New Place (Dobson and Wells 2001: 519).

II

Apart from Shakespeare's family, where he had to be at the helm of things regarding his daughters' marriages, the Elizabethan family life was dominated by the father/husband figure. In locating the status of the family in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, Jonathan Goldberg reports in his essay, "Fatherly Authority" that King James I preferred to draw on the analogy between the human body and the family when he was defining the state. As the head was the most important organ of the body, so were the father in the family and the king in his kingdom (Ferguson 1986: 2). Working on a family/state analogy James, in his first address to the parliament, as Goldberg quotes, called his kingdom his wife and the subjects his children: "'I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife'" (Ferguson 1986: 3). Goldberg studies many paintings of noble families of the time which suggest to him that the Renaissance England viewed

family as a unit of the larger political society: "The family was understood as part of the larger world, both as the smallest social unit from which the larger world was composed and as the essential link between persons" (Ferguson 1986: 8). The same view, we note, was identified by Jordan, in her essay mentioned above, as continuing from Aristotle's idea of the family.

Marriage, therefore, was viewed not only as an institution to meet certain biological needs, but also thought of as an arrangement to bring about certain curbing effects on passion, and, further, as a gateway to gaining influence, power, and wealth in society, a view which in our essay we will show to have been fully exemplified in many a Shakespearean play. Goldberg refers to John Donne's marriage with Ann More as having been fraught with negative consequences as the marriage was not in conformity with his family values. He also suggests that Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* may have inspired Donne to risk the family's defiance (Ferguson 1986: 8). Though John Donne's life didn't get destroyed with a marriage which was hostilely received in society, "Still," says Goldberg, "his ten years of discontent suggest how closely the family and society functioned in the period" (Ferguson 1986: 8).

What Goldberg views as the position of the family being a part of the greater society and thus not separated from the ideological and political life of the time is not actually the reading of Catherine Belsey who, in the essay we followed earlier, "Finding a Place," counters that in such a view the fact ignored was that women were of a different gender and thereby disadvantaged, and she thinks this overriding was deliberate. She states that the liberal view set in with the advent of the sixteenth century which actually allowed women to propose their own choice for a life partner, was by 1660 undermined by the development of another concept known as affective family unit in which women were viewed as the centre of family life in terms of giving birth to children, raising them and caring for them. That is childbearing and childrearing became the major functions of women. Despite the fact that Belsey's essay discusses texts ranging from pre-Shakespearean to post-Shakespearean period, her argument, however, is well within our purview, as she explores the irony of the situation. Women were relocated no doubt from a position where they were dominated to a position where they apparently enjoyed greater liberty as good sisters, mothers or wives, but what they actually lost or never gained was their say in the public life. In short, they became depoliticized beings:

> Once the family is outside politics, the power relations within the family are excluded from political analysis. The position of women, at the centre of the family, is thus no concern of political theory. In consequence a new and more insidious form of patriarchy, a 'chosen' patriarchy, comes to rule there unchallenged. (Drakakis 1992: 209)

That is by an introduction of the concept of affective nuclear family women were actually undone in disguise, because on the one hand their influence on the outside world was curbed and on the other, conversely, the father/husband was privileged to dominate within the family life unrivalled. Women's freedom was therefore heavily compromised.

To show the difference between woman as politically independent and woman as domesticated Belsey compares Shakespeare's Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) with Dryden's Cleopatra in *All for Love* (1677) and says that in the difference of seventy years a political Cleopatra becomes a political nonentity in the later play: " . . . the distance between the two texts is a measure of the transformation of love in the course of the seventeenth century. The relationship between Dryden's Antony and Cleopatra is oddly domestic" (Drakakis 1992: 222).

What Belsey understands as women being depoliticized had constituted the basic reason, as Jordan reports, that propelled the Renaissance humanists like Boccaccio, Erasmus and Elyot into the quest for the proper image of a liberated woman, a woman more than a housewife, a citizen: "Political events may have contributed to the humanists' preoccupation with the notion of women as citizens rather than as daughters, wives, and mothers" (Ferguson 1986: 244).

By studying the Elizabethan domestic handbooks on love and marriage, Belsey reports that the dissenting children and the denying parents were advised to follow a path of reconciliation, parents were asked to exercise restraint unless the looked-forward to matches by the children, again mostly daughters', were absolutely unacceptable.

