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"The after-life of the original". Practices of Rewriting Shakespeare in Contemporary British and American Prose

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Abstract

This study focuses on rewritings of William Shakespeare's dramas in chosen novels by American and British contemporary authors. The choice has been narrowed down to five books that greatly expand the female characters known from Shakespeare's texts. As the stories are various in terms of their plots, the novels were divided into two groups determined by the type of problems that absorb the main protagonists. The first part of the analysis discusses characters who become marginalized in their groups, or who cannot meet the standards imposed by their families or society. This selection includes: *Vinegar Girl* – Anne Tyler's contemporary retelling of *Taming of The Shrew*; *New Boy* by Tracy Chevalier, which is a transposition of *Othello* into Washington of the 1970s; and *The Gap of Time* written by Jeanette Winterson – an interpretation of *The Winter's Tale.* Another group consists of texts centred on characters who suffer the status of a victim. There are two books in that group: *Nutshell* by Ian McEwan, based on *Hamlet*; and *Hag Seed* by Margaret Atwood, based on *The Tempest*, a modernized story on different kinds of escape and isolation. Although four of the books were written by female authors, the entire choice is not uniquely dominated by them. The exception in the selection of authors is Ian McEwan, whose work, *Nutshell*, was chosen for the study because of the unusual point of view of its narrator, a foetus, who is the only means of communication between the reader and the foetus's mother. As that particular female character – a translation of Shakespeare's Gertrude into a modern context – deserves a nuanced reading, *Nutshell* has found its place within the re-narrations offering complex and rich alternatives to the often underdeveloped and underwritten female protagonists in Shakespeare's dramas.

The analytical part of the work is preceded by a theoretical one in which theories of rewriting, translation and adaptation are presented that seem helpful in discussing new literature inspired by the earlier works. In chapter three, historical background has been provided in order to cast a light on a specifically Elizabethan perception of womanhood. After some research, I can initially conclude that Shakespeare does not determine the comprehension of his heroines, but leaves an open space for continuing reconstruction of his dramas. The rewriters, by blending their literary sensitivity, experience and various literary styles with the classical narratives and stories, can offer contemporary Shakespearean tales that are synchronized with the perception of the contemporary reader. Additionally, the contemporary re-readings are studied here in a specific context which is briefly commented on in another, supplementary chapter. This context is co-created by pandemics which were also a permanent element in the background of the whole life and literary career of Shakespeare who, in spite of such obstacles, succeeded in

writing literature of a remarkable quality and quantity. The rewritings of Shakespeare discussed in the present work make it possible for Shakespeare's female characters, who are originally located in a male-dominant, patriarchal context, to reappear as more self-determined heroines. These "new" heroines are, therefore, more familiar to the contemporary reader, who may find them more accessible and approachable than their archetypal equivalents.

Introduction

The idea of "the after-life of the original" comes from Walter Benjamin who acknowledged the distance between the source text and its rewritten, translated form, thus liberating the rewriting from the tight bond with its ancestor – the original text. The translation – the aforementioned literary "after-life" – is a literary product which detaches from the original, so that it becomes – as Corinne Lhermitte names it – a "free translation" (par.6), an independent literary creation which balances between sameness, equivalence and difference that is an immediate effect of inspiration. The freedom of interpretation seems to be the nature of adaptation, of the form of artistry that blends "sameness and difference" (Lhermitte par.6) and which lets the original function in a form of a reconstruction, of a translation which lives its independent "after-life", but which is always connected to the source text, either closely or remotely. Himself, Walter Benjamin observes that translation is a dynamic form of literary expression which always happens after a certain time interval from the moment of creating the original: "for a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translator at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life" (Benjamin 71). The laps of time directly translates into difference in reading the original, but also on innovation motivated by the different points of view of the rewriters and of the whole set of circumstances in which the new reading – therefore adapting – is being performed. All the novels selected for the study can be classified as such adaptations of Shakespeare which – by nature of the time gap distancing their creation form the moment of creating the original plays – are certain to bring difference and innovation to reading Shakespeare as well as to interpreting his works.

One of the characteristic features in literature is the regular reappearance of literary classics. By means of rewriting old themes, contemporary rewriters engage in a dialogue with the preceding texts, which is an inevitable aspect of every act of artistic interpretation. What I mean by rewriting is the activity of a literary reconstruction of the source text which results in constructing a new text that shows noticeable correlation with the first one, but which is at the same time an innovative response to it. There is a variety of terms that relate to the practice of rewriting and which are often used interchangeably to it, as their main goal is to alter the source

text by still maintaining the essence of the latter detectable in the background. Ruby Cohn, for example, writes in *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* about abridgements, conversions, metamorphoses, variations and "offshoots" while only referring to the rewritings of Shakespeare (3). Also, she gives attention to the popular term adaptation which she finds as most often used while addressing the reworkings of Shakespeare's plays (3). July Sanders, whose definition of adaptation is also discussed later in chapter 1 devotes even more space than Cohn in her discussion on the practice. In her view, one of the characteristic feature of adaptation is letting the reader see in the newly adapted text the relationship with the sources (35). It is for this reason that the rewritings that are going to be discussed in the following work may be decisively regarded as adaptations as they rather clearly signal the relationship with the plays from which they stem. Four of them may be classified undoubtedly as adaptations, as they were part of a larger publishing project, Hogarth Shakespeare, whose main objective was to adapt the plays to the contemporary readership in such a way that the narrative axis of the dramas is retained (the idea of Hogarth Shakespeare initiative is also shortly discussed later, in chapter 4). At the same time, all of the novels that are being discussed in the dissertation dialogue with Shakespeare in a variety of different, original ways, so that they can be treated as independent pieces of literary creation – of which I also mention in the subchapter 1.1. Due to this fact, the rewritings meet at the common point also with reworking and reinterpretations as they often radically change the settings and the standardized ways of reading the text.

As the rewritings grouped for the study present new versions of Shakespeare that rather considerably rebuild the structure of the plays, as well as the portrayals of the protagonists, especially the female ones, they may be also regarded as transformations as they touch the common ground of objectives that are characteristic to rewriting and to transformation. Ruby Cohn regards transformation as the "brightest heaven of invention" (4), as being the most innovative form of rewriting. For this reason, rewriting and transformation, especially in the case of the following study, should be regarded as synonymous terms and they will often be used interchangeably. The new versions of Shakespeare chosen for the study focus on considerable reworking of the Shakespearean motifs – they attempt to develop the essence of the dramas by shifting them radically towards the contemporary setting, which often pairs with a visible deportation from the original play. Nevertheless, remaining faithful does not seem to be to prior goal of the rewriters as they translate Shakespeare into their own individual style and language, often by offering plots with characters moving "through a partly or wholly non-Shakespearean plot, sometimes with introduction of non-Shakespearean characters" (Cohn 4).

The latter passage suggests close correlation of rewriting with transformation, but also with writing an entirely new version of Shakespearean plays what certainly was the final effect of the rewriting practices undertaken by the authors discussed in the following work.

The creative responding to the earlier works of literary art – which is also synonymous to rewriting – produces literature which is on the one hand an effect of inspiration, but on the other, it is an inevitably an effect of rebuilding the ready worlds offered by the author, whose influence cannot be escaped in the creative process. This connotation directly relates to Harold Bloom's idea of the inescapability of literary impact which was a fundamental claim of his theory of influence (*The Anxiety of Influence* 6). Originally, Bloom's theory was applicable to poetry, but it can be also translated to writing prose. In rewriting practices authors are certain to relate to one another, as literature circulates and it continues that ongoing movement just through subsequent works of literary art. Yet, although Bloom does signal that the ultimate escaping of the sources is not possible, as it is always marked by the influence of the author, the authors of the retellings chosen for the study did considerably reformulate the ancient themes, thus "escaping" to some extent the aforementioned influence by infusing their individuality to the old narrations and by re-contextualizing them so that they could be better accessible to the contemporary receivers. At the same time, the modern rewriters prove that the worlds Shakespeare created are not to be considered as fossilized statues, never to be reworked, but are still open to be reconstructed, as they continue to influence and inspire the subsequent generations of writers.

By tapping the world of Shakespearean motifs the contemporary rewriters do also engage in the practices of repetition of the themes that have already been used in literature in a variety of forms and configurations. By means of such practices the contemporary authors always offer their individual answers to what has been written before, continuing the dialogue with the older texts, with other authors, and also with Shakespeare, who too was a rewriter and a translator of literature that was available to him. Shakespeare, whom Bloom considered the greatest poet of the English language – the poet who belonged "to the giant age before the flood, before the Anxiety of influence became central to poetic consciousness" (11) used to take from his predecessors not only sole inspiration, but also the whole content and ideas, which was an activity that was popular at the time. That particular aspect of Shakespeare's artistic performance is discussed further in the following work, in chapter two: "Shakespeare rewritten and Shakespeare as a rewriter". As Bloom puts it, "Shakespeare's prime precursor was Marlow, a poet very much smaller than his inheritor" (*The Anxiety of Influence* 11). Regardless of

Bloom's assessment of these authors' greatness, Shakespeare's engagement in rewriting practices lets us include him into the large group of rewriters who tap into the circle of interconnected literary corelations which continue until today.

Undoubtedly, rewriting is also largely coupled with inspiration. Apart from being the canvas on which new narrations are being made, Shakespeare is a remarkable source of inventiveness for the contemporary authors. Thus, rewriting practices do not solely concentrate on reformulating of the old material and on reframing it into a modern context, but also on forming entirely new stories, on building new literary worlds stemming from Shakespeare understood as a starting point. Not rarely, the original story becomes also a layer where the debates may start, raising questions whether the widely accepted and known interpretations are still valid for the contemporary receivers and whether the new ways of reading are possible. These new ways of presenting old motifs are to be found in each of the novels selected for the study. For instance, the worn-out concept of taming a woman and of manoeuvring her into the marriage could have resonated with the audiences at the times of Shakespeare, but today it does not stand the test of time. Thus, the author of the modern response to *The Taming of the Shrew*, Anne Tyler, reformulates that rather anachronic theme present in the drama by writing her own understanding of what "taming of the shrew" could mean today to her and to her readers. Also, Tyler brakes with the overall misogynist aura of the drama by placing the story in a fresh, modern context and by telling a tale of a young woman with whom the contemporary audience can easily resonate, even without the Shakespearean canvas lying behind it. Nevertheless, contemporary rewriters do mingle with Shakespearean texts even while still remaining innovative, they step into the network of intertextual references which is not to be avoided while rewriting the sources. Intertextuality is also discussed further, in chapter two and subchapter 5.5 on the occasion of discussing rewritings of *Hamlet* which include several intertextual layers.

Thus, contemporary rewriters of Shakespeare, definitely not free from the influence of his plays, find their own answers to them. They do not try to deny their existence as sources, but by means of deconstruction and re-narration they rather create their original responses just by means of rewriting practices. Despite the tight bond with their predecessor, they do not cease being innovative, nor does Bloom's theory belittle their creativity. Quite the reverse – Bloom claims that "poetic influence need not make poets less original; as often it makes them more original, though not therefore necessarily better" (7). Rewriting Shakespeare's plays, hundreds after the poet's death, is certainly not a battle for superiority of one over another, but is more an activity aiming at creative expression based on the material that has been rewritten multiple

times and in multiple ways. Probably the biggest difficulty is not to stay away from the influence of Shakespeare, but rather to create independently from the influence of other rewriters who had rewritten the plays before. Nevertheless, Shakespeare leaves enough space for interpretation in his works to let contemporary rewriters find their own way to respond to them. There are numerous aspects and elements of the plays that still can be reconstructed and restated. For instance, one of the niches for modern authors is an imbalanced intensity between male and female protagonists, which becomes rebuilt in my selected modern retellings.

