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From Subservient Reticence to Uncontainable Defiance: The Rendition of Ophelia in the Adaptations of Hamlet by Olivier, Branagh, and Almereyda

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Abstract

Ophelia in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (2004) is a potent discursive site whose interpretive and critical valences have been salvaged through various adaptations of this play. Through the utilization of critical insights of critics, such as Jacques Lacan (1977), Elaine Showalter (1985), and commentators like David Leverenz (2004), Bridget Gellert Lyons (1977), and Philip Armstrong (1996), the study identifies Ophelia's schizophrenic characterization, her reminiscences of the past, and her representation through the play's iconographic values as the negotiable features for taping into Ophelia's multi-layered characterization. The study chooses Laurence Olivier's adaptation (1948) as the more theatrical rendition of the play next to two more modernized and experimental adaptations done by Michael Almereyda (2000) and Kenneth Branagh (1996) to discuss its identification of these discursively potent features in Ophelia's adapted renditions. While utilizing its main critical insights, the study would also use the interpretive readings of commentators, such as Amanda Rooks (2014), Jessica Maerz (2011) and Gulsen Teker (2006) on the cinematic and literary significance of each of the selected adaptations in the continuum of the adaptations done on *Hamlet.* In the study, it would be argued that although none of the adaptations could deny the patriarchal dominance over Ophelia, the more experimental ones by Branagh and especially Almereyda do manage

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to tap into the ambivalent points of resistance which Ophelia's characterization could create against this dominance. These ambivalent points expose the incomplete nature of strategies which are adopted by the patriarchy in containing and othering figures such as Ophelia.

Keywords: Hamlet, Ophelia, Almereyda, Branagh, Olivier

Introduction

Among the works that have been targeted for being a potent site of having adaptive and appropriative elements, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (2004) has a canonical standing. What places *Hamlet* at the centre of the twentieth-century literary canon is the influence of Freud and theories of psychoanalysis. Among the play's characters, Ophelia is psychoanalytically the most identifiable and resonant of all Shakespeare's heroines. Her iconic status is evidenced in the proliferation of Ophelia's adaptive renditions found in many cinematic productions. Each production tends to tap in one or a series of this character's psychological and behavioral features. Although she is conventionally regarded as the feminine repressed subject, her tapped and even untapped features cause her to acquire her reticent but effective resilience against the patriarchy, and as a result surprise modern readers. With this acknowledgement in mind, it needs to be emphasized that no authentic production could disregard Ophelia's repression under the rule of the patriarchy at the expense of highlighting her resilience.

Ophelia's schizophrenia, her ambivalent references to the past, and the iconographic values with which she is represented comprise the key thematic consistencies among almost all *Hamlet*'s cinematic adaptations. Therefore, in the study's first and second parts entitled "Ophelia's Schizophrenia: The Interpersonal Site for the Affirmation and Disruption of the Patriarchy", and "Ophelia's Drowning: The Depiction of Femininity as Both Lacking and Creating the Phallic Lack", aspects of her femininely conventional and more uncontainable schizophrenia would be studied. In "Ophelia's Gaze into Memory: The Impossibility of the Absolute Mastery over the Past", both Ophelia's passive and interpersonal weaving into the past would be discussed. Finally, in the last part – "Ophelia's Iconographic Values: Potent Sites for Simulated and Ambivalent Impregnations" – both the conventional and ambivalent ways with which Ophelia is represented through iconographic values would be reviewed.

The aforementioned thematic consistencies could be ideally studied in adaptations done by Laurence Olivier (1948), Kenneth Branagh (1996) and Michael Almereyda (2000). The reason for choosing these three particular adaptations is due to the unique approach of each adaptation towards the play. While Olivier's adaptation tends to remain theatrical and represent more conventional features of Ophelia's characterization, adaptations done by Branagh and Almereyda are more cinematic, and tend to delve into more untapped features of Ophelia's dramatic comportment. Also, while Branagh's adaptation observes the historical elements more, Almereyda's adaptation sets the play in quite contemporary and millennial milieu.

It should be noted that adaptations by Branagh and Almereyda emphasize the challenges which patriarchy could create for itself and suppress within its workings. In materializing this emphasis, these two adaptations do not turn the play – and in turn Ophelia – into a universal mouthpiece of either feministic rebellion or feminine reticence. By putting the rebellious nature of the play and Ophelia in an ambivalent position, Almereyda and Branagh facilitate the emergence of Ophelia's latent potentials without rendering this character in a one-sided manner. Such adaptations are in categorical contradiction with Laurence Olivier's theatrical and categorically loyal and unproblematic adaptation of the original, and therefore, they depend upon the original more tangentially. In their tangential dependence on the original, adaptations done by Branagh and Almereyda observe a longer 'distance' from the play itself. As Julie Sanders (2006) comments on the issue of distance which exists between adaptations and original works:

> *The distance between the poet's act of appropriating a given text or theme and his or her own intellectual product and property can be much smaller: the extent to which his matière is given, the extent to which source, genre, plot patterns, topoi, and so on are pre-ordained is much greater. (p. 34)*

In adaptations such as Olivier's with small 'distance' with the original works, fidelity to the original is observed. Such small distances could not identify and work the aesthetic challenges and potentials that need to be reworked and interpreted by adaptors; the challenges and potentials which are rife in Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* especially in its characterization of Ophelia. The longer

adaptation distances of the movies by Branagh and Almereyda indicate a "treacherous, textual, multifaceted, non-teleological and circuitous return" to the text rather than abiding by a linear and symmetrical imitation of the original text (Sanders, 2006, p. 65). In such a 'return', these more experimental adaptations develop their uniqueness in correspondence to the original work without dishonoring their dependence to it.