> But most of the popular discussions of the matter conclude that on the one hand children should not marry without parental consent, and on the other parents should not withhold consent without powerful and compelling reasons. (Drakakis 1992: 215)

Needless to say the defining parents did not include the mother as her opinion in the marriage matters of her offspring could often be overlooked (Drakakis 1992: 215).

The concept of the affective family unit actually grew out of Aristotelian anatomical view that since women were physically weak, they were intellectually weak, too. Margaret W. Ferguson, et al., point out in their Introduction to *Rewriting the Renaissance* that anatomy was held as destiny. Having the anatomical difference thus politicized the biological inferiority of women was by a subtle stroke transferred to intellectual inferiority to "privilege men over women" (Introduction XXI).

And this view naturally made women victims of unequal opportunities. Virginia Woolf states in her book, *A Room of One's Own,* that if Shakespeare had a sister

as genius as he was she would have gone insane and committed suicide, because nowhere would she get any opportunity to flourish her talents (1929: Chapter 3: 46).

Thus women became powerless, virtually losing the control on social dynamics, and they were merely biologically important as procreative agents while men held the controlling buttons. The view was that women were like nature and men symbolized culture, that is, the agents to control nature, and Goldberg supposes that the gap between nature and power created the exploitable ground for male rhetoric to work: "It is the space in which patriarchal rhetoric is constructed, the space of the mystification of power" (Ferguson 1986: 18).

The only goal set for women was to become good wives having three qualities: beauty, virtue and wealth. They must be chaste, and they must breed after marriage. (Shakespeare seems more concerned about chastity as plays like *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* manifest, and he uses motherhood merely as a concept not giving it any substantial treatment, not to young motherhood at least. Lactating mothers are nearly absent in Shakespeare.)

In an extreme case women were considered as witches or hags incapable of giving birth to children. King Lear curses Goneril so that she loses fecundity: "Into her womb convey sterility! / Dry up in her the organs of increase" (1.4.255-56).

Begetting children was thought to be a prime duty of women, perhaps, because of the higher mortality rate of children, and also, generally, because of the country's small population (Thompson 1992: 1).[6] Shakespeare appeals to the young man in his sonnets to marry to beget children to continue legacy. Erasmus said, "increase and multiply."[7]

Marilyn French, unlike Belsey, however, believes that gender divisions based on biology are scientific facts which shouldn't be challenged, or cannot be changed by the application of non-biological, that is cultural, phenomena like merit or intelligence, but she claims that the masculine principle which insists on exercising reason, control and power is inferior to the inlaw feminine principle that stresses emotion, sympathy, fellow-feeling and procreation. That is why it (inlaw) is more genuine. By coming away from the masculine principle what King Lear loses is his kingship but what he gains is humanity: "Lear moves from 'masculinity' to 'femininity' . . . He has seen through the self-delusion of 'masculine' definitions of the human, and has endured his 'feminine' suffering. . . . He remains 'feminine' in that he renounces power-in-the-world, and desires only felicity, love, harmony" (Drakakis 1992: 255-256).

Coppe`lia Kahn forwarding a similar argument in her essay, "The Absent Mother in *King Lear*," says that for a child motherhood precedes fatherhood, and, thereby, though the male authority prevails in society but still beneath the surface

lurks the "maternal subtext," which asserts itself in more than one way. Exploring the mother's self in King Lear, Kahn says, "In this reading of *King Lear*, I try like an archaeologist, to uncover the hidden mother in the hero's inner world" (Ferguson 1986: 35).

III

In Shakespeare's plays enforced marriage is treated through a dichotomy between the father's prerogatives and the daughter's resistance (and, occasionally, acquiescence).

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1590-91), Sylvia, the Duke's daughter, raves about the choice made by her father over Valentine, her choice: ". . . how my father would enforce me marry / Vain Thurio, whom my very soul abhors" (4.3.16-17).

In *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) the old Capulet, Juliet's father, after coming to know that Juliet is grudging his decision to marry County Paris, becomes furious and threatens Juliet of disowning her from his property: "An [if] you be mine, I'll give you to my friend. / An [if] be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets." (4.1.191-2)

For him his daughter should feel indebted to him for food and shelter, and, thereby, she should obey him. A feeling of having been betrayed by their daughters is also common to Shylock, Brabanzio and Lear, who says, "'Is't not, as this mouth should tear this hand / For lifting food to 't?'" (3.4.15-16).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-6), Egeus, father of Hermia comes to Theseus, Duke of Athens, "with [a] complaint / Against my child, my daughter Hermia" (1.1.22-23). The law of Athens was that if a daughter refused to comply with her father's consent in respect of marriage she was either to adopt perpetual celibacy by joining a nunnery or die. Montrose suggests that this condemnation to celibacy can be taken as an additional indictment, a patriarchal measure against unruly women in that as they did not marry according to their fathers' choice so they would not marry at all. That is the cultural authority of the male is forcing itself upon the natural body of the woman: "Theseus appropriates the source of Hermia's fragile power: her ability to deny men access to her body. He usurps the power of virginity by imposing upon Hermia his own power to deny her the use of her body (Ferguson 1986: 73).