The practices of rewriting dramatic pieces in prose are, therefore, the central concern of this study. As rewriting aims at reconstructing and changing the source text, it will be often discussed parallel to translation which also needs to alter and process its sources. The final products of both of these activities are texts which carry the specific meaning or image embedded in the text in its original form, but which are delivered in a different language, manner, or style. The quotation heading this chapter may embed the metaphoric sense of translation – we may speak one universal language, but only on the level of the abstract shape of the concepts. After reformulating them in their minds, all users of language will express the message differently. So it is with rewriting – everyone who responds to Shakespeare will process a text or texts differently, even if the prior text is the same for everyone. At the same time, rewriting is a continuous dialogue, as "books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told", as Umberto Eco notes in *Postscript to the Name of the Rose* (20). Literature has therefore a repetitive nature, and is an interactive concept – texts remain under the continuous influence of each other, as well as their authors, who get inspired, motivated, or provoked by other authors and their literary forms of expression.

While the dramatic works written by Shakespeare have always been exploited by the performative arts, especially theatre, they are also often used in literature as a source of inspiration or as a basis for new interpretations and rewritings. Rewritings offer a different kind of entertainment than the pieces staged in the theatre, or adapted to film, but they are also capable of taking the reader into the invented Shakespearian world. The rewritings that I chose for this dissertation can be enjoyed by various groups of readers, starting from those less experienced and less familiar with dramatic forms, and ending with those who are more advanced and who will take pleasure in spotting nuances referring to the classical text. However, disregarding any level of expertise with the canon, all readers will be able to follow the narrative without being distracted by side notes, as all of the novels are rather meant to deliver a story in an undisturbed manner, and are dedicated to those who treat reading as an

intellectual pastime. André Lefevere refers to such readers as "non-professional" ones (4). They are the key receivers of rewritings, and they most often become familiar with the original texts only through rewritten forms. In many ways, the retellings may facilitate discovering the canon, as the reader's attention in a novel does not have to be disturbed by referring to the notes as much as it might have been when approaching dramatic pieces, which are usually densely commented on with footnotes. In other words, novelised retellings of Shakespeare's plays may by regarded as compact compositions linking the elements of the original texts with an individual interpretation of the rewriters.

With regard to the ongoing process of referring to earlier literary works, in particular to those by Shakespeare, all the novels discussed in the study are intertextual pieces of literature. "Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature" (Allen 1); hence, while reading, the reader "plunges into a network of textual relations" (1). The rewritings of the plays by Shakespeare that are discussed in this work relate to their source texts in various ways and manners, often foregrounding some aspects of the play or re-contextualizing the plots and themes. They are polyphonic in such a way that they present a world where "all characters, and even the narrator him- or herself, are possessed of their own discursive consciousness" (Allen 23). That consciousness is especially apparent in *Nutshell* where the mature, adult voice of the narrator speaks behind the tale told by the foetus, an unborn hero who possesses a wisdom of a philosopher. That voice is also audible in *Vinegar Girl*, in which the narrator is an omniscient observer of Kate Battista, the protagonist, whose personality and all the aspects of life are seen and commented on by the narrative voice. One can hear a subjective narrative voice in the tale told by Felix, the protagonist of *Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold*, an unfulfilled theatrical director, who creates his own Shakespearian theatre. Finally, the narrators present their own points of view in two other novels, *The Gap of Time* and *New Boy,* which are strongly grounded on the personal experiences of the rewriters. Thus, that network of interconnected texts and tales constructs the retellings, which, additionally, are co-created by the personal reading experiences of their authors and of their readers. No narrative voice is therefore objective, but each of them relates to Shakespeare in his/her own individual way, demonstrating that there is no ultimate nor finite way to interpret his plays.

Within the process of rewriting, the classic stories become re-narrated and reframed, which in many respects allows the rewriters to renegotiate the ways in which these canonic plays have been perceived and interpreted. Thanks to rewriting practices, the readers may realize that there is not a universal way in which Shakespeare should be read and understood, but that the plots

might be adapted to various narrative frames and, therefore, they can resonate with many different worldviews. Some of the ideas for adaptation and for rewriting might appear to the reader as surprising, thought-provoking and challenging to the imagination, proving that Shakespeare's works may be expressed in various modes and styles. Moreover, some elements of his plays can become foregrounded and amplified, such as, for example, the female characters. According to Bloom, "no world author rivals Shakespeare in the apparent creation of personality" (*Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* xviii); yet in spite of the high status of these creations, admiration for them and their fame, many female characters in Shakespeare are either underwritten or depicted as largely dependent on men, a patriarchal world order and a male-centered social organization. Therefore, contemporary rewriting can be a technique thanks to which these fictional protagonists might acquire embodiments that are more expressive, decisive and much more independent than their original predecessors. Finally, the reader can rethink the former conception of these protagonists, as re-contextualization may challenge the fossilized perception of the earlier pieces of literature.

Shakespeare's representation of womanhood in his plays was severely dependent on a patriarchal worldview and on a system of hierarchies which generally situated women as inferior to men. In Elizabethan England, women were considered as radically less important human beings than their husbands or fathers, which was apparent on various levels of social organization. The overall attitude to women that supported their underestimation may have stemmed from various traditions, still vibrant and influential in the folklore of the time (McEvoy 69). For example, at the time when Shakespeare was creatively active, a belief was popular that ascribed the guilt for mankind's fall to Eve. In line with it, a woman was "a temptress, sexually insatiable once she had lost her virginity" (69). The patriarchal tradition of taking control over women's choices is, for example, clearly seen in *The Taming of The Shrew*, where Kate is expected to obey her father's wishes relating to her marriage. Yet, in spite of his undisputable dominance, Kate tries to win her independence. Her unruly attitude may be considered an inspiring motto for all the rewriters who try to rebuild these anachronistic female portrayals and imbalanced relationships with men in such a way that they become more synchronic, even symmetrical with the imagination of contemporary women. Hence, *Vinegar Girl*, a rewritten version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, has found its place within the books selected for this study next to other ones in which Shakespearian heroines acquire alternative portrayals. The Elizabethan patriarchal world-order no longer correlates with a modern understanding of society; thus, contemporary retellings may serve as vehicles transposing the

plots into different contexts in which the status of women becomes transformed. The optic taken by the four female rewriters whose novels are discussed in this dissertation is an interesting factor in rewriting, as the works written by Shakespeare in the times when women had no privileges to work creatively are here reconstructed by women who are entitled to put Shakespearean protagonists, plots, and imagined worlds in any context they wish. The only male author in the selection, McEwan, was included in the discussion due to an unusual circumstance that appears in his rewriting – circumstances that are created by a woman and which are entirely dependent on her. The whole narration of the story takes place in the womb of Trudy – a pregnant mother whose unborn baby is (unusually) capable of telling a fascinating story. Although she is not audible as the first person narrative voice, her presence in the novel determines the whole sequence of events which create the life journey of the main protagonist. Her specific situation and a rather upsetting addiction to alcohol are also helpful characteristics in depicting dysfunctional family model. Furthermore, Trudy's carefree attitude towards drinking in pregnancy might be frightening, yet the risk she undertakes is perhaps not a rare experience among certain groups of women in contemporary societies.

1. The definition of rewriting and an overview of selected works on the practice of rewriting

1.1. Rewriting – a definition and related practices

The urge to rewrite a work of art, or in other words, to reconstruct an already existing literary text is a widespread phenomenon among writers. According to the definition of rewriting offered by the *Dictionary of Translation Studies* by Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie, rewriting is a phenomenon referring to "a range of processes, including translation, which can be said to reinterpret, alter or manipulate an original text in some way" (147,148). The term was discussed in general terms by André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett in their pioneering work on the topic – *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame.* The authors keep the focus on aligning translation to rewriting, finding the two terms synonymic. Under the process of translation (hence rewriting) the texts may change revolutionarily, to such an extent that they can deliver "new concepts, new genres, new devices" (Lefevere vii). Conclusively, every act of rewriting is at the same time an act of manipulation, as rewriters may influence the reception of their audiences by means of remodelling and reframing the literature which has once been known in a given form. Thus, the role of rewriters' – the people who stay "in the middle, the men and women who do not write literature, but rewrite it" as Lefevere puts it (1) – seems to be substantial in delivering literature to all those who consume it. Also, as Lefevere and Bassnett underline, rewriters continually take part in the dialogue with the "ordinary" readers who, in the majority of cases, are the main and most numerous recipients of rewritten works of literature, as both authors argue (4). According to one of their main theses, "ordinary" or "non-professional" readers scarcely come across the texts in their original, classic form. What they encounter most often are reproduced forms of the image of those narrations which have become famous and recognizable by being previously reworked by earlier authors. "The non-professional reader", as Lefevere maintains, "increasingly does not read literature as written by writers, but as rewritten by rewriters" (4), hence the final literary product delivered to that reader is already a translation of a source text. The tradition of reading editions instead of originals is, in fact, a very old one. In the past, very few people had access to the original manuscripts of the classics, and they had to be content with approaching them in abridged forms (Bassnett, Lefevre 4). Similarly, today, non-professional readers are exposed to the literature most often by rewritings. These recreated works of art can be offered by a variety of media, not only literature. They present new interpretations, re-contextualizations of already existing topics and narrations. Rewriters, too,

quite often encounter rewritings instead of actual manuscripts, be it in a form of translation, or, for example, film adaptation.

There are numerous terms that can be used interchangeably with "rewriting" that refer to the same practice of exploring the subjects which are already present in the older texts, such as revision, rephrasing, reinterpretation, adaptation, appropriation, transformation, translation and reconstruction. Julie Sanders, the author of *Adaptation and Appropriation,* offers other alternatives: borrowing, stealing, appropriating, inheriting, assimilating (5). Also, the interest in reworking the art of previous artists might be referred to as: "being influenced, inspired, dependent, indebted, haunted, possessed … homage, mimicry, travesty, echo, allusion and intertextuality" (5). Making use of the recurring literary topics may be also regarded as, as it were, literary recycling, as all that has already been written continues to function in literary circulation. The word *circulation* is of special importance to Jean Baudrillard, who considers it to be an accurate metaphor for the processes of rewriting. Quoted by Edwin Gentzler in *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, Baudrillard suggests that texts circulate rather than originate, and that "all forms of writing create images, or better said, images of previous images – all regenerating upon each other to the point that the *original* disappears" (Gentzler 11). The other examples listed by Sanders that refer to the same practice could be given as "version, variation, interpretation, continuation, transformation, imitation, pastiche, parody, forgery, travesty, transposition, revaluation, revision" (22). Some of them might be less known, but what they all seem to point to is that texts that appear under these headings do not try to stay close to the original, but rather engage in exploring, even celebrating, as Sanders argues, the "ongoing interactions" between alternative texts (22). In other words, any act of revision and of rewriting always aims at transformation, which in consequence stimulates creativity, and the production of a new form of expression.

For Sanders, an impulse to rewrite a source tale may also stem from the desire to break with the traditional perception of an earlier text. On a way of reconstruction the former ways of interpretation may be questioned which can have an especially formative value for female rewriters. According to Adrienne Rich, whom Sanders quotes, "for women writers it is essential to take on the writing of the past in order to move beyond it into a creative space of their own" (12). These are words Rich first published in 1971 in her essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" in which she expresses her dissent from stereotypical and prejudiced male society which has tended to repress women. In the essay, she invites women to a "radical critique of literature" (Rich, 18) as a necessary way of undertaking self-exploration and moving

towards self-knowledge. Rich argues that: "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction ... is an act of survival" (18). It is so, as, according to Rich, women will not be able to know themselves, until they discover the conditions and the narrations/narratives in which they are situated. Rich also promotes the notion of disagreement with given literary assumptions and stories, claiming that women "need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (18). This postulate definitely raises the act of rewriting to a stage that is much more complicated and elaborate than mere copying. Rewriting, understood in this way, is also manifested in the retellings of Shakespeare which are analyzed in this study.