The study uses insights of critics, such as Jacques Lacan (1977), Philip Armstrong (1996), David Levernez (2004), Bridget Lyons (1977) and Elaine Showalter (1985) to discuss the schizophrenic resilient nature of Ophelia's subject position in the selected adaptations. These critics, next to the critical insights of commentators on the very selected adaptations, such as Gulsen Teker (2006), Amanda Kane Rooks (2014), Allesandro Abbate (2004), and Jessica Maerz (2011) discuss the resilient and uncontainable affinities in Ophelia's rendition in two of the more modernized adaptations of the play; the discussion which would attest the existence of the profundity of Ophelia's untapped potentials as a rich discursive site in the play.

Ophelia's Schizophrenia: The Interpersonal Site for the Affirmation and Disruption of the Patriarchy

According to the Deleuzian reading schizophrenic feelings de-territorialize normal discourses of psychoanalysis and make situating proper human subject within these discourses impossible. He believes that such feelings demonstrate the existence of an unconscious investment which is distinct from conscious investments coexisting with them (Wolfrey et al, 2002, p. 88). Such ambivalence between conscious and unconscious turns a subject into a schizophrenic subject, invalidates his/her voice through making it non-exclusive to him/her, and turns the subject into a blank space. In correspondence to schizophrenic feelings and readings, Leverenz (2004) in "The Woman in *Hamlet:* An Interpersonal View", writes: "Schizophrenics reveal the tragic variety of people whose voices are only amalgams of other people's voices, with caustic self-observation or a still more terrifying vacuum as their incessant inward reality" (2004, p. 124). In his opinion, almost none of schizophrenics' utterances – and consequently the major proportion of their voices – belong to the subject, and they are the resultants of 'amalgams' of other

voices. That is how they turn into malleable blank spaces for others. Such an understanding of schizophrenia makes schizophrenic subjects silent and oppressed and obliterates their individuality categorically (Showalter, 1985, p. 90). That is why critics such as Leverenz (2004) believe that Ophelia's schizophrenic madness does not come from her self-contained desires, but has its roots in "interpersonal falsities and expectations that represses her feelings and leave them unacknowledged" (2004, p. 129). In this sense, her 'interpersonal' madness turns only into a dramatic role which can not be read through conventional psychoanalytic models since this madness depicts multitude of voices within its constitutive components.

Olivier's adaptation of the play depicts Ophelia's interpersonal madness masterfully. In the two sequences where Ophelia's madness is depicted, Ophelia represents no sense of constancy, is hailed in the abstract role of a space that is only showing others' mischief and tyrannies and as a result is turned into a bland enunciator of others' feelings and voices. According to Leverenz (2004), that is the exact role of Ophelia in the play; she favors abstract and interpersonal values through her rote practices and shows no sense of control on her behavior, voice, looks and movements. In one part of the play, Laertes even commands Ophelia like this: "And, sister, as the winds give benefit And convoy is assistant, do not sleep, but let me hear from you" (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 20). In obeying such commands, and depriving herself of sleep as a natural requirement of the body, Ophelia gives preference to being a good sister – which is a value defined arbitrarily and abstractly by Laertes – than heeding for her basest necessities; let alone desires and preferences.

In contrast to this reading of Ophelia as the blank space for reflecting others' voices and desires, Leverenz (2004) maintains that although Ophelia, in remaining a reticent and obedient figure in patriarchal power structure of the play, reflects others' interpersonal desires and becomes complicit in the patriarchy, she reflects a "collage of voices" about the presence of sensuality and absence of faithfulness in the society of the time (p. 132). In this sense, she exposes contradictions of the represented voices within her without exposing her feelings. The only feeling that she reflects is a general sense of sorrow and sadness. This sadness has the power to beautify everything, and in doing that, make one extracting the original connotation of even painful episodes and transpirations – and fathoming

Ophelia's motivation behind such beautification – impossible. That is why Laertes comments on Ophelia that "Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself, She turns to favour and to prettiness" (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 107).

In adaptations by Branagh and Almereyda Ophelia's madness and schizophrenia are represented in a more disruptive and nomadic manner. In Branagh's adaptation, Ophelia shows her rage in vengeful cries and even assaults Claudius with a lewd and obscene gesture. By continuing this gesture in a very explicit manner and accompanying it with analeptic remarks and flashbacks, the adaptation allocates some instances of individuality and personal remembrance to Ophelia not for emphasizing her individuality, but for exposing the confusion, disruption and ambivalence of her madness and schizophrenic voice. It is as if the adaptation wants to turn Ophelia to a mandated and sanctioned enunciator, whose authenticity and comments on agonies, betrayals and repressions of the time are materialized through vivification of her disruptive lack of belonging to her individuality. In Branagh's reading of Ophelia, these instances of personal remembrance and lewd gestures are testimonies of the ways with which Ophelia as a seemingly blank space exposes the manipulative and contradictory trends and voices of others. In doing this, Ophelia's individuality as an independent potent figure is not materialized, and the audience is faced with a figure who is not anchored to any particular of the past, and has molecular and schizophrenic references to it.