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a comedy, where, therefore, the distressful experience of a father having to see a daughter want to marry a person not to his liking is allowed to melt into the lighter fold of the play. In *Othello* (1603-4), however, the daughter's choice, vis-à-vis the father's opposition, is worked out to produce dire consequences. Brabanzio cannot believe that his so well-loved, well-protected daughter, Desdemona, can elope with Othello, an elderly Moor.

He thinks that as in the Moorish culture they cultivate magic and spells, Othello might have used charms to bewitch his daughter: "Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her" (1.2.64).

Desdemona, anticipating Cordelia ("I love your majesty / According to my bond; nor more nor less" (1.1.91-2)), categorically explains her divided role distributed between filial love and nuptial love: "My noble father, / I do perceive here a divided duty" (1.3.179-180). She says that as her father has given her sustenance and education she owes her life to him, but she also has to fulfill her duties to her husband as her mother has done to him: "But here's my husband, / And so much duty as my mother showed / To you, preferring you before her father, / So much I challenge that I may profess / Due to the Moor my lord" (1.3.184-88).

The Merchant of Venice (1596-7) preceded *Othello* in having the theme of interracial marriage or miscegenation. There are two fathers: Shylock and Portia's dead father. One is alive and the other is dead, but their respective care for each of their daughters is dramatized through a difference in paternal attitudes between races.

Jessica, Shylock's daughter, elopes with Lorenzo, a Christian. Shylock's character is built around the traditional notions about the Jews who were hated for their religious belief as well as for practising usury. So Shakespeare exploits Shylock's character along these hated traits and makes him appear like a clown when he bewails the loss of his money as overweighing the loss of his daughter: " 'My daughter! O, my ducats! O, my daughter!'" (2.8.15).

Critic Kim F. Hall in his essay, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" has said that Jessica's marriage with Lorenzo has achieved three things: 1) Interracial marriage has effected harmony over differences, though in favour of the majority group, 2) the enemy/minority property has gone to the majority group, and 3) the female property has gone to the Christian male heir (Smith 2004: 198-219).

The father's concern over the choice of a bridegroom for his daughter is dramatized here in the form of the casket lottery. The casket trial with Bassanio, apparently open and democratic, is actually stage-managed. Because the song accompanying Bassanio's arrival hints at the idea of the necessity of getting disillusioned with the outward show: "Tell me where is fancy bred" (3.2.63). Bassanio disregards the allure of silver and gold in favour of lead.

Katherine Eisaman Maus, however, suggests in her introduction to the Norton edition, that Bassanio chooses the lead casket because of his Christian training, which has taught him the value of sacrifice: ". . his upbringing as a Christian gentleman has acquainted him with a particular frame of mind that prefers invisible over visible things, spirit over body, metaphor over literal meaning" (392).

Portia, however, grumbles: "O me, the word 'choose'! I may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father" (1.2.19-20). But she does not reject the device. The status quo, that is, the patriarchal dominance is established by disciplining the women in the play, as Hall says: "Portia's originally transgressive act is disarmed and validated by the play's resolution when these 'disorderly' women become pliable wives" (Smith 2004: 213).

Ophelia in *Hamlet* (1600-01) is under double persuasion. The Elizabethans worried about young unmarried women's falling or being trapped into vulnerable and susceptible circumstances where they might lose their chastity. Her brother Laertes warns her against Hamlet because, first, he, for his status, is ungettable for her, and, second, he may take advantage of her: "your chaste treasures open / To his unmastered importunity" (1.3.31-2). Polonius repeats the warning, clarifying the privileged position of the male, especially of an heir apparent: "For Lord Hamlet, / Believe so much in him, that he is young, / And with a larger tether may he walk / Than may be given you" (1.3.122-125).

Elaine Showalter in her essay, "Representing Ophelia," forwards three views about Ophelia: the American view, which sees the woman as nothing ("The Story of O"), and the French view which sees her as insane, because women cannot but be that, and a contemporary view that sees her as an underside to Hamlet (Drakakis 1992: 282).