Apart from reconstruction, criticism, translation and other terms relating to rewriting there are also those that are relatively new. The lexicon is continuously expanding with other concepts, such as "the mash-up, remix, hack or sample" (5). Users of language invent new terms due to the expansion of digital culture and technology which has defined new communities who are especially interested in adaptive work that becomes later presented, for example, on YouTube (3). Moreover, in a process where texts undergo multiple and very often multimodal changes, it is also difficult to draw a clear line between the producer and the consumer (4). What is more, it becomes hard to determine, as Sanders observes, the so-called original, which does not have to be the first link in a chain of ongoing modulations. The author stresses that: "a point of entry for younger people today to canonical texts such as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland* might well be via film adaptations or in indeed Walt Disney animated versions of so-called classics" (4). The plays of Shakespeare also originated from previously existing works of literature. Due to this fact, but also because of being a skilled translator of foreign texts into English, Shakespeare is also recognized as a rewriter. Again, Sanders stresses the urge to consider rewriting as a process interested in creating innovation which should rather be understood as "adding, supplementing, improvising, amplifying" (15). Hence, literary art is continuously evolving, just as the world of living species is governed by the mechanisms of constant change. The world of art might be therefore, at least to some extent, paralleled to the world of nature which is repeatedly recreating itself by means of amplifying, withdrawing and sometimes improvising.

While exploring further the parallel between nature and literary art, one may observe that the practice of rewriting, especially at the point where it meets adaptation, can be to some extent compared to evolution. Although usually related to the natural sciences, such as biology,

zoology, ecology or environmental science, evolution may well function as an umbrella term embracing the mechanisms of change occurring in any field of human activity. Sanders observes that the scientific community has been fascinated by the complex processes of environmental and genetic adaptation since Charles Darwin presented his controversial theories of evolution in the nineteenth century (Sanders 32). Since literature is a form of human expression, the evolutionary mechanisms may be especially well applicable to the development of this field of activity. As well as in nature, evolution in literature determines its survival. In both domains, variation is a factor maximizing the chance of adapting to new circumstances. By way of alteration, the living species combat the risk of extinction. They mutate on elementary genetic levels to equip new generations with the features which would be most beneficial for them. A similar logic is applicable to literature – in order to survive, to stay vivid in the mentality of subsequent generations, classic literature needs to undergo constant recreations which help to assimilate it into new contexts. Adaptation or rewriting may progress in various directions. It can be concerned with, for example, expanding the text to voice those subjects that were silenced or marginalized in the older texts. Yet, rewriting practice can also be directed at simplification of reading, if, for example, there is a need to abridge complex pieces of literature into forms that would present the text's message in a more explicit way. Certainly, a variety of adaptation processes relate to Shakespeare's works. As Marjorie Garber puts it, "Shakespeare's plays are living works of art. Their meaning grow and change as they encounter vivid critical and theatrical imaginations" (18).

The process of abridging a text is intrinsically connected to facilitation. Facilitation as the need to transpose literature into more comprehensible forms of literary art can be seen as "an artistic drive in many adaptations of so-called 'classic' novels for television and cinema" (Sanders 23). By facilitating literary classics, rewriting practices aim at rearranging the canon so that it becomes more "comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating" (Sanders 23). A group which can especially benefit from such literary techniques is the younger generation of readers who usually get acquainted with Shakespeare at schools during lessons (Rokison 1). Abigail Rokison who examines the ways of introducing young readers to Shakespeare asserts that getting the students to read classics may often be a challenge; "teachers, theatre practitioners, writers, illustrators and film makers, irrespective of whether they agree about the centrality of the bard in prescribed education, continue to find ways of engaging young people, who are often perceived as struggling with this work" (1). As a way of finding a facilitatory means of presenting a text, the exploration of

Shakespeare may be followed by screening a film adaptation, in order to overcome a large gap between historical contexts, oblique sentence structure or language. An attempt is also made to capture young readers' attention by means of performative arts, but the privilege of seeing a full-scale stage production, which in many ways can help imagination in depicting the plot, may not often be guaranteed and accessible. Hence, offering a contemporary rewriting which "translates" the canon into familiar, contemporary language, may be a successful way of connecting the young with the classics – the way which may inspire them to explore the plays further in their original form.

In the process of adaptation, as well as in the processes of rewriting, all attainable textual manipulations are permissible, such as cuts, rearrangement of the narration, stylistic polishing, or even the use of fewer characters or locations (Pavis 14). For example, the authors of the rewritings discussed in this work, focus mostly on the selected strong points of a particular drama, or on elaborating on those characters and issues that are not developed fully or silenced in the earlier text. As both adaptation and rewriting, unlike translation, can be very free, the rewriters are able to reconstruct the structure of the plays according to their individual needs. Some of the topics which they found particularly interesting are foregrounded, others reduced, or put behind the central axis of narration. The reader can, therefore, spot in these re-makings various elements characteristic of adaptation, such as addition or deletion of text, rich development of characters, different endings and changes in the plot. In all cases, the original text is entirely rewritten and used as a raw material for reinterpretation. It is especially worth noticing that, as Patrice Pavis states, there are no definite prescriptions for "a perfect or definitive adaptation of plays from the past" (14). This can be helpful in raising awareness that Shakespeare plays might be retold in a variety of ways. Adaptation may involve, for example, the transition from one genre to another, or, as in the cases of the novels discussed in this study, making drama into prose narrative. Each time the generic shift triggers the change of expressive means, therefore the rewritten version does certainly differ from the original play. Sanders argues that the discrepancies that arise between the final product of adaptation and the source text may raise questions regarding faithfulness, value, and taste, yet instead of "encouraging polarized value judgement" (Sanders 24) that can emerge in possible debates, adaptation studies should be focused more on exploring "process, ideology and methodology" (24). Moreover, criticism can still involve a comparison, but it can be focused on specific aspects, such as, for example, the elaboration of the main motifs, foregrounding, re-contextualization, or development of protagonists.

The concept of rewriting is closely related to adaptation, but it has also a lot in common with the practice of translation. Pavis notes that it is often difficult to draw a dividing line between the two terms, as both practices refer to the same sets of operations on texts. Adaptation, just as rewriting, should mean translation in the sense of adapting "the source text to the new context of reception" (Pavis 14). All re-readings of classics, he states, including abridged versions or new interpretations, are in themselves adaptations, as is "the process of translating a foreign text and adapting it to the cultural and linguistic context of the target language" (14). Also, as he observes, many translations are today called adaptations which reaffirms the fact that any kind of intervention in a previously written text, ranging from translation to rewriting, is a creative act, a "re-creation" (14). He also argues that any transfer of forms from one genre to another is always a process involving "the production of meaning" (14). On the basis of these arguments, it can be assumed that literary reconstruction or reproduction is a creative act which, additionally, can stimulate positive emotions (Nęcka 79). The positive emotions may also facilitate access to resources of memory which, according to Nęcka who examines the psychology of creativity, can significantly reinforce any creative process (80).

Another literary practice standing in a close relationship to adaptation is appropriation. Although, similarly to adaptation, appropriation is aimed at reinterpreting and revising the original text, it is a practice which takes the rewritten text even further from the sources. Adaptation, as Sanders argues, "most often signals a relationship with an informing source text either through its title or through more embedded references …" (35). Appropriation, however, does not always demonstrate this so explicitly. It is "a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain, often through the actions of interpolation and critique as much as through the movement from one genre to others" (35). Appropriation aims to become a critical text, whereas adaptation is not necessarily concerned with criticism. Because appropriation may involve a genre shift, the retellings discussed in this work often possess the features characteristic of this practice. Of course, all the novels chosen declare their relationship with the source dramas in a direct way, but the source texts have become embedded in them, and re-contextualized into entirely new literary contexts. The retellings remain, however, independent pieces of art, as they can be successfully read and understood without a need to refer to the source texts, as may be required in the case of appropriations, which does not always refer to the source text in a straightforward way. The books that I discuss may be, therefore, approached by readers without prior knowledge of the

original plays, but the intertextual awareness of Shakespeare may make their experience "deepened and enriched by a wider range of possible responses" (Sanders, 37).

Although Sanders states that knowledge of the works embedded in a film adaptation is not necessary for "a satisfying experience of viewing such a film" (28), it remains debatable whether this is so in other circumstances. When approaching novelized versions of Shakespeare's plays, such knowledge might appear rewarding. Sanders agrees with this assumption, claiming that the awareness "brought into play in the process of understanding could enrich the spectator's experience and may indeed enhance or complicate the pleasures involved" (28). Although the argument mostly concerns film adaptation, it can be universally applied to any other practice of rewriting. In the process of reading novelized versions of the plays, possessing knowledge of the source works appears important for at least two reasons. Firstly, the reader is aware of any change introduced to the base text and can trace such changes within the whole narrative. Spotting and recognizing the tiniest detail referring to the classic text can bring satisfaction that the allusion has been deciphered. Secondly, the reader can also take pleasure in comparing the two different interpretations of a given drama – the one 'staged' in someone's imagination, and the other offered by the rewriter, which, additionally is set within a narrative frame. The picture held only in the reader's mind, which emerges after reading a play is an abstraction, a mental construct, which can therefore be confronted with the world presented in a retelling. Again, satisfaction might be obtained from comparing, liking or disliking the solutions offered by a rewriter, or engaging in a game of choosing which picture seems to be more appealing to one's preferences. Additionally, pleasure may be taken from waiting for the story to unfold, for the closure to come, which, then, can produce a pleasant imbalance and tension (Abbott, 57). According to Abbott, this lack of closure, called *suspense*, is an indispensable element which gives narrative "its life" (57). Finally, the cumulative knowledge of all texts that have been previously read by both the reader and the author is an indispensable condition on which all intertextual texts of culture are created, rewritings included. Intertextuality is, therefore, a condition upon which all rewritten works are made, firstly because they have embedded in them some pre-existing texts of which they are composed, but secondly because both the reader and the author co-create them in a parallel manner, on two separate axes of reading.

Intertextuality is an important category to which all the texts discussed in this work belong. The term is believed to have been coined in the late 1960s by Julia Kristeva, who based her theory on Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, which assumes that texts and their authors engage

in a continual dialogue with each other (Martin 148). Kristeva defined intertextuality in her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" as "a mosaic of quotations" (37). She argued that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another" and that a word is always a mediator between them (37). The theory of intertextuality offers a specific understanding of a text, the reader and of the author. In light of it, a text is not only a piece of writing, but in a more general sense it means "anything perceived as a signifying system – therefore the reader is anyone who (consciously or unconsciously) receives something of the message, and the writer has to be understood in an abstract sense" (Still and Worton 33,34). According to Judith Still and Michael Worton, the authors of *Intertextuality. Theories and Practices*, the understanding of a text as an effect of blending two or more literary sources helps to "demystify the notion of *author*" (34). If the reader is a receiver of a message inclined in any text, he or she becomes its co-author, becomes a part of the creative process in which a text is made. Furthermore, the theory of intertextuality states that no text can exist as a "hermetic or self-sufficient whole"; nor can it function as a "closed system" (Still and Worton 1). This regularity is determined by two reasons. Firstly, the writer – before she or he becomes a creator of a text – is a reader of a variety of other texts, and in consequence new creations always become affected by a variety of "references, quotations and influences of every kind" (1). Secondly, in order to come into existence, texts must be co-created by their readers, as they (texts) are "available only through some process of reading" (1). Still and Worton underline that the reader's role in this process of co-creation is quintessential. H. Porter Abbott, on the other hand, underlines in his definition of intertextuality that we can express ourselves "only through words and forms that are already available to us" (236).