The same instances of transient, nomadic and molecular individuality is evident in Almereyda's adaptation as well. In this version, Ophelia foreshadows her drowning vaguely, and publicly accuses Claudius with her uncontrollable shrieks. Almereyda's version utilizes foreshadowing and the uncontrollable shrieks for giving Ophelia an ambivalent and shattered individuality. In the scene where Ophelia foreshadows her drowning, she fancies the idea of getting rid of the patriarchal discourse by killing herself. Yet her subsequent and perpetuated presence in the scene shows the patriarchal tyranny and repression which do not even give her the luxury of devising her presence or absence on the scene in accordance with her own terms. Any kind of disruptive agency in her individuality – which was formerly materialized through her public accusing of Claudius, and through her drowning fancy – becomes transient, and could not help her fulfill her wish of attaining full control on her haphazard and mentally schizophrenic train of thoughts. Her thoughts

are too rife with the thoughts and agencies of others to be under her control.

Apart from the foreshadowing of the drowning episode, Almereyda's adaptation utilizes Ophelia's direct insult of Claudius as another instance with which Ophelia's repressed, yet disruptive individuality could be represented. In this scene, although the adaptation does not accompany her rage and shrieks with personal flashbacks and lewd gestures (which have been implemented in Branagh's version), it does give Ophelia a personal sense of hatred and disgust toward Claudius. As Rooks comments, in this adaptation, "Ophelia demands acknowledgement: She struggles violently against a security guard, and glares defiantly at Claudius, attempting to lash out at him. […] Viewers are actually encouraged to be stunned more by Claudius's stifling of Ophelia's voice as he covers her mouth with his hand, to avoid public embarrassment" (2014, 480). This hatred has not been allocated with any single and clear-cut motive. As a result, Ophelia turns into a disruptive element for exposing patriarchy through her individuality; the kind of schizophrenic individuality which is motiveless, disruptive, nomadic and molecular, and does not even have the ultimate ability for getting rid of the patriarchy's dominance and amalgams of voices. The disruptive nature of Ophelia's individuality comes from her motiveless and vague tendency to expose that the workings of others' voices – all of which belong to patriarchal figures – have constituted the major proportion of her voice and identity, and have crushed the actualization possibility of her most basic and the most intimate fancies.

Ophelia's character is a schizophrenic one that represents a collage of impersonal affinities and voices. While Olivier's adaptation materializes a theatrical and unproblematic reading of the character, and emphasizes the manipulated and reticent nature of schizophrenia in her, Branagh's and Almereyda's readings of Ophelia acknowledge the efficiency of her hectic personal feelings in at least exposing the workings of the interpersonal voices which have made Ophelia voiceless in the very first place. These hectic personal feelings do not give her any motivated individuality, yet their masterful representations in adaptations done by Branagh and Almereyda show how both of these adaptations have turned this character as the expositive voice against the patriarchy which repressed her in the very first place. In presenting this kind of Ophelia(s), the adaptations exercise their uniqueness and, while acknowledging her repressed and defined position in the

patriarchy, do not fashion the character into either a reticent or a rebellion entity. Such fixed readings would have been "based on ideological binaries and [would not have represented] interdisciplinary contextualism of true Ophelia; [an Ophelia] who is cubistic, has multiple and conflicting perspectives and speaks more than the sum of all her parts" (Showalter, 1985, p. 91). In order to continue delving into Ophelia's 'cubistic' and schizophrenically 'conflicting perspectives', the study will turn now to the drowning scene, one of the key scenes in *Hamlet.* By doing this, the study would identify how the chosen adaptations treat Ophelia's femininity in this scene as being lacking in itself, and as the source of lack and disorganization in the play.

Ophelia's Drowning: The Depiction of Femininity as Both Lacking and Creating the Phallic Lack

It is believed that the drowning scene in *Hamlet* plays a significant role in identifying the Elizabethan regard toward women's nature in his plays, which is repressed, leaky, incoherent and lacking. In the play, Hamlet always regards the feminine side in himself as the cause of his whorish hesitance and chastises it in couple of occasions openly. In one occasion, he says, "O, vengeance! Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave, That I, the son of a dear father murder'd, Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words, And fall a-cursing, like a very drab, A scullion!" (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 59) At the same time, Laertes also regards his tears feminine and irrational and wants to get back to his masculine dryness immediately. That is why he refers to crying as a "folly" and the sign of "shame" and being a "woman": "Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet It is our trick; nature her custom holds, Let shame say what it will: when these are gone, The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord: I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze, But that this folly douts it" (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 115). Such observations, alongside with other conventions of female insanity, make water, immersion, drowning and submersion feminine.