Ophelia goes mad because of the double reason of meeting disappointment in love and losing her father. Her songs before she falls into the pond render a theme of a girl's unfulfilled desire, not getting her lover. Her putting the weed garlands, when insane, around everybody's neck is suggestive of the suppressed wish for marriage. But she is tragically barred from achieving her lover by her father and brother, and also by Hamlet whose situation hardly allows for any kind of romantic thinking.

Ophelia therefore is the most helpless victim of the male hegemony. Psychoanalytical studies suggest that from repression women become sick, unstable and schizophrenic. Showalter informs us that Ophelia became a model for insane women found in mental asylums in the nineteenth century. They would dress like her, speak like her and move about with a heavy heart (Drakakis 1992: 287). She refers to Ellen Terry, who debuting as Ophelia in Henry Irving's production of the play in 1878, "led the way in acting Ophelia in feminist terms as a consistent psychological study in sexual intimidation, a girl terrified of her father, of her lover, and of life itself" (Drakakis 1992: 289).

Showalter, however, has very little praise for the famous Victorian painting *Ophelia* (1852) by John Everett Millais, which she thinks is "cruelly indifferent to the woman's death" (Drakakis 1992:287).

Showalter also says that the fact of Ophelia's drowning is a symbol of female fluidity: "Water is the profound and organic symbol of the liquid woman . . . as her body is the repository of blood, amniotic fluid, and milk" (Drakakis 1992: 284).

In *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592), the attempt to implement enforced marriage fails. Kate and Bianca are two daughters of Baptista Minola. Bianca the younger daughter is apparently docile and has no dearth of suitors, and, finally, betrays her father by eloping with Lucentio. But Kate the elder daughter has a bitter tongue, and so lacks in suitors, to the much discomfort of her father. Petruccio, an indomitable young man, enters the scene, picks up Kate as his choice but, finding her very stubborn in nature, plans to discipline her the hard way. The marriage takes place, where Petruccio arrives very late to the ignominy of the bride's party, and further he is attired in the most outlandish dress. However, the marriage is solemnized, and, soon after, Kate is made to undergo physical deprivation in Petruccio's house. Food, sleep, and peace are refused to her. Out of sheer physical exhaustion, she finally submits, and Petruccio declares, "This is a way to kill a wife with kindness" (4.1.189). Kate is tamed so much that she calls the sun the moon because Petruccio desires her to call it so: "But sun it is not when you say it is not" (4.6.20), and an old man a young man because Petruccio desires her so.

Making women undergo physical deprivation was often thought effective in reducing their physical urge. One episode from the play *Othello* clarifies it. Othello holds Desdemona's hand and finds it very warm, which he takes as an indication of Desdemona's being sexually aroused, and since he has already begun to suspect Desdemona of secretly committing adultery, he does not accept Desdemona's explanation that her hand is warm because it is the hand of a chaste woman, but rather thinks that Desdemona should be put to physical deprivation to reduce her physical urge, though, as it turns out, he goes to the extreme of killing her:

Oth: Well, my good lady. [Aside] O hardness to dissemble!-
How do you, Desdemona?
Des: Well, my good lord.
Oth: Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.
Des: It hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow.
Oth: This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart.
Hot, hot and moist—*this hand of yours requires*
A sequester from liberty; fasting and prayer,
Much castigation, exercise devout,
For here's a young and sweating devil here

That commonly rebels. 'Tis a *good* hand,
A *frank* one. (3.4.32-42) (Italics to emphasize the point.)

Othello's choice of words like "moist," "hot and moist," and the words "good" and "frank" meaning now 'unchaste' and 'sexually generous' insinuate that Desdemona is sexually aroused, and the other phrases like "liberal heart" meaning faithlessness, and "sweating devil" meaning the irrepressible sexual urge belong to the common patriarchal terminologies used for calumniating women.

But the crowning moment of having a wife tamed comes when Kate delivers a speech on the bounden duties a wife must perform for her husband: (5.2.141-183).

Agreed that this speech may have been delivered on the stage with a wink of eye from Kate to the audience suggesting that she is speaking like that because Petruccio wants her to and not because she wants to, still the content of the speech is uniquely representative of the age's view of women, and Shakespeare probably was not questioning this at the beginning of his career, that is 1592.