The co-dependence of texts on both the reader and on the author resembles the process of staging a performance in theatre, which is determined by the presence of spectators in the audience (a theatre performance is also a text within the scope of the theory of intertextuality). Still and Worton further argue that "what is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilization of the packaged textual material (say, a book) by all the texts which the reader brings to it" (2). What is more, the knowledge and the awareness of the texts embedded in the rewritten, or newly adapted text, is helpful in taking the most profit from reading. If, for example, an author gives a subtle allusion to a work that is unknown to the reader, she or he will not be able to notice it, and in consequence this reference will not play its intended function, or, as Still and Worton state, it "will have a dormant existence in that reading" (2). On the other hand, however, the text may benefit from a situation in which the reader has some experience

of a practice or theory which is entirely unknown to the author, and this in consequence may lead to a "fresh interpretation", a surprising one or one unexpected by the author. In all cases, an intertextual text is produced on two axes, the one on which texts enter via authors, and the other where they enter via the readers, their "co-producers" (2). On every level, intertextuality involves interactive processes of reading.

As the reader may become a "co-producer" of an intertextual piece of writing, as Still and Worton put it, he or she may be also rewarded with a particular pleasure "gained from investigating the hide-and-seek games which literary texts present with their intertextual references" (par. 1), as Hannah Jacobmeyer puts it in her essay "Graham Swift, *Ever After*: a Study in Intertextuality". Even if the reader may not be entirely capable of identifying all the hypotexts scattered by the author, "intertextuality generates tensions and excitement", as Jacobmeyer asserts (par. 1). As far as the author is concerned, he or she may implement those many references into a newly created text either consciously or unconsciously, depending on his or her experience in reading, as well as on a volume of texts which one has read before. From the reader's point of view, the potential of pleasure inferred from the aforementioned hide-and-seek game will also be dependent on one's reading expertise, as well as on the ability to spot the references integrated with the text. Anyway, if the author builds up the text consciously, he or she will undertake a certain creative strategy to sketch the intertextual patterns of a narration. He or she will challenge the reader with that guesswork, offering "a handful of more or less clearly recognizable hypotexts" (Jacobmeyer). Instinctively, and by means of one's reading proficiency, the reader will become engaged in that intertextual game, trying to recognize the hidden hypotexts. By means of entering that game, in that dialogue with the author, the reader stops being only a passive receiver of a text, but becomes its co-composer, an active creator who "complements" the intertextual thread of a narration by enriching it with their own reading experience. The supposition that the reader is a co-creator of an intertextual text lies at the basis of Roland Barthes's theory on readerly and writerly texts, of which the latter ones are the texts which can be co-created together with the reader.

Barthes developed his theory on readerly and writerly texts in his book *S/Z*. In the study Barthes argues that the most classical and typical approach to writing texts assumes that the reader is only a passive receiver of a literary product, does not take part in the pleasure of its creation, but is only given a ready text for consumption. Contrary to this approach, Barthes juxtaposes a more creative one – the writerly approach, which assumes that the reader is allowed to step into the creative process of writing and is enabled to rewrite any text of culture in parallel

with the author. The writerly kind of texts may be created by the whole tissue of voices delivered both from the author as well as from the reader. Such a phenomenon becomes possible thanks to the process of interpretation which always takes place in the present time and is a tool which every reader possesses and uses while reading, and therefore co-creating the meaning of a text being read. Every act of interpreting a text is a unique experience semiotically, as readers vary in terms of the texts they know and have read. Thanks to interpretation though, texts can be rewritten continually and, contrary to readerly ones, become not a physical object that can be put on the shelves, but are rather "written" in the imagination of the reader. In Barthes's view, the writerly texts are the ideal ones, as they lessen the distinction between the reader and the writer. A writerly text has, according to Barthes, "no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable" (*S/Z* 5). In light of that theory the rewritings of Shakespeare's plays fit into the category of writerly texts as the majority of readers will approach them with at least a little knowledge of Shakespeare, his plays and of the numerous representations of his literature present and available in culture.

Intertextuality can also be a term used to cover much broader range of practices than only those connected to texts. The repetition of past and contemporary texts can also occur within usual, everyday contexts by way of everyday communication. Still and Worton draw attention to the fact that the variety of processes of rewriting can range from those most conscious and sophisticated elaborations of other works, to a "scholarly use of sources, or the quotation (with or without the use of quotation marks)". In fact, transformations of previous texts occur also while the users of language translate the ideas in their minds into spoken or written language. The authors also observe, that although the term *intertextuality* was coined in 1960, the phenomenon "is at least as old as recorded human society" (2).

Since Kristeva argued that texts absorb one another (37), there must exist a corelation, a dialogue between them. The inevitability of this dialogue has become the basis of another important literary theory – the theory of anxiety of influence that was broadly developed by its author Harold Bloom. According to his arguments developed in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* from 1973, many aspiring authors struggle with the fear of being influenced by prior literary works, and after all they can hardly overcome that feeling. Similarly to Kristeva, Bloom argues that no piece of writing is created "from a scratch", but is made up of other earlier texts, by means of citations, allusions or by transformation. In other words, Bloom maintains that it is highly unlikely that an author can create any original text, as every literary

product is always a poet's response to everything he or she has read or heard before. Although originally applicable to poetry only, the theory of anxiety of influence is certainly adaptable to the other forms of writing, as every literary artist is influenced by prior works of literature. All writers, to some degree, copy one another voluntarily or involuntarily by means of relating to other texts in their compositions. According to *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, "a poet is motivated to compose when his imagination is seized upon by a poem or poems of a *precursor*" (Abrams 155). This composition may be oriented in two directions: it can be either a piece of admiration or a criticism of that anterior text, but it is always a kind of a dialogue with it.

To illustrate the concept of influence, Bloom quotes Oscar Wilde, observing that "Influence is simply a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to one's self, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss. Every disciple takes away something from its master" (Wilde: Bloom 6). Anything that is taken from the master, as Bloom observes, may be either a blessing or a curse – besides the benefits of influence which can relate to inspiration and an awe that can drive a writer, that "transference" may change into a burden from which all the anxiety stems. The unwanted influence may hinder creativity, newness and originality. As a result, the suppressive forces of old texts may stimulate "hate, envy, and fear of the precursor's preemption of the descendant's imaginative space" (Abrams 155). In other words, those poets who can overcome the unwanted reminiscences of the "parent" text will be called "strong" ones, and those who will not will be called "weak" ones (Abrams 155).

In terms of the theory of the anxiety of influence, contemporary re-writers of Shakespeare are neither "strong" nor "weak", as their aim is not to create an entirely new piece of writing. Quite the reverse, they seem to be inspired, intending to recreate Shakespeare and to enter into a conscious dialogue with that huge "parent" literary work. Perhaps, escaping the influence of the prior works was to some extent unavoidable, as, in fact, the project's aim was to base the retellings on the classical plots, without losing the trace of the anterior works. The dramas are therefore an anchor to which the contemporary tales are connected. Some of the rewriters have an especially tight bond with that anchor – Jeanette Winterson, for example, found in *The Winter's Tale* a mirror story to her own experiences. Explaining why she chose that particular play she would say: "it's got an abandoned baby in it, and I am one" (Winterson). In the same conversation the writer admits to have been attracted to the play since her early childhood when she was reading Shakespeare a lot – and it was in *The Winter's Tale* where she found "clues" about herself (Winterson). Certainly, for the author relating to Shakespeare in

her retelling might have meant creating a tight dialogue with the play, perhaps also a personal one. Though the traces of *The Winter's Tale* are rather well-covered in her novel, *The Gap of Time* – like all the other novels discussed in this study relate to Shakespeare either by language, or by the structure of each play – they are detectable in the rewritings, either by direct quotations, or by thinly veiled allusions, as for example in the protagonists' names that only hint at the original names in the precursive texts.

1.2. Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame As Discussed by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere

Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame is Susan Bassnett's and André Lefevere's pioneering work on rewriting. It extensively discusses some of the motivations standing behind rewriting impulses. Although first published in 1992, the regularities of rewriting discussed by the authors still remain relevant. Edwin Gentzler who refers to Lefevere later in his own work, believes that the book is the "most often cited by the scholars on the topic" (121). In *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, Lefevere and Bassnett maintain that translation is in fact a practice of rewriting, as any translated text is a text based upon another one and they remain in an inseparable relationship. They also argue that translation, just as rewriting, must always be suited to a certain ideology and poetics. No text appears in a vacuum. There is always a certain context in which texts are read and reread, and another one into which they are translated and transposed (Aksoy par. 5). Lefevere and Bassnett also distinguish and analyse criteria by which one can measure the shifts in rewritings and which influence the choices of rewriters. As Aksoy argues, "most translation projects are initiated by an actor of the domestic culture such as state ideology, culture climate, the expectations of the target audience, economic and social reasons, etc. and foreign texts are selected not by translators themselves but by this actor, who manipulates the whole process" (Aksoy par. 6). The above sentence very accurately summarizes the role of the three criteria which Bassnett and Lefevere presented as key factors determining the rewriter's choices. The criteria are patronage, poetics and ideology, and they all influence the processes of translation – the primary form of rewriting. Any form of rewriting is always a manipulation. "All rewritings", say the authors, "whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (Lefevere vii). The fundamental and initial aim of all rewritings, as Lefevere asserts, is power, and if it is positive, it can immensely influence the evolution of literature and of culture. Hence rewriting is indeed a proactive force, what Gentzler himself very often repeats in his own work. At the

beginning of the book, Lefevere explains that rewriting can introduce new qualities into cultures, such as new concepts, genres and devices. On the other hand, it can be also a limiting force, as it can "repress innovation" (vii) and spontaneity in the evolution of literature. Nevertheless, the author strongly invites readers to pay more attention to rewriting, as in times when one is faced with different sorts of manipulation, it is recommended to explore rewriting (itself a form of manipulation) to become more aware of the invisible networks of correlations in which we live.

1.1.1. Patronage

The first factor which influences any process of rewriting is "patronage". "Patronage" is defined as the powers held in the hands of people or institutions that can "further, hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature" (Lefevere 15). In other words, the choice of what will be and what will not be rewritten is not an outcome of randomly taken decisions, but depends on the funds that are dedicated to it, and on the people who distribute them. According to Lefevere, the bodies which mostly influence the processes of rewriting literature are courts, political parties, religious institutions but also "the media, both newspapers and magazines and larger television corporation" (15). Gentzler supplements that list with "large publishing houses" (121) which definitely do have an impact on the reading choices of their clients, who may determine their reading decisions either according to one's preferences, or on the basis of what is being launched for retail. Patronage is therefore the factor which influences rewriting, and reading as well, so that the rewritten literature becomes suited "in line with the *new* dominant poetic" (Lefevere 19). Nevertheless, besides of being a control factor "which operates mostly outside the literary system" (15) patronage is, at the same time, a positive power which "produces discourse" (15) and stimulates creativity.