In Shakespeare's time, melancholy in women – coupled with the mentioned conventions of insanity – was regarded as more innate characteristics and tendencies than being imaginative and intellectual. In the concerned adaptations of the present study, Olivier's version does abide by this common belief. Olivier represents

Ophelia on the basis of aforementioned conventions and in the drowning scene, she is depicted as this beautiful object whose death should even be more beautiful and sublime, and should not represent any instance of disturbance in the materialized beauty of the scene. In this adaptation, Ophelia's "character, madness, and death are exploited with the intention of creating a lyrical effect; she is not a speaking subject but an object to-be-looked at. That is why the acting style and mise en scène still reveal in Ophelia only the lyricism of her beauty, madness, and death" (Teker, 2006, p. 114). Furthermore, the very moment of her death is not depicted and the audience is only informed of this tragic incidence through Gertrude's serene and poetic voice over which goes as follows. Note that in this voice over, apart from beautifying the drowning scene, Gertrude introduces Ophelia as a 'creature native' to 'distress' and lack, and therefore, hails her within quite conventional and patriarchally-defined feminine role:

> *There is a willow grows aslant a brook, that shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream; there with fantastic garlands did she come of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples that liberal shepherds give a grosser name, but our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them: There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke; when down her weedy trophies and herself fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide; and, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up: Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes; as one incapable of her own distress, or like a creature native and indued unto that element: But long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with their drink, pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death. (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 114)*

In Olivier's theatrical rendition of the play, the beautified lack and insanity remain restricted to Ophelia as such a 'creature'. While Olivier represents the drowning scene conventionally and without any challenge – and even beautifies the scene more than Shakespeare's play – adaptations done by Branagh and Almereyda problematize this scene radically, and materialize the interpretive latent potentials of this seemingly conventional representation of femininity in *Hamlet.* Although all of the three adaptations observe analeptic references to the scene, Branagh and

Almereyda play with the exact positioning of the drowning scenes in the plot structure of their movies, and in this sense, mock the significance of their analeptic references to the drowning scene. In Almereyda's adaptation, the drowning scene is represented after Gertrude's curt report of the drowning and as a result, has its dramatic effect on the audience proleptically and not analeptically. On the other hand, Branagh does not represent the drowning scene (except showing Ophelia in submergence with water very briefly) and only refers to it through Gertrude's remarks. As Jessica Maerz notes, these remarks

> *leave the audience in considerable doubt as to the truth of Gertrude's story. A strong impression is created that Ophelia may indeed be another helpless victim of the state apparatus of Denmark, and that Gertrude's speech may just be an official metonymy invented to cover up the fact that her treatment was far worse than her so called madness. (2011, p. 138)*

This 'official metonymic cover up' shows the menace – and not a feminine melancholic kind of beauty – in Branagh's rendition of the Ophelia's death. In the audience's mind, this menace alongside the abrupt elimination of the drowning scene could be uneasily coupled with Ophelia's "sudden body movements and jerks" earlier in the adaptation, attesting her reaction to her abrupt oppression and imprisonment; the oppression and imprisonment which do not even tolerate the representation of her death scene, and signify Ophelia "being denied, used, abused, misunderstood, and forbidden from love and pleasure" (Teker, 2006, p. 118).

Compared to Olivier's conventional dramatization of the scene, such treatments of the drowning scene in these two more modernized and less theatrical adaptations are coupled with the lack of conventional elements in Ophelia's drowning scene. Branagh eliminates the scene and although, claiming to be a full text version of the play, leaves the details of this particular scene to the audience's imagination. In the case of Branagh, Teker (2006) believes that "by refusing to show her dead body on the screen, he seems to be undermining those interpretations that read her suicide and death as signs of her defeat, her giving in to the overpowering patriarchal order or her acceptance of ultimate passivity and silence. Branagh's Ophelia is only reportedly dead" (p. 118). This 'reportedly dead' silence is a more active and resilient conceptualization of Ophelia's death than appropriating it

through the beautiful, courtly and tamed conventions of the patriarchy; the very conventions which are utilized in Olivier's rendition of the play.

When it comes to Almereyda's representation of the drowning scene, we do not see the presence of flowers and other 'conventions of female insanity' and instead, Ophelia's collection of Hamlet's tokens is represented floating on the water. As Amanda Kane Rooks believes Almereyda's *Hamlet*

> *repudiates the tendency to focus on the aesthetic import of Ophelia's beauty, death, and madness, as well as the inclination to position these elements as central to her characterization. Rather, the films representation of Ophelia and her death seems to engage a more decisive and astute transmission of protest and resistance against this character's objectification than can be distinguished in other more conventional films. (2014, p. 477)*

Unlike Olivier's adaptation, in Almereyda's version, Ophelia is not objectified, and 'the aesthetic import' of all aspects of her characterization is undermined. As a result, it is emphasized that the drowning is intentional and suicidal, and is committed in a mundane, conventionally non-feminine and unromantic setting. Even before this scene, it is deducible that Ophelia's death in Almereyda's film is not only deliberate, but also undoubtedly premeditated. Ophelia's reading taste indicates her macabre existential considerations long before the onset of this scene as we see a copy of the Eastern Spiritualist text *On Living and Dying*. In another scene, she actively daydreams about her suicide, and shows agency in having this daydreaming. As Rooks believe, Almereyda's Ophelia is but the "pale, fragile, silent and dead" Ophelia of other more conventional adaptation (Rooks, 2014, p. 483).

The reason behind such problematization of the drowning scene in the more modernized adaptations can be analyzed through Jacques Lacan's reading of Ophelia (1977). According to Lacan (1977), Ophelia is the play's "object a" and can not be regarded as the Other. This object a is something for yearning of the male subject, and this yearning makes this subject function and be hailed in the fantasy of desire. In creating this yearning, Lacan (1977) believes, object a deprives the subject of his totality, does not satisfy anything, and through its fetishistic and perverse nature only makes the subject realize the menacing absence of the possibility of

having the ultimate phallic fulfillment through object a . As a result, the object a is lacking, but this lack is not due to its innate nature (e.g. for its feminine nature). This lack has a phallic nature since it deprives the desiring male subject to experience totality. In this sense, object a becomes entrapped in the phallic enclosure. The object a generates the concept of lack and absence through making the subject abruptly embarrassed and humiliated. This humiliation is rendered by the vivification of the subject's failure in attaining the object a and more importantly phallus (Lacan, 1977, p.16).