It is a long speech (5.2.141-183), but the terms of endearment (or enslavement?) can be summarized: the husband is the wife's "lord" (151) and "keeper" (151), her "head" (152) and "sovereign" (152), one who goes through "painful labour both by sea and land" (153) to keep her "warm at home, secure and safe" (155). So in return the wife should be, shunning her shameful rebellious spirit, obedient to her "loving lord" (164). The wife should also lower down her pride ("vail your stomachs," (180)) because it is useless ("for it is of no boot," (181)), and should show—the crowning line it is—utter submission to her husband by placing her hand on the husband's feet: "And place your hands below your husband's foot" (5.2.181).

She anticipates Portia, who likewise spells out the terms of submission without the slightest tinge of irony, when she speaks to Bassanio after their betrothal is completed: ". . . her [Portia's] gentle spirit / Commits itself to yours to be directed / As from her lord, her governor, her king" (3.2.163-165).

In *As You Like It* (1598-1600) the father's prerogatives do not prevent the daughter's marriage, but circumstances have put them asunder until the reunion comes at the end of the play. Rosalind is Shakespeare's most independent heroine. She performs three things at the same time: she chooses her own mate, but as circumstances would have it, Orlando is the younger son of Sir Rowland de Bois, who was a good friend of her deposed father. So there is no question of her choice likely to be rejected by her father. Secondly, Rosalind corrects both Orlando's and Phoebe's romantic notions about love, and thirdly, through her disguise she challenges the male hegemony. The irony, however, is that

Rosalind, like Portia, requires a male disguise—a disruption, as Belsey points out (Drakakis 1992: 211) — to assert her sense of independence.

In *The Tempest* (1611) the father is much worried over finding the right bridegroom for his daughter. In *The Merchant of Venice* Portia's father is ruling from the grave, but in *The Tempest* the father is arranging the arrival of the groom through magic.

King Alonso has married his daughter Claribel to the prince of Morocco against her wish. Alonso regrets: "Would I had never / Married my daughter there" (2.1.105)!

But Prospero has selected Ferdinand as Miranda's wooer. Love occurs at first sight. Ferdinand, however, is made to do menial jobs, his training to be a good provider as the future husband of Miranda.

Ferdinand takes it positively: "The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead / And makes my labours pleasures" (3.1.5-7).

The idea is that getting a desirable wife to marry is in itself a precious objective, and that must be achieved through sacrificing the utmost. The theme is a subtle repeat of what Portia's father wrote on the lead casket: "'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath'" (2.7.9). Ferdinand is Bassanio reborn. Miranda offers to help him, but he, sticking to the sacrificial code, refuses to let her do it, which comes in conformity with what Kate in *The Shrew* indicated earlier regarding the kind of sacrifice a husband must do: he must undergo "painful labour both by sea and land" to keep the wife "warm at home, secure and safe" (5.2.153 and 155).

From Ferdinand's point of view the coveting of the bride in absolutist terms has a tinge of the courtly tradition. Ferdinand tells Miranda that he has compared her with other women, but finds that she is the "peerless . . . created of every creature's best" (3.1.47-48). Miranda in reply goes one degree higher as she says that though she has not seen any man except her father, yet she "would not wish / Any companion in the world but you" (3.1.54-55).

Then Miranda asks a very common, but in this context quite significant, question: "Do you love me?" (3.1.67) to which Ferdinand confirms: "I . . . / Do love, prize, honour you" (3.1.71-73)

Prospero, who was standing all through behind them unseen, very happily comments that "Fair encounter / Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace / On that which breeds between `em" (3.1.74-6).

Prospero, however, cautions Ferdinand about the unbridled nature of desire: "The strongest oaths are straw / To th' fire i'th' blood. Be more abstemious" (4.1.52-53). Before this he warned him saying: "If thou dost break her virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies . . ." (4.1.15-16).

IV

The way Prospero withdraws happily leaving the couple all to themselves is symptomatic of what Shakespeare desired. That is the couple should love each other, and the father should consent. Prospero later happily finds Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess.

Thus the balancing note, which as we have quoted Belsey earlier as saying, has been struck. A fundamental dictum was laid by the Elizabethan handbooks on family life where children are asked not to marry without the consent of the father and the father is asked not to be unreasonably strict.