Patronage has a long history in literary systems and has always been an important factor influencing the formation of cultures. Even Shakespeare, being a translator and a playwright, had to deal with the constraints imposed on him by the royal court, as he was working "within traditional patronage relations of literary production" (Kavanagh 151). Shakespeare's plays were written for a theatre which was "subject to state censorship" (Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction" 65) and he must have cared about fitting into the dominant ideology and poetics in order to remain prosperous as an artist. He worked "within the parameters delimited by its constraints" (Lefevere 13) but chose to adapt to them, which, in consequence, was a guarantee of success, as the plays appealed to the patrons and audiences. Throughout his career

Shakespeare was well aware about the current poetics and dominant "social codes" (Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction" 76) as he had to respect and satisfy his sovereign – the Queen who, "for good reason, was sensitive to any challenge to the legitimacy of the monarchy, and her word could put an end to Shakespeare's career, if not his life" (Kavanagh 151). Especially, the poet had to "keep favour with his court patron – in this case the powerful Lord Chamberlain – who afforded the company political protection, and, literally, licence to work." (Kavanagh 151). Finally, the playwright must have consider the tastes of his broad audiences which was demanding and varied – as Kavanagh states – had its representatives from "London's mercantile, artisanal and working classes" (151). Nothing was therefore careless or spontaneous in Shakespeare's artistic entrepreneurship, but it was rather a well-thought and meticulously prepared work governed by a far-reaching and effective strategy.

At the same time, close cooperation with patrons gave to Shakespeare an opportunity to become a wealthy man. From the Introduction to *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan, we learn that by 1592 Shakespeare was already well established in London as an actor and as a playwright. The poet's income, however, came not only from royal commissions. He was also a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and – as we can read in Proudfoot, Thompson and Kastan – this position entitled him to "one-tenth of the company's profit" (3). With the accession of James I to the throne in 1603, the group changed its name to The King's Men for whom Shakespeare worked until the end of his life. From the facts presented by the authors we are able to infer that the sums were not small, as the writer was able to make "considerable investment in real estate" (3). The salary made for writing the plays commissioned by the company was even recorded in court records from 1594, which "indicate payments to Shakespeare and two other sharers in the Lord Chamberlain's Men for 'two several comedies or interludes showed by them before her Majesty in Christmas time last'"(3). Other source informs us that Shakespeare not only made money, wrote about it, but also enabled many others to make it (Holderness 1). Holderness also mentions that in 1970 "Shakespeare *became* money (…)" (1) and was "the first non-royal historical personality to appear on a banknote" (1).

The demand of staying in line with the current literary trends, stylistic demands and needs imposed by the patrons must have influence Shakespeare writing which was mostly based on the practice of rewriting. Rewriting or imitating existing models or motifs was a general tendency in Elizabethan England, and Shakespeare was no exception to it (Proudfoot et al. 10). This might be explained by the fact that "Elizabethan playwrights worked in a repertory system

which constantly demanded new plays. Their natural expedient (…) was to base many, even most, of their plays on familiar stories" (10). Proudfoot notes that almost all of Shakespeare's plays "can be shown to follow, broadly or closely what scholars have designated as his 'sources' – that is earlier texts he had read or otherwise knew of" (10). Examples of such rewriting may be, for instance, *Romeo and Juliet* which is based on a novella written in Italy in the late fifteenth century (Gibbons 1007), or *A Midsummer Night's Dream in which Shakespeare* "assembles heterogeneous materials and links them narratively and thematically" (Brooks 889) in a complete narration. Indeed, the fact that Shakespeare rewrote existing texts makes him an especially good case in a discussion of rewriting, especially, inasmuch as the modern rewritings of his dramas continue the process he himself initiated.

1.1.2. Poetics and ideology

Another component influencing rewriting as defined by Lefevere is "poetics", including all the available technical devices and frameworks which are at a translator's disposal. Gentzler interprets that component in the following way. "Poetics", Gentzler writes, "refers to the literary devices, genres, motifs, and characteristics prominent in the receiving culture" (121). Lefevere maintains that a translator's choices, invention and strategies strongly depend on this category. In line with this assumption, all the decisions a translator makes should resonate with the linguistic climate of the receiving culture – or at least the culture of the mainstream; it seems logical to assume this. In the vast repertoire of literary devices, translators need to align all their decisions with given cultural standards, in order not to deliver a text which is hermetic and awkward. These assumptions resonate with the ideas of "patronage", so perhaps these categories intertwine. Additionally, according to Berrin Aksoy, no translated, hence rewritten, text emerges from a vacuum, but is rather created with respect to the given norms of the target society which should be helpful in "influencing the audience according to the ideology and poetics of that society" (Aksoy, conclusion). Such an aligning to the target context does not have to be regarded as limiting, but should be rather considered a helping guide, and a call to more extensive research into the target culture, of which Julia Tymoczko mentions in her essay (1084).

1.1.3. Ideology

The third and the last factor listed by Lefevere is "ideology". Ideology "points to constraints upon the translator because of the political climate in which the translator lives" (Gentzler 122). To illustrate the power of this component Lefevere tells the fascinating story of the famous Anne Frank's *Diary*. The *Diary* not only underwent many editions after Anne's death, but was also considerably restructured in the translation into German. The translation, full of unintended misunderstandings (due to the translator's insufficient knowledge of Dutch) and deliberate omissions, was done by a German friend of the Frank family, Anneliese Schutz. Schutz was asked to translate the manuscript by Anne's father, who had a strong wish to publish it in Germany. The translation was prepared under severe restrictions of the former German ideology and political correctness, which makes it a good example of how destructive the power held by copyright laws may be (Lefevere 61).

The final German edition became a much-reduced version of what it was intended to be, and to a great extent it is a weakened retelling of the authentic Anne Frank's report. Much of the time, Schutz "cleans up" (71) Frank's language in order to fit it into the approved standards of the target culture. Lefevere points out that all the references to bodily functions of all kinds were omitted. For instance, Anne had a purpose to write about people complaining about their defecation – such scrupulous documentation stemming from her observation must have reflected how horrible sanitary conditions were for the people living under Nazi occupation. The German translation, unfortunately, does not fit in with her intentions. Suffering people express their discomfort "more elegantly" complaining about their "digestion" (71). Lefevere reminds the reader about the fact that Anne, as many girls her age, used to be especially interested in defecation, as it "was for a while associated in her mind with the birth of children" (62). None of those subtleties are reflected in the translation. Moreover, Frank's manuscript lost much of its content for another reason. According to Anne's father, Otto Frank, Anneliese was much too old and too mature to recreate the authentic tone of the narration made by a fourteen-year-old girl and was not able to take a similar perspective. Her point of view dictated different strategies and choices than those that could have been taken by Anne herself. The language, too, is inadequate. Many of the expressions which used were "not in the tone of youth" (65), and she misunderstood many expressions in Dutch. Moreover, Lefevere is certain about the fact that Schutz omitted so much of the content of the diary to put it in line with German ideology and politics. This way, for instance, some of the fragments where the

Germans are shown in a bad light are weakened in Schutz's translation or completely silenced (Lefevere 64).

Anne Frank in the translation into German had to become a girl who could suit the repertoire of manners for a German girl her age. She had to behave "properly", yet this "right" way of behavior is another false note in the translation. Schutz ignores the fact that the "good character" of the girl had been influenced by the cruel occurrences of the war and life in hiding places. The German-language Anne Frank is impossibly, artificially "proper". In the German interpretation she does not use an expression for "chamber pot" (70), nor even say "I laugh until I get bellyache" (as if it was improper for a girl to admit she has an aching stomach). The German translation makes her laugh "without care and happily" (70). The other "dirty words" like Dutch "cordeel" (brothel) and "cocotte", which Anne picked up from her reading, have been silenced too (Lefevere 64).

In the cognition of the German translator a girl of Frank's age and social status is not supposed to possess too much knowledge, or at least knowledge of a certain kind. Frank, for instance, once described flowers she received for her birthday as "de kinderen de Flora" [the children of Flora] (Paape 198), uncovering in this way her interest in mythology, which – as we read in Lefevere – was one of her hobbies. The German translator rewrites the passage into a far weaker, neutral version. Anne gets "flower greetings", which does not give a hint of what the girl was interested in at that time. In this way we are also able to see how scrupulous the German translator is in deleting any manifestation of Frank's literary creativity. In the stereotype of the target culture, a fourteen-year-old girl is just not supposed to be creative. It might be concluded that a girl of Anne's age is not allowed to possess talents, imagination, freedom of thought and speech, at least not in German reality to which the text was meant to be delivered. Lefevere leaves no doubt as to the fact that no effort is made to reproduce in German any of the stylistic effects which the author tried to achieve in Dutch (71).

Another characteristic issue in the German translation is the fact that the translator deprives Anne Frank of the right to judge other women. Again, stereotypical views vibrant in the target culture dictate the choices of the translator and influence the final content of the text. "Fourteen-year-old girls", writes Lefevere, "are also not allowed to sit in judgement on their mothers or elder sisters" (71). For example, Anne writes in Dutch that she could never live a satisfactory life the way her mother and sister Margot were willing to. Frank describes their routine as "such a limited life", which clearly suggests what her feeling is about the life pattern

the women had chosen. In the German translation, the girl says, "such a simple life", which sounds rather objective, and is another example of lessening the power of Frank's message, of depriving her of individuality and criticism. The interference of Schütz goes even further. She deprives Anne of the right of possessing her own diary – a privilege of having a private space where one can deposit one's secrets (Lefevere 71). The German projection of Anne is a girl who only wishes of having such an object, and only intends to never confess certain thoughts to anyone (Lefevere 71). All these techniques used in translation were meant to deliver a version of a person who conforms "to a cultural stereotype" that was current in Germany at the time (Lefevere 72). Anne Frank became aligned to the constraints and expectations of the target culture.

In conclusion, patronage, poetics, and ideology influence the translator's choices, Lefevere maintains, and the outcome of translation can never be free from that impact. This view is maintained by Gentzler, who supports and develops many ideas of Lefevere and Bassnett and finds in them vivid inspiration for his own research. Moreover, Gentzler observes that what Lefevere tries to say is that translation is not a direct retelling of a text from one language to another, but it is more a retelling of a certain "image" of that text, the image which is vivid within the culture. "According to Lefevere", writes Gentzler, "all the three categories are intertwined so that the translator never produces *true* translations, but rather *images* of the original that were often more powerful than the originals themselves" (122). A good example of re-creating a particular literary image is, for example, a film adaptation, in which one image changes into another image – the one processed in the imagination of its re-creator. In effect, there appears a new representation of a former image – a translated product which may differ radically from its predecessor, but which has a strong impact and wide reach.

While discussing rewriting we obviously cannot ignore the importance of rewriters, who are at the centre of interest in Lefevere's work. The author defines rewriters as "those in the middle, the men and the women who do not write literature, but rewrite it" (1). Most readers are not fully aware of how significant their role is in the systems of literature and in the literary markets in which we actively participate. The rewriters – all those who reshape existing works of literature – prolong those works' existence, recycle them and deliver them in a variety of forms and ways, be it translation, adaptation, criticism, or in the form of a lecture delivered during courses in literature. They actively retell literature, linking the past with the present. The outcome of their work serves non-professional readers – all those who do not make their living from writing, but only read for pleasure. These readers very often have no access to the original

works, but just their rewritten versions. According to Lefevere, those readers "constitute the great majority of the readers in our global culture" (Lefevere, 1). Rewriters act like agents who, by reworking classical literary "images," let them live new lives in the imaginations of new generations of readers. According to Lefevere, rewriters are "responsible for the general reception and survival of works of literature" (1) among non-professional readers. Having this responsibility, rewriters, among whom translators are included, open us towards the abundance of texts which non-professional readers would never be able to read due to, for example, language barriers. There are, for example, troublesome words in Shakespeare which may be difficult either because they are "used in an older sense" (Brook 47), or are of Latin or French origin (Brook 47). Rewriters also maintain and prolong the fame of the authors and of their works, and of the splendour of the texts letting their readers cherish various feelings for literature, as for example the evergreen awe towards plays by Shakespeare.