According to Lacan, due to her irrepresentable and phallic nature, Ophelia can not be properly represented in the "symbolic register" smoothly (1977, p. 38). With this in mind, the unconventional treatment of the drowning scene could be beautifully interpreted through a Lacanian perspective in Almereyda's and Branagh's adaptations. Both adaptations insert abruption in their depiction of the scene; the very ingredient necessary for embarrassing and humiliating the subject, in this case Hamlet. By representing the result of the drowning mundanely (Almereyda) and eliminating it completely (Branagh), both adaptations tend to get away from "Olivier's Pre-Raphaelite conception of the scene, [which] intends to represent off-stage and irrepresentable concepts symbolically" (Sanders, 2006, p. 152).

In contrast to Olivier's romantic exaltation of Ophelia's drowning, Almereyda's and Branagh's mundane and eliminatory treatments of this scene work on Hamlet's "subjective and pathological disorganization, abruption, humiliation and irruption" through having Ophelia as a lacking phallic figure in his life (Lacan, 1977, p. 22). Read through the Lacanian lens, the manipulations of these two more recent adaptations could turn Ophelia as "the uncanny object of Hamlet's sin" (Lacan, 1977, p. 23) and represents his unfulfilled desires, which are phallic, lacking, mundane and depersonalizing; the characteristics which are not present in Olivier's theatrical rendition of the drowning scene, and have little to do with Ophelia's passive and beautified silencing.

The problematic and unconventional treatment of the scene in Almereyda and Branagh would also expose the failure of Gertrude's patriarchal and appropriating voice in managing the phallic nature of the scene in the symbolic order. This failure turns the scene – and in turn Ophelia – into a "negative, veiled

and irrepresentable phallus" whose abrupt elimination from the stage can not be compensated by any symbolic enterprise on the stage (Lacan, 1977, p. 49). The modern adaptations of Branagh and Almereyda acknowledge the phallic nature of Ophelia by showcasing the fact that her facile and beautified containment in conventional structures of signification would be highly problematic. In these adaptations, Ophelia has a ghostlike subject position in relation to the patriarchal symbolic orders of signification. Although these orders tend to represent and contain ghosts such as Ophelia in an eliminatory manner, the abruptness of their elimination turns Ophelia into a figure who would always haunt the totality and containment efficacy of the patriarchy's symbolic orders of signification.

In the next entry, we would tap into Ophelia's mnemonic references to the past; another site whose absolute agency could belong to no single entity.

Ophelia's Gaze into Memory: The Impossibility of the Absolute Mastery over the Past

Many commentators believe that memory is of utmost importance in *Hamlet.* Philip Armstrong (1996) believes that "mnemonics or theatre of memory in *Hamlet* is devised in such a way that will always betray [main characters'] attempts in its mastery" (p, 222). This betrayal makes memory ambivalent, communal and dialogic, and prevents the play to have a central mnemonic gazer. Such conceptualization of memory makes characters' attempts to gain "the masterful perception of complete images" impossible and illusive (Armstrong, 1996, p. 221). In order to compensate for this impossible mastery, a series of assimilated and fragmented images are incorporated and introjected in their incomplete memory so that the illusion of completeness could be materialized for some characters in the play.

In *Hamlet,* there is a scene in which Ophelia is compelled to provide a reply for Polonius' question regarding her relationship with Hamlet. While the play only gives us ambivalent and appropriative images from these remembrances, the adaptations take different paths in approaching this issue. The play mostly imputes the existence of an intimate relationship between Ophelia and Hamlet through her two songs, which are prone with sexual innuendoes. In doing this, Ophelia does not become the master of these reminiscences, and in observing her past and answering

Polonius' questions, adopts a confessional position. In this scene of the play, Ophelia becomes the observed object of Polonius' mastery. She turns into a helpless girl who is not even sure about her past. In the case of the songs, she is the appropriative object of other patriarchal figures such as Claudius, Laertes and even Gertrude and does not have any mastery on her reminiscences of the past. Even when Ophelia tries to taunt Gertrude and Claudius for their improper marriage (at least in her and Hamlet's eyes) through using flowers with sexually charged and lewd connotations, Laertes appropriates her sexually charged taunt as a sign of beautified "thought and affliction", and waters down its insulting nature:

> *[Ophelia says] There's fennel for you [Gertrude], and columbines: there's rue for you [Claudius]; and here's some for me: we may call it herb-grace o' Sundays: O you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy: I would give you (sings) For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy—*
>
> *[Laertes comments] Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself, She turns to favour and to prettiness. (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 106-107)*

The appropriated nature of Ophelia's reminiscences by patriarchal figures can be vividly identified in Olivier's adaptation of the play. Although the adaptation refers to Ophelia's sexually charged songs, it does not present her the sole owner of her mnemonic references at any level. She is depicted as a site upon which other voices project their mastery over the past and the relationship between Ophelia and Hamlet, turning Ophelia into a "passive projector" (Armstrong, 1996, p. 220). Although this passivity could give her enumerated memories the illusion of completeness, it could not give her the agency for becoming the sole gazer and enunciator of her past.