There is also another point to note. In the case of Portia miscegenation could have occurred in the form of Morocco's becoming successful in choosing the right (lead) casket. I mean, Morocco could also feel the same way as Bassanio does and choose the lead casket. That he does not feel so is well explained, but it can also be seen as a shrewd twist of plot in saving Portia from the embarrassment of going for a cross-racial marriage which he (Shakespeare) later on shows in *Othello* to be so potentially disastrous for everybody concerned. Again, in keeping with the status quo in which the Christian interests must be served, Jessica, a Jewish daughter is allowed to go in for conversion, but Portia, a Christian daughter, is saved from it by having Morocco not able to choose the lead casket. The Spanish Aragon also fails, is this because he is a Catholic, moreover a Spanish Catholic?

Yet another point to note is the differential treatment given to comic and tragic heroines. Portia acquiesces to the arrangement of her match fixed by her (dead) father as much as Ophelia does obey her father and brother in denying her match. Portia is happily married, but Ophelia goes insane and dies heart broken. Again Shakespeare's tragic heroines suffer more often than not for obeying their parents or not obeying them, in both cases their choices equally bring disastrous consequences. On the other hand Hermia and Jessica disobey their fathers but they are not punished because they are comic heroines. For the same reason Portia is rewarded for obeying her dead father, and so is Miranda for obeying her live father. On the other hand, Cordelia and Desdemona suffer for disobeying their fathers but Ophelia suffers for obeying, all because they are tragic heroines.

Shakespeare's comedies speak of harmony, and his tragedies of disharmony. What is easy in comedy takes on a 'to be or not to be' dilemma in tragedy.

V

One fact to bear in mind is that Shakespeare in depicting his female characters was originally constrained by the fact that on the Elizabethan stage women's roles were played by young boys whose voice did not yet break. In *The Merchant of Venice* Jessica refers to this fact as she prepares to escape her father's house in

the guise of a boy: "Cupid himself would blush / To see me thus transforme`d to a boy" (2.7.38-39).

When in *As You Like It* Rosalind disguises herself as Ganymede, and then as Rosalind (not in guise though), she becomes a boy-turned-girl-turned-boy-turned-girl character thus imposing a lot of arduous skills on the young boy-actor who performed the role.

There is no way to decide how far did this stage fact affect Shakespeare in creating the female characters, but it is because of this convention that Shakespeare could use transvestism so successfully as a device in his plays. This also makes way for a discussion on the prevalence of homoeroticism in Shakespeare's plays, which, however, is beyond the purview of the present paper.

Notes

1 Pp. 10-11. This is a discussion of a book named *The Lodger: Shakespeare in Silver Street* by Charles Nicholl (London: Allen Lane, 2007). I happened to come across this review well after I had finished writing this present essay. The thrust of this essay, however, is to review the author's discussion of Shakespeare's days at the Silver Street and thus relates to my essay only scantily.

2 All quotations from Shakespeare's plays refer to *The Norton Shakespeare.* Stephen Greenblatt et al, eds. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.

3 Though these views were common in most Renaissance literature, we can still quote from Jordan for a summing up of the issue: "It would be difficult to overestimate the support Renaissance misogynists derived from Aristotle. His notion of women as fundamentally inferior to men underlay the arguments of most learned treatises limiting the activities of women to family life. His logic is circular but it was rarely rejected on this account. He derives this doctrine of the subordination of women from his belief that they are morally weaker than men, but he in turn derives this notion of moral weakness—which he correlates with such physical traits of the female as smallness of size, softness of flesh, and need for sleep—from women's subordinate place in the political economy. Despite the obvious flaw in this reasoning, commentators were generally reluctant to challenge Aristotle's conclusions, which they saw repeatedly corroborated in scripture, notably in Genesis where Eve's transgression institutes the subordination of wives in accordance with the will of God, and in St Paul's epistles where women are forbidden to speak in public (especially 1 Tomothy 2:11-12)." (Ferguson, et al. 1986: 249)

4 Belsey in Drakakis 1992: 211: "In Shakespearean comedy women literally 'personate masculine virtue', with the effect of bringing about reconciliation and integration, but it is on the grounds of their discursive and subjective discontinuity that they are presented as able to do so."

5 Many historians call him Hamlet. *Oxford Companion to Shakespeare,* Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: 418), enters 'Hamlet' in parenthesis beside his name.

[6] In the year Shakespeare was born, the birth rate of children in Stratford was about sixty every year. The child mortality rate in England at the time was around thirty percent to their first birthday. In England the population increased from 2.2 million in 1545 to 4.2 million in 1603. John and Mary Shakespeare had four sons and four daughters. Only one of Shakespeare's four sisters survived childhood, and his three younger brothers though strong did not outlive him. See Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 1.

[7] Forgotten where I have read it. Probably in some handbook on Humanism.

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