I argue that rather than thinking of translation as a somewhat secondary process of ferrying ideas across borders, we instead think about translation as one of the most important processes that can lead to revitalizing culture, a proactive force that continually introduces new ideas, forms or expressions, and pathways for change.

Edwin Gentzler

1.2. Edwin Gentzler on the responsiveness of translation studies to irreversible changes in culture

Fame, according to the definition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, is "the state of being known or talked about by many people" ("Fame", def. 1.a). Every kind of fame, including literary fame, tends to rise and fall, usually in an unpredictable manner, seemingly out of anyone's control. However, the title of Lefevere's work – *Translation, Manipulation and Rewriting of The Literary Fame* – includes a suggestion that fame may be to some extent regulated, as it is open to manipulation. The fame of a literary text is strongly connected to rewriting, and to some extent it is an effect of it. What is more, fame can create illusions. The fame associated with certain names and titles, is, according to Lefevere, not an abstract idea which escapes reasonable explanation, but an effect of purposeful and intentional rewriting of existing works of literature. Practices of rewriting, adaptation or translation always serve various ideological, economic and aesthetic needs which stand behind choices as to which literary text is going to be reworked. Lefevere's book is an attempt to show that such attributes as "originality", "inspiration", and "aesthetic excellence", which are often ascribed to books, cannot deliver objective judgements. Gentzler's *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies* from 2017 is strongly inspired by Lefevere's theories. He finds Lefevere's claims germane to modern literature, and notices that the "greatness" of a piece of literary art, which is often taken for a synonym of originality, inspiration, or aesthetic excellence, is to a greater extent an effect of skilful rewriting. Professional, purposeful rewriting of the source literature is, according to Gentzler, the pivotal ingredient of creating literature, and no piece of literary art can be analysed without an investigation of the sources. Moreover, the author argues that the fame ascribed to the names of authors and their works is often misleading: "these texts", writes Gentzler, "are imbued with a great deal of aura, as if the authors of these texts were divinely inspired with access to original ideas and expressions. Yes, maybe these authors are geniuses, but postmodern literary critics and post-translation scholars suggest that they are geniuses of a different sort – of construction, form, composition, importing

new ways of expression, and, especially, translation"(Gentzler 119). Gentzler, of course, does not discourage us from liking books, but rather provokes one to look behind the surface of any text, to perceive a work of literature as a meticulously made collage, to see writing as a heavily trained craft of reconstruction.

Gentzler's work – *Translation and Rewriting in The Age of Post-Translational Studies* – opens with a foreword written by Susan Bassnett in which she provides an explanation of the prefix 'post', which has a specific meaning for the author. The word signifies a new opening which has been awaited by the discipline of translation studies for long time. According to Bassnett, the prefix 'post' has two juxtaposed meanings: "it can signify ending, meaning that something is definitively over and behind you […], or it can have a much more positive meaning, it can signify the start of a new phase, a movement towards a next stage […] out of which comes new life and growth" (viii). The second interpretation of the word is especially inspiring for Gentzler who perceives an upcoming era of translation studies as a "revolutionary act" (viii), the start of a new phase offering new possibilities for translators. The contemporary approach to translation must bring into context the elements that stand behind linguistics, such as sociology, politics, anthropology or psychology. Only after looking from such a broad perspective, can one understand the translational effects of any text, which derive from all the aforementioned aspects coexisting together. Understood this way, post-translation studies cannot proceed successfully without being aware of the influence of all the elements that construct the context of translation (viii).

In order to grow and evolve, translation studies should step out of the area centred mostly on linguistics. Culture and communication have developed rapidly within recent decades; texts are being created within new contexts; therefore focusing merely on the comparison of texts can no longer be the sole objective of translation studies. The author observes that translators have locked themselves within self-imposed boundaries, and pay too much attention to strict analysis of texts. The discipline needs to work on opening itself towards other fields of study, such as new media, cultural studies, psychology or sociology. It should start learning about the background of the culture to which texts are being translated and rewritten in order to be able to measure the effects translated texts have on the target cultures. Gentzler's observation is shared by other scholars, who perceive the insularity of translation studies as a definite drawback. "Some scholars", he argues, "find the field of translation studies too narrow, text-centric, and based upon European definitions and models derived in the 1970s and early 1980s" (1). The author suggests stopping treating translation as the "centre of a single

discipline" (2), but instead recommends considering it a multidisciplinary field. Thinking about translation must be altered too. Translation should not be regarded "as a short-term product or a process, but as a cultural condition underlying communication" (7).

Furthermore, Gentzler underlines that the need for change is not a possibility but rather a necessity. Forces of globalization have already reshaped the world to such an extent that the goals of translation have shifted too. The speed of communication has become so high, that translators can no longer focus only on correctness and linguistic accuracy, but they should rather facilitate communicative processes, and rethink translation as a fundamental aspect of a dialogue between cultures. Translation as a process is too powerful to be shut into a box of linguistic comparisons (5). Also, the products of translation can be seen in many other forms than only literature. The landscape in which we live – "the parks, buildings, roads, memorials, churches, schools, and government organizations" (5) – can be regarded as products of post-translation effects, Gentzler asserts.

The author is also aware that literary texts move rapidly and internationally on a massive scale, mostly by means of new media. Processes of rewriting are performed daily and by a countless number of people. Within the last three decades there has also occurred evolution in the perception of a translator, or, broadly speaking, a rewriter. In the early 1990s, Lefevere regarded translators as members of a rather exclusive group of professional rewriters. He differentiated them from non-professional readers to whom literature constitutes merely a pastime. Today, however, this formerly limited society of rewriters has widened its borders letting non-professional rewriters take some floor space as well. Non-professional translators and rewriters not only create new forms of rewriting in new media, but they also translate a plenitude of texts on a massive scale –one that could not have been foreseen by Lefevere. "Young people", Gentzler argues, "using new media have taken such *rewriting* processes to new heights: authoring blogs, spinning the news, adapting music and film, creating YouTube pastiches" (7). The change in the distribution of rewritten texts arouses a growing interest in these means of expression. The new forms of rewriting, according to Gentzler, do not allow the discipline of translation studies to stay fossilized in its old-fashioned monolithic shape. This is especially so because today, as never before, rewriting has become a tool available to almost everyone. People spend more time on the Internet and on electronic texts, which "become easier to copy and paste", as Gentler observes. In fact, "never before have art, music, film, and translations been easier to search, scan, reproduce, and send" (11). Taking all those changes into consideration, translation studies can no longer be approached with the worn-out set of

tools and words which were relevant to it in the last century. Translation processes are today substantially determined by the activity of young users, whose forms of expression can bring a vast amount of information regarding communicative processes. Finally, Gentzler encourages his readers to "rethink translation by getting rid of the many dichotomies and reimagining the cultural foundation in terms of all people being rewriters" (8).

1.1.1. How will translation research develop? The possible trajectories offered by Maria Tymoczko.

The need to open the discipline of translation studies towards other disciplines has already been recognized by some scholars. In 2005, Maria Tymoczko, a professor of comparative literature at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, published an essay "Trajectories in Research in Translation Studies" where she made an attempt to foresee and discuss the possible trajectories of research in translation studies that were "likely to be productive in the coming decades" (Tymoczko 1082). Among the possible changes discussed, Tymoczko focuses on the need to redefine translation, as, in order to undertake any kind of research, the researchers must deal with the terms and definitions which help them to handle, tackle and manipulate abstract or concrete ideas. She argues that the definition of translation studies is not forever fixed but can still be reformulated and remodelled. The category must remain open, even if there might be opponents who like "precision and controlled or closed definitions" (Tymoczko 1088). It must be open-ended, because this allows it to adapt to "diverse cultural conditions, to diverse social functions, and to changing technologies as well" (1088).

Technology and globalization are other issues taken by Tymoczko into consideration as serious factors which will determine – and which already has determined – the direction of research in the field of translation studies. One of the most considerable changes will be the change of the optic of perceiving the agent of translation, who can no longer be perceived as a single, individual creator of a text, but rather as a group operating quickly and multilingually. Today, Tymoczko argues, "when translation projects involve both multiple languages and high speed [..] translation must become a decentred process conducted by teams of people linked electronically through technological systems, rather than by single individuals or even groups of individuals coordinating their efforts from a single place" (1089). Other possible changes that will be induced by changes in technology and globalization are difficult to foresee. To discuss them –she comments – is like gazing into "a crystal ball", which, as the author believes, is "a dangerous and heady endeavour, where the limitations of a gazer are always apt to be shockingly apparent" (1082).

Tymoczko also believes that another area of translation research which is likely to expand in upcoming decades will be connected to the relationship between translation and cognitive science. Such a fusion might deliver some knowledge about processing of the likeness between an original and a translated text by the human brain. If users of language understood the mechanisms of that phenomenon, they would gain "greater self-reflexivity, including a better understanding of the types of likenesses privileged within specific contexts" (Tymoczko 1092). Moreover, we are also very likely to observe a dynamically growing interest in the neurophysiology of translation, which could be helpful in understanding not only the process of translating, and therefore rewriting, but also the activity of the brain characteristic to moving between two languages. Possible research questions would be as follows: "How do the brains of bilinguals differ from those of monolinguals? Where and how are multiple languages stored in the brain? Do all translators operate using the same parts of the brain or do people vary widely in their cognitive modes and brain patterning? Is brain patterning during translation largely uniform across culture (and individuals within cultures) or does it differ radically from person to person, place to place?" (1093). Summing up, research in translation is tending to become interdisciplinary, and the future outcomes might be significant in the post-translation era. Its outcomes, Tymoczko believes, might drastically change the perception and the pedagogy of translation, as well as the entire approach to it, which can no longer be static and formulaic (1095).

1.1.2. Translation studies and food

Another interesting connection between translation and other disciplines is that with food studies. Delia Chiaro and Linda Rossato from the University of Bologna in Italy discuss this topic in their essay published in 2015 in *The Translator.* In the initial part of the article the scholars try to discover the origins of the growing interest in food in culture and science. The voice of Harold McGee is helpful here. McGee is an American author writing about the chemistry and history of food science and cooking. His interdisciplinary approach let him built the opinion that the growing interest in food is a natural and logical consequence of the growing availability of that supply in Western societies. He is also helpful in explaining a still growing presence of food in the academic world. "Science", writes McGee, "has found its way into the kitchen and cooking" (2), and in consequence, the kitchen and cooking have been brought to universities in exchange. Further, as Chiaro argues, "due to globalization of food production and distribution, the circulation of food items originating from the most remote parts of the planet [...]"(Chiaro and Rossato 237) has caused a growing demand for the translation of many

different documents and labels that come together with food to all the countries that are ready to import them. Another obvious consequence is the growing interest in translation devoted to food related topics (237).

1.1.3. The analogies between translation and food

Nevertheless, despite the rapidly growing market for translation of food-related texts, there has appeared a gap for investigating the relationship between food, culture, and translation, argue Chiaro and Rossato (237). They also present several points of convergence between translation and food, explaining the analogy between them. Firstly, the authors compare the act of translation to the act of preparing a dish. Just as a dish is composed of a certain set of ingredients held together by adequate tastes and structure, a literary text is a composition of words "glued" together by syntax and grammar. In consequence, the work of a translator and of a cook is parallel. "Both cook and translator", the authors maintain, "must examine the original recipe or text, find the right ingredients or words and consider strategies that will make the dish appealing to readers or diners. These strategies may involve the omission or substitution of an ingredient or an expression, if not the explication of a cooking method, of a pun or metaphor" (238). They also compare a translator to a mother whose child cannot eat solid food: "In a sense, the translator acts like a mother whose infant, the target reader, is incapable of chewing. Just as a mother pre-masticates food, similarly, the translator will physically break down the text and transform it into a satisfactory and easily digestible form" (238). Consequently, what both a translator and a cook try to achieve is the maximum "understanding" of their product. They also want these products to be as well integrated as possible with the target culture, to an extent where a recipient will not analyze them in terms of awkwardness, but where she or he will enjoy the consumption freely, without an inconvenient feeling of experiencing chaos (238).