In contrast to Olivier's adaptation, Almereyda and Branagh problematize the patriarchal appropriation of Ophelia's gaze into the past. In Branagh's Ophelia, one can see vivid flashbacks and analepses of her sexual and intimate relation with Hamlet. As Teker (2006) comments, "the Ophelia of Kenneth Branagh is emotionally more mature and physically stronger compared with her predecessors. Branagh's Ophelia (1996) is also sexually experienced and passionately in love with Hamlet" (p. 117). Ophelia's 'sexual' experience and passion toward Hamlet is

explicitly represented through making the "spectators view the flashback images of her making love with Hamlet" (Teker, 2006, p. 117).

Next to these analepses, one could turn to Ophelia's confessional scene to find a more active Ophelia than her previous renditions. In this scene, although she maintains the doll-like and appropriated image for Polonius, she shows her ability of referring to taboo and forbidden concepts of making love to Hamlet, and her capability of hiding such facts from the authority till the confessional moment in the adaptation. In doing this, although she does not become the central and absolute mnemonic gazer of her past, she does show her contingent dominance on her flashbacks and memories.

Such an active representation of Ophelia's mnemonic reminiscences of her intimate relationship is depicted in Almereyda's adaptation. In this version, there is no doubt that Ophelia is still under the patriarchal hegemony of male figures such as Polonius and Laertes and even Hamlet. As Abbate (2004) comments:

> *In glassy world of Manhattan - with all its transparent and reflecting surfaces of monitors, camera lenses, smooth metals, marbles, and windows, there is no possibility of contact beyond the surface. While Ophelia sees her father approaching through the transparent overhead walkway in his East River apartment, Polonius only commands and eavesdrops on her. (p. 83)*

In this adaptation, 'the lack of contact possibility' perpetuates the callous and indifferent patriarchal gaze on Ophelia. The only difference is that she is an active part of the gazing stratagem herself by having the photography hobby. In this adaptation, even in Ophelia's photography studio, it is Hamlet who takes footages and pictures from Ophelia and as a result, becomes the owner (and introjector) of mnemonic remembrances.[1] He, next to conventional patriarchal gazers such as Polonius, is the representative of interpersonal voices of others who want to hijack and manipulate Ophelia's reminiscences to the past. However, unlike the full appropriation and manipulation stratagems in Olivier's adaptation, in Ophelia's

[1] Next to this observation should come the observation made by Kim Fedderson and J. Michael Richardson in "Hamlet 9/11: Sound, Noise, and Fury in Almereyda's *Hamlet*". They believe that some instances of autonomy in Ophelia's rendition in Almereyda's adaptation should not give us the illusion that we would see a totally transformed and independent Ophelia in this adaptation. (2004, p. 159).

manipulation and appropriation through digital means (photos and eavesdropping devices), she has a more powerful and accented presence. She and Hamlet even start their love affair in a shared fascination with their reproduced images. As Abbate (2004) believes, "these two young lovers replace dialogue with photographic development and digital postproduction" to revisit the moments they have with each other (p. 84). In another instance, we see Ophelia exercising her more active using of photos and digital means to forget Hamlet, and through doing this becomes the gazer into her past. At the end of the nunnery scene, Ophelia burns snapshots of Hamlet to symbolically show her understanding of the significance of photography as a means of facilitating her affair with Hamlet. At the same time, her burning of the snapshots is her humble and partial but quite effective way for undermining the dominance of the weakest ring of gazers on her past i.e. Hamlet. Through her partial comprehension and mastery of one of patriarchy's appropriation means, photography, Ophelia exposes Hamlet's solipsistic appropriation of her past – Hamlet as the weakest member of the patriarchy. Even Hamlet always enjoys treating Ophelia "as a thing, a shot, and a frame – something he can cut and paste with his editing" (Abbate, 2004, p. 85); the kind of solipstic treatment which was partially shattered by Ophelia's burning of the photos. In Almereyda (2000), Ophelia has a "distinct awareness of herself as an image" since she lives in a world in which an "interrogation of seeing and looking is evident through the omnipresence of video surveillance" (Rooks, 2014, p. 483). This awareness makes it difficult to easily hail her in conventional objectified positions. In this adaptation, Ophelia's infatuation and partial mastery of one of the patriarchy's appropriation means, photography, could imply that Ophelia's theatre of memory, although being heavily controlled, fragmented and introjected by other voices, can not become categorically appropriated by them since Ophelia's more active and photographed presence in this theatre will defy their appropriative enterprises.

While Olivier's adaptation work on Ophelia's passive, introjected and appropriated nature through depicting her unproblematically and eliminating the sexual implications of Ophelia's songs, Branagh and Almereyda work on potential challenges a suppressed voice can impute against the patriarchal mnemonic introjectors and gazers. In Branagh's Ophelia, we see a strong sense of referring to explicit sexual relations by Ophelia. At the same time, in this adaptation she is also

represented as being capable of hiding these relations masterfully, making her active participation in mnemonic gaze to the past more intense and very ironic (since only the audience see these sexual reminiscences).[1] It is as if while she is becoming Polonius' object of gaze, she is participating in another discourse which, though very suppressed and contingent, turns her into a "guilty participant of beholding" a secret (Armstrong, 1996, p. 227). On the other hand, Almereyda's Ophelia is represented as a figure whose past relationship with Hamlet, though appropriated by Hamlet as a male figure, can not be categorically usurped and as a result become "negotiated, transgressed and exchanged" (Armstrong, 1996, p. 230). Such a negotiated nature of her past in both adaptations will make "pure spectatorship" of the past impossible for both Ophelia and patriarchal figures of the play and always keep open the risk of "being read and written" at the very moment a person thinks to be in control (Armstrong, 1996, p. 230). In materializing the introjected nature of a character such as Ophelia in the play and not remaining loyal to the surface values of the original work, Almereyda and Branagh exercise their adaptive uniqueness and materialize a negotiated and more active presence of Ophelia in her mnemonic reference to the past.