The goal effect of translation processes is therefore to enable a text to melt into the recipient culture, to align it with certain set of stylistic or ideological standards and expectations. Nevertheless, although the work of the translator may be considerable, it is at the same time – as Chiaro and Rossato believe – "merely the tip of a lingua-cultural iceberg" (238), as "the twenty-first century is emerging as a liquid society in which borders and cultures appear to be slowly merging not only into a multicultural melting pot but also, as far as culinary habits are concerned, into a huge transcultural cooking pot" (238). The authors observation rhymes with, for example, Maria Tymoczko's suggestion to opening up the field of translator's work in order

to gather enough information about the target culture to which texts are being rewritten and translated.

One of the secrets of Shakespeare's success may be his changeability, the openness of his works to take on new meanings in contexts he cannot have anticipated.

Richard Proudfoot*, The Arden Shakespeare, Introduction*

2.   Shakespeare rewritten and Shakespeare as a rewriter

The practice of rewriting Shakespeare is not a recent phenomenon. However, it has scarcely been noted that the playwright was a rewriter himself. Gentzler refers to this fact by providing an observation that many scholars writing about rewritings of Shakespeare focus mostly on the rewritings, but give less attention to the fact that the poet was a prolific translator and rewriter of these works that were available to him. One of the editors of *Hamlet*, G. R. Hibbard, provides a claim that "Shakespeare's genius was his ability to take an old fashioned drama and utterly transform it" (Introduction 13). Itself, *Hamlet*, regarded as Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, is believed to be an adaptation of an earlier play, Thomas Kyd's *Ur-Hamlet* (Draut 290). As a complete drama, *Hamlet* is also believed to have been revised by Shakespeare himself. For example, one of the versions of that tragedy available to us nowadays is an adaptation of acting version done for the sake of pragmatic reasons (Draut 291). Draut notices that when companies went on tour to escape the plague, "the plays in its repertoire would be adapted to suit the smaller number of actors in the touring troupe" (291). *Hamlet* is not an exception among the plays that underwent adaptation though. *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, the other two well-known titles, are reckoned to have been revised by Shakespeare as well (Draut 291). Similar practice of reworking of the old plot can be also found in comedies, as Draut asserts, for instance in *The Comedy of Errors*, for which Shakespeare "adapted and complicated the plot of Plautus's Menaechmi" (Draut 291). Also, as Gentzler puts it, "many claim that Shakespeare was a genius, but during the age of Shakespeare and the English Renaissance, the concept of authorship was different than it is today. Most of Shakespeare's plays have earlier sources from which he borrowed heavily" (Gentzler 23). Also, "borrowing, rewriting, adaptation, even plagiarism, were more permissible", we learn from Gentzler (23). What is more, Shakespeare's choice regarding what to rewrite was most probably considerably broad and not limited by such constraints as authorship which might be an issue for the contemporary authors. In his essay, Adam Gopnik states the following: "Shakespeare grabbed his stories more or less at random from Holinshed's history of Britain and Plutarch and old collections of Italian ribald tales" (par. 1). Almost all Shakespeare's plays – Proudfoot claims – "can be shown to

follow, broadly or closely, what scholars have designated as his 'sources' – that is, earlier texts he had read or otherwise knew of" (10).

In order to imagine how intensive the schedule of the Elizabethan theatre was, let us present some figures. McEvoy provides information that the public playhouses were in operation six days a week, "putting on a different play each day. A new play would be added every two weeks or so, with more popular plays repeated and others abandoned […]"(120). Put under the pressure of time, rewriters became especially skilful in the practice: "The demand for new plays was high and playwrights often collaborated in teams or reworked others' material" (120). The matter of salary is also interesting, as playwrights sold individual plays to company managers together with the ownership to their plays (McEvoy 120). Once a text got into the hands of the theatre it became its property; it could be edited in multiple ways – in order to suit the actors who were to perform it, who were also privileged to change their lines according to their preferences. This way people employed in the entertainment industry became another link in the chain of rewriting, and literature evolved once more. Shakespeare, however, succeeded to keep the authorship to his early plays and could even edit the when he changed companies in 1594 (McEvoy 120). Less common were contracts: "A few established writers were put under contract to produce a certain number of plays in a specified time, receiving a 'salary' on top of the usual payments" (120). Shakespeare, as McEvoy argues, enjoyed "so far as we know the first of these rare arrangements" (120). In 1594, he was bonded by means of a contract with the Lord Chamberlain's Company, "probably for one 'serious' and one 'light' play during the year" (120). That was a privileged position, as he was one of the leading members of that company. He remained with them until the end of his life. Proudfoot informs us that the contract with the Lord Chamberlain's Company – which later evolved into the King's Men (during the reign of James I) – provided the playwright with economic stability and with "reasonably good working conditions and the opportunity to develop his work with known performers and business associates" (Proudfoot et al. 1). Altogether, it was the theatre which made Shakespeare a wealthy man, and the theatre was his primary work, Proudfoot argues (1). Nevertheless, what is probably less known, is the fact that the money which he earned, "came neither from commissions, nor from royalties for his plays but from his position as a sharer in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, by which he was entitled to one-tenth of the company's profits, a share handsome enough to permit him considerable investment in real estate" (Proudfoot 3). Without a doubt the goals of the theatre and of the writer were convergent. Another profit for Shakespeare from belonging to a company was the considerable chance that his plays would be

later collected. Other dramatists, as Proudfoot argues, such as for instance Thomas Middleton, "who produced work for a number of different companies, had a less stable working environment and less chance of having their work collected or even identified" (2). In conclusion, Shakespeare could enjoy favourable writing conditions guaranteed by a stable job, and, as one can believe, inspiring working environment.

According to Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare might have rewritten his own plays to achieve, for instance, an alternative ending of the plays. By altering the endings of the plays Shakespeare could also influence the emotions of his viewers what may suggest that he was an effective agent in the entertainment industry of that time. A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, is in many ways a rewriting of *Romeo and Juliet* which – to achieve a much more comic ending - was rewritten as a comedy. In line with what Garber argues, Shakespeare could have made that change for an audience who wished that the play had a much less tragic ending – especially without the death of Juliet. The audience could have wished to watch a romance with Romeo and Juliet "that does *not* take a late tragic turn" (Garber 23), and an answer to that demand might be *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which shares a number of common features with *Romeo and Juliet*, but ends happily. Where exactly are these plays similar? Garber argues that they both "have strong figures of authority, fathers who want to choose husbands for their daughters, and women who refuse to marry their chosen-for-them husbands and make plans to run away with 'true' lovers. Both plays figure daylight as rigid and related to law and order, and the night as open and transformative, associated with dreams and fantasy" (32). There are also "nightingales' evening songs, larks' morning songs, passionate speeches by strong women, talk of star-crossed lovers, and images of celestial lighting" (32). Other scholars, as Gentzler argues, are of the opinion that it is very likely that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written "concurrently with *Romeo and Juliet*" (32) and that "the play-within-the-play of the 'tragic comedy' of *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a way of parodying, metamorphosing and translating the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* into a tragical-mirth" (32). From these examples there emerges an image of a writer who was able to deliberately manipulate the given tones of his texts to obtain a desired effect in his recipients.

In order to achieve commercial success, the playwright also had to obey a certain discipline in observing trends, reacting to them and answering the needs of the entertainment industry. None of Shakespeare's writings is therefore set in a vacuum but is decidedly based on rewriting. The stories in Shakespeare's plays are, therefore, set within certain genre frameworks and built upon them – not solely for aesthetic reasons, but just for the sake of the success of the

play. The stories "had, by and large, set paths on which to run – or, rather, along which the audience expected them to run; any deviation from those paths would be measured in terms of the effectiveness of the difference from the expected path taken" (McEvoy 121). By acknowledging and respecting conventions, Shakespeare could have become a successful playwright. But there were also other mechanisms by which he might have "waved" to his audience, giving a sign of being familiar with what was being read and talked about at the time. One of the most common references was the Bible. Interesting is also the fact that in 1603 King James I commissioned a new translation of the Bible with an ambition to take all the existing versions of Bibles into account, and to rewrite them into a unified one. The goal was therefore not to create a new piece from scratch, but to reorganize the earlier existing versions of one work into another one – a "translation" of what had already been said and written (Gentzler 120). In Gentzler's view, this kind of approach to translation very accurately reflects the way of understanding this practice at that time, according to which translation is much more about *importing* given ideas into another culture than about inventing an entirely new concept. Shakespeare was a skilled professional at importing earlier ideas into his own works, which – as Gentzler maintains – does not diminish his talent, but rather underlines the fact that he was a genius of a different sort, "of construction, form, composition, importing new ways of expression, and, especially, translation" (120).

The role of translation in Elizabethan England was fundamental both for England's culture as well as for Shakespeare's writing. In fact, it was particularly due to translation that Shakespeare was able to create the works we know today. At the beginning of the sixteenth century languages in England were distributed within the country in a rather patchwork-like way. "Early Modern Britain was multilingual from within" (Gentzler 24) – the rich, privileged and educated spoke French and Latin. English, or more precisely Anglian dialects of English, were languages of the poor and uneducated. Himself, Shakespeare must have been particularly well exposed to translation, therefore he could access foreign languages and foreign literature without the need of travelling. Among the sources in which Shakespeare was immersed, there were, of course, the works of English authors as well. Proudfoot provides information that among Shakespeare's favourites were Chaucer, Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney (10). Some of the playwrights of his own and of the previous generation "notably John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, Robert Green and Christopher Marlowe, had much to offer him by way of example, and he must also have learned from his interaction with such rivals as Ben Jonson and from his collaborators, John Fletcher and (less certainly) Thomas Middleton" (11). Therefore, it is clear

that Shakespeare's art did not emerge in a void but was firmly based on earlier and contemporary literature. In the light of the theory of intertextuality, we may say that his works constitute an "intertext" as they overtly related to earlier and contemporary works and authors.

Apart from what was available in written form, some source texts might have also become known to Shakespeare by means of oral presentation and translation. Because the Elizabethan Age was tan age of trade and discovery (Gentzler 30), oral translation became common. It was "a natural result of the news spread by explorers returning from their voyages" (30). In addition, the Globe Theatre was situated right on the docks of the River Thames (Gentzler 30) which created natural environment for contacting people speaking foreign languages. The theatre's actors, including Shakespeare, "were surrounded by Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Portuguese, Welsh, Irish, Scots, and other languages in the boats, bars, hostels, bull-baiting rings, and streets" (Gentzler 30).

Among the most important and dominant trends which were translated and incorporated into English language and culture during the English Renaissance was the Italian Renaissance. During that time England was under the strong influence of Italian literary and intellectual trends. The "backwater English culture", Gentzler argues (23), not only wanted to read and hear in the English language "Dante, Ovid, Boccaccio, Tasso, and others" (23), but was also fascinated by a whole repertoire of the attributes of that culture, such as "Italian theatre, music, art, architecture, gardens, cooking, wines, dress, movement, and manners" (23). The Italian word *inventio* was the right word to denote any activity related to finding, borrowing and incorporating. Garber explains that "in the Renaissance, the notion of *inventio,* with its etymological root in 'finding', referred to the discovery, by search or endeavour, of ideas or images that could be used in rhetoric" (Gentzler 23). "Inventio" derives from *invenire*, or "to come upon", "to discover", or "to find" (23). In conclusion, it can be said that "to invent" meant rather to discover something through thorough research, than to establish a new idea from scratch. Plays were indeed invented. They were rewritten versions of chosen sources, which increased the probability that the audience would like them.

Basing our argument on the above examples, we can argue that the Elizabethan theatre was a dynamically operating construct which imposed on its participants its own specific rules, rules which playwrights should obey if they wished to become successful players in the entertainment business of that time. One of the practices which every playwright should incorporate into his own craft was creative imitation of existing models. Plays were expected

to show connotations with familiar stories, with already known topics and trends. Theatre companies were demanding. Writing experiments, or the lack of certainty whether the theatregoers would buy tickets or not, could not be welcome, as there was no room for errors. If a play failed, that must have meant either a loss of profit, or of the money that had been invested. Shakespeare appeared to be a skilful player in that system. As has been said earlier, almost all his plays "follow the source which he had read or otherwise knew of" (McEvoy 119). In practice, this equalled survival in the business. Having an awareness of the fact of how crucial rewriting was for Shakespeare, we can see contemporary rewritings of his works as a continuation of the process he himself initiated. Just as he used to base a play on a Chaucer story, so writers of today set their narration on the basis of his writings – which are already rewritings of someone else's work. There emerges a multiple layer of various tissues of narration which have eventually constructed the narrations of today, so that there is no possibility of talking about the contemporary novels that I have chosen without relating to the originals. The chosen books will therefore also be discussed also in the context of their predecessors.

Another important and relevant aspect of his literary art is the posthumous publication of the works of William Shakespeare. As Garber argues, the modern culture holds "a desire to identify and fi the 'real' Shakespeare, both the man and the play-text" (11). However, as she puts it, "the very nature of plays written for performance as well as the conditions of early modern printing and publication, at a time when the modern concept of copyright was in its nascent form, work against this understandable wish for authenticity" (11). Themselves, as any form of literary reproduction, the collection is an example of rewriting Shakespeare as well. As we already know, the plays were generally written on demand for a theatre company, and after a script was completed it belonged to the company that commissioned it. In obvious ways, the texts evolved under the influence of the performers – the actors changed their lines; the directors could omit whole passages. But another stage at which the scripts underwent even deeper alterations was when they were published (Gaber 11-12). As far as Shakespeare is concerned, his literary ambition seemed not so pushy. He "displayed no similarly proprietary artistic impulses" (7), as Proudfoot argues. At the time of his death, says the author, "eighteen plays had reached print (many in more than one edition), but he had prepared none of the texts for publication and had overseen none through the press" (7). In fact, none of the texts display "any sign of Shakespeare's interest or involvement in its printing" (7). As Proudfoot argues, "under certain circumstances, and with no necessary regard for the author's wishes or interest, the

companies would sell their rights to a play to a publisher, who would have it printed in an edition of about 800 copies, usually in a quarto format and selling for sixpence" (7). In line with the demand that authors receive no gratification after their plays were sold, they were given no profits from the sale of the manuscripts either. It is important to note, as Proudfoot argues, that the literary ambitions of playwrights were not a factor in publication (7). Authors remained anonymous and publishers did not particularly care about marking someone's identity on an individual title page. That was a rule to which there was, however, one exception. The only playwright in the period ever identified as an 'author' on a title page was Ben Johnson who undertook an "aggressive effort to create himself as a literary figure" (7).

The moment Shakespeare's name finally appeared on the title pages was the one at which it became a value for a publisher. This happened with the publication of the First Folio editions of his plays. This occurrence, as Proudfoot writes, "was neither his own idea nor of any direct benefit to him. He had died in 1616, seven years before the Folio appeared, and to the end showed no sign of any literary ambition for his plays" (8) Nevertheless, what the First Folio assumes is that "Shakespeare is indeed an author to be read and not merely a provider of scripts to be acted. The play-texts in the Folio are stripped of their theatrical associations" (8). In fact, Shakespeare the book and Shakespeare the dramatist, as Proudfoot argues, "were set on their divergent paths" (10).

3.   Shakespeare and women

The quotation heading this chapter is a phrase that begins the monologue of a nobleman Jaques, a character from Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It*, and is one of the most frequently quoted passages from Shakespeare. Jaques, who ascribes to himself the role of a melancholic observer, compares life on earth to a performance on "the world's stage" on which all people, both women and men, play their parts like actors on a stage. Jaques perceives a human's lifespan as a play in seven acts, which – in his interpretation – translates into seven decades of living (*As You Like It*, 2.7.139-166). He refers to the occurrences of life in which all people participate, and to the laws of nature to which everyone is also subject, regardless of the role taken in society. Both men and women all pass through the same phases of life, beginning with "the infant … in the nurse's arms", then changing into an adult, later to an elderly person "with spectacles on nose", and finally all turn "again toward childish … sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (*As You Like It*, 2.7. 143-166). As long as the "world's stage" (*As You Like It,* 2.7.139) does not distinguish between women and men, Jaques's metaphor cannot be translated into the conditions governing the stage in a theatre, which in the times of Elizabethan England was anything but democratic. The world of performing arts in the times of Shakespeare was, as Orgel puts it, was "an exclusively male preserve" (Orgel, *Impersonations* 10)

This patriarchal control over the theatrical world is, to some extent, renegotiated in the retellings which I have chosen for this study. The rewriters try to re-establish the balance between male and female characters, turning Shakespeare's plays into their own creative ground on which they can decide which parts to intensify or expand. In some ways, democracy has been restored, as a recognizable playwright, a creator of dramatic universes in which women could only play the roles he ascribed to them is now being taken by their hands and reconstructed. Now it is his worlds that serve as a platform for building the concepts of others, and his works become sources upon which new stories are built. Thus, the rewriting of Shakespeare today is an especially good example of circulation of literatures. It might be said that the work of the contemporary writers is a creation related rather to choosing the appropriate

colours from an already available palette, than to inventing an original concept. Of course, the narrative ideas of each of the writers are new, yet the field on which they can grow is already given and also open to any kind of remodelling. The fact is also worth stressing that these new rewritings are rewritings of texts which are already rewritings themselves; therefore they become intertextual pieces. The practice of rewriting, as well as the practice of translation, has also become more intertextual. The key to analysis is no longer to look for the analogies and differences between the source and the target texts, but it lies rather in searching for the traces of various texts within one text. According to Linda Hutcheon, who is frequently referred to by Edwin Gentzler, we have already entered a new era of translation and rewriting in which one does not have to be limited by the strict frames of comparative analysis of the source and target texts. Hutcheon argues that "adaptations are everywhere today" (Hutcheon 2). The "original" texts, which are the platform on which the new texts are being created, are very often rewritings themselves, she argues. The new texts find new forms of expression, and they do not have to be necessarily written texts. According to Hutcheon, any form of writing is a form of storytelling, regardless of the form the story will adopt. She also uses the term an "adapted" text than a "source" one, as, in her view, "original" texts do not exist. All texts are already rewritings themselves (Hutcheon 2).

3.1. The status of women in Elizabethan England

To begin the discussion about women present in the dramatic realities created by Shakespeare, we will pay attention to the status women had in Elizabethan England and in the theatre of that time. In Shakespeare's time, thinking of a woman as inferior to a man was nothing uncommon. McEvoy argues that many writers of the time used to present a woman as a second-class creature, which may have stemmed from various traditions, still vibrant and influential in the folklore of the time. The medieval belief which ascribed the guilt for the mankind's fall to Eve was widespread. Other well-known beliefs deprived woman of mental abilities. She was perceived as "an incomplete man, lacking the faculty of reason and the ability to control her emotions. She was controlled, like the tides, by the fickle moon, as her menstrual cycle showed. Fluidity and excess were qualities often attributed to women in literature" (McEvoy, 69). In a general view, woman was not able to maintain the control over what she says which, as McEvoy argues, "elevated silence to the position of highest female virtue" (69). On the other hand, there are many intelligent, witty and determined Shakespearian heroines who stand in opposition to these stereotypical tendencies. Suffice to mention Lady Macbeth, a clever, influential personality whom Macbeth choses as his guide. Additionally, McEvoy reminds us about the

fact that "for most of Shakespeare's life the monarch was a woman" (69). According to Peter Erickson, "the presence of strong women in Shakespeare's work from Elizabethan period can be read as oblique glances at the cultural presence of Queen Elizabeth I" (24).

3.2. Sexual differences

In the essay "Explaining Racial and Sexual Differences" published in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, Mary Floyd-Wilson focuses on the sources of early modern beliefs about male and female physiology. The overall conceptualization of male and female sexuality derived from Aristotle and Galen and from many sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century medical accounts of human physiology, which, basically, maintained that women were imperfect men (Floyd-Wilson 788). The physical differences between the two sexes were framed as a dominant narrative, which conceptualized the standard human body as male. According to Thomas Laqueur, some sources maintained a belief that: "women have as much hidden within the body as men have exposed outside; leaving aside, only, that women don't have so much heat, nor the ability to push out what by coldness of their temperament is held bound to the interior" (Laqueur 788). This kind of narration was usually well assimilated in the male-dominant society of England. It fitted in well with a world in which women generally occupied a secondary place in education, professional careers, and participation in public matters (788).

Another concept helping to emphasize the differences between woman and man in early modern Europe, including England, was the theory of humours. According to this theory, the bodily functions were all determined by four fluids: black bile or melancholy, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm (Fissel 764). As all the fluids had their own qualities, it was believed that they must determine the character of woman and man. For example, according to physiology of Galen, "women's bodies were colder and moister than men's. Masculinity was constituted by the hotter humours of blood and choler" (Fissel 789). Moreover, it was believed that the humoral body encoded social hierarchies and "cultural narratives of engenderment" (789). Each peculiarity of female physiology to which there was no simple explanation was, therefore, perceived as fluid-dependent. This resulted in thinking that woman, in general, keeps living in a state of a permanent humoral imbalance, as her temperament is distorted by the so-called "six non-naturals", such as eating, sleep and emotions (Fissel 764). As a consequence, all the ideas deriving from the theory of humours became good pretexts to picture women as worse than men, imperfect, and demanding male control. For example, Floyd-Wilson writes that "female

production of bodily liquids – menstrual blood, milk, urine – was interpreted as a lack of control" (789). Moreover, in early modern texts, woman's excessive verbal expressiveness and "unruly appetites" were associated with her "leaky body" (789). In an essay by Barbara Traister, entitled "How The Body Works", published in the same volume, the author underlines that, in the understanding of early modern England, the "*normative* human body is understood to be male" (781). All of these suppositions about female sexuality and physiology were regularly employed to understand the female body as "worse", inferior to men, or even "failed" (782). However, the widespread popularity of the theory of humours should not astonish, as it was the dominant model of the time, and contemporary systems of medical knowledge recommended it as an explanation of health, disease, and any bodily imbalance.

Because the early modern English audience understood quite well the differences between human bodies, Floyd-Wilson argues, Shakespeare could rely on their knowledge while composing the passages of dialogue of his plays. For example, in general knowledge, Floyd-Wilson writes, "women's flesh and temperament were understood to be inconstant and impressionable" (789). This issue is reflected in *The Taming of The Shrew* when Kate speaks the following words:

> Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth,
> Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
> But that our soft conditions and our hearts
> Should well agree with
> (*