Ophelia's Iconographic Values: Potent Sites for Simulated and Ambivalent Impregnations

It is believed that iconographic values have significant importance in Elizabethan era. Lyons (1977) writes that women, represented as "solitary readers of a book" are considered to be "pious" and "devoted" in this period (p. 61). On the other hand, Lyons maintains, "walking men with books" are considered to be "philosophically melancholic and even in love" (1977, p. 61). Such courtly calculations are easily identifiable by the audiences of the time and that is why both Ophelia and Hamlet maintain their "emblematic" role in the iconographic conventions of the time (Lyons, 1977, p. 71). Apart from the pious posture, Ophelia's insistence of conveying her insanity and desire through specific flowers is in line with these conventions. In her recitation of "Bonny Sweet Robin", Ophelia's

[1] This reading is in stark contrast with readings such as Chillington Rutter who in "Snatched Bodies: Ophelia in the Grave". He claims that Branagh's more sexually active Ophelia "denies the role's anxiety-provoking potential for contemporary audiences through its rendering of Ophelia as erotically recognizable and therefore containable" (1998, p. 318).

reference to Robin is materialized as "long purples" as well (Shakespeare, 2004, p. 106). On iconographic significance of flowers in *Hamlet,* Harry Morris (1958) writes:

> *All writers on the flowers in Shakespeare identify long purples with orchis mascula or with arum maculatum. They resemble closely our Jack-in-the-Pulpit, which gives a good idea of the plant's physical characteristics. Among the common names of the arum maculatum is Wake-Robin. That this meaning is amorous seems to be corroborated by the list of other names for the plant in Lyte's herbal (1578): Priestespyntill, Cockowpintell, and Cockowpynt The name wake-robin, as well as the others, seems to be a manifestation of the doctrine of signatures. Not only does wake-robin establish the common use of Robin as a convention for euphemistic reference to amorous and even vulgar significance, but it also gives considerable support to the contention that Ophelia's mad song is an expression of repressed desires. (p. 602)*

Even in referring to her 'repressed desires', Ophelia observes such convolutedly devised euphemisms to maintain her commitment to the courtly conventions. In the play, iconographies that are presented around Ophelia are intended to be shown through objects that are going to sustain their imputations. That is why Olivier's adaptation observes these iconographies and presents Ophelia with a book and later uses real flowers in Ophelia's hands as iconographic signals of amorous and melancholic affinities in her. In this adaptation, Olivier still relies on what Jean Baudrillard calls to be the "exchange values" for showing the Elizabethan iconographic conventions around Ophelia (Lane, 2006, p. 22). These exchange values according to Buadrillard, will be regarded as "equivalences of a functional logic" and will not impute any "ambivalence" in their workings (Lane, 2006, p. 22). To put it differently, Olivier imitates the exchange value economy of the original context so that conventional iconographies around Ophelia could be observed.

In comparison with Olivier, one sees that Branagh also observes these conventions as well. In the scene where Hamlet encounters Ophelia with the book, the presence of the iconography of a seemingly chaste girl with a book is in line with the conventional values of the Elizabethan period. However, in not knowing at first

the secretive and manipulative nature of his doctored encounter with Ophelia – Polonius and Claudius were watching both of them to worm out the motives behind Hamlet's weird behavior – the iconographic elements seem to be more manipulative and as a result, simulated. In this simulation, the elements espouse a degree of ambivalence which is devised only to manipulate Hamlet towards vexation and bewilderment. Under such set of circumstances, the staged scene between Ophelia and Hamlet does not show control of manipulation in the hands of Ophelia, Polonius and Claudius, or the abidance by particular conventions of feminine prudence, but it shows the manipulation of meaning in the grey area between reality and unreality which Baudrillard refers to as the "sign value" (Lane, 2006, p. 23). Such a "hyperreal" and simulated understanding of this scene does not simply refer the audience to the exchange value, but it intimates a hyperreal understanding of the staged scene, where meaning is not in control of any single element or individual, does not depend on presence or absence of a particular convention or object, is materialized in the grey area between reality and unreality, and is only espoused through the "hyperreal logic of represented, signifying and differentiated signs" (Lane, 2006, p. 23).

In Branagh's version, it is due to the exposition of signifying and differentiated value of Hamlet-Ophelia staged scene which makes Hamlet fail to understand the scene's manipulative nature. This lack of understanding reoccurs in Almereyda's adaptation as well; where no particular tradition or iconography is used when Ophelia is mandated to approach Hamlet. She is only wired by an eavesdropping device that camouflages her sign value in the manipulative network of meaning. As Abbate believes, "the very thing they have in common – photographic and digital objects of mechanical reproduction for maintaining their love affair – becomes the thing that tears them apart" (2004, p. 84). This camouflaged tearing apart of their relationship makes Hamlet nearly handicapped in understanding the manipulative circumstance in which he is hailed.

When it comes to the representation of flowers, Olivier relies on conventional iconographies suggested by Morris (1958) earlier. He even dilutes vulgar and obscene imputations of flowers radically; the dilution that is observed in other two adaptations as well. None of the adaptations refers to the ambivalence of the figure of Flora and how Flora as a "double bound" entity (Lyons, 1977, p. 67)

can be regarded as both "the representative of mythical world of fertility, order and innocence and at the same time, the representative of urban and courtly deception, calculation and lustful undertakings" (Lyons, 1977, p. 67). On the basis of Lyons' remarks, Flora's double bound nature between innocence and experience makes the materialization of any "natural and pastoral catharsis" impossible (Lyons, 1977, p. 67). Similar to Olivier's adaptation, Branagh and Almereyda do not refer to the lewd and vulgar significance of flowers when it comes to the imputation of Ophelia's desire and in doing this, fail to depict the double nature of a figure like Flora. Leaving their dependence on the "ennobling" (Lyons, 1977, p. 73) and at the same time, the double nature of mythological figure, these two adaptations manage to emphasize the ambivalent nature of flowers as "symbolic values" (Lane, 2006, p. 22) which, according to Baudrillard, will espouse ambivalence, pluralism and idiosyncrasies. Regarding the lack of rigid symbolism around the representation of flowers in the play, Lyons write:

> *Among the plants Ophelia mentions, fennel could be a medicinal herb, particularly good for clearing the sight, but it could also denote flattery, as one example cited in the Variorum (Fennel is flatterers) shows. Columbines could mean cuckoldry, or forsaken lovers; because of their connection with melancholy, however, they were also associated with the Sorrows of the Virgin. (1977, pp. 65-66)*

According to Lyons' observations (1977) and the evidences he brings from the play, the intention behind the utilization of flowers is to espouse ambivalence. In this regard, the audience will fail recognizing to what particular thought or memory Ophelia is referring, making the flowers into rich and uncontainable symbolic values.

As observed, iconographic values in *Hamlet* are represented conventionally, but they do not impute reliance on a specific coda of signification or connotation. It is as if the play intends to denaturalize and make any sense of fixity and naturalness of femininely-devised iconographies and suggestions 'problematical': "The iconography of Ophelia and its incongruities typify a world in which the most important imaginative transformations, whether religious, heroic, or pastoral ones, become problematical" (Lyons, 1977, p. 73). Unlike Olivier's

adaptation, Branagh's and Almereyda's adaptations materialize their uniqueness through undermining even the conventional iconographies of the play. By foregoing fetishistic values of exchange, these two adaptations regard the manipulation in Hamlet-Ophelia scene as the ambivalence of sign values which can not be owned by a particular person or agency. That is why they first depict Hamlet in oblivion of such sign values and show him infatuated with the machination of this mirage. When it comes to the representation of flowers, Branagh and Almereyda, although diluting the original lewd connotations of flowers like Olivier's adaptation, insist on the ambivalence and plurality of flowers' connotation and their lack of symbolic rigidity by eliminating them. In the case of Branagh's version, the elimination is utilized through making Ophelia talk to imaginary flowers, and in Almereyda's case, this elimination is utilized through making Ophelia talk to the photos of flowers and representing them in their symbolically ambivalent rendition.

Conclusion

The more experimental adaptations of Almereyda and Branagh turn Ophelia into a phallic figure that can not be simply defined and contained in either rebellious or reticent positions. Such definitions, according to Showalter (1985), will be ideological and will not observe interdisciplinary rationalism of Ophelia's motiveless circumstance. That is why Ophelia should be considered as a schizophrenic voice, who articulate a plethora of individually considered rational voices, but does not belong to any of the voices. In becoming such a schizophrenic, molecular and nomadic figure, Ophelia espouses her phallic absence and as a result, defy being contained through analeptic references to the past, the drowning scene and the iconographic elements of the play.

Apart from addressing her phallic and schizophrenic nature, Ophelia's ambivalent and multifaceted aspects and potentials have been addressed in Almereyda's and Branagh's adaptations as well. In contrast to Olivier's rendition of the play, these two adaptations work on the fault lines through which Shakespeare's play presents Ophelia. Like any true adaptation, they show their homage to the past and the traditional models, especially when it comes to the utilization of iconographic props; nevertheless, by treating these props and models as simulated sign and symbolic values, they emphasize their disenfranchised, fragmented and

displaced take from Shakespeare's play so that they can showcase their contemporariness and at the same time, represent interpretive potentials and challenges of the original work.

In molding their unique interpretations of Shakespeare's Ophelia, Branagh and Almereyda decrease their dependence on the surface developments of the play. Therefore, Ophelia's drowning scene is unconventionally represented in these adaptations, and causes these adaptations to be distanced from Olivier's romantic and Pre-Raphaelitean rendition of the scene. Furthermore, both adaptations disregard bland and manipulative utilization of iconographic props in staging the Hamlet-Ophelia scene, Ophelia's reminisce of the past in the confessional scene with Polonius and her insane interlocution with flowers. In all of these scenes, although Ophelia should not be taken as a revolutionary or rebellious entity, she is represented as an entity who functions on a set of values other than conventional exchange values and in this process, exposes the challenges patriarchy faces in keeping problematic elements contained.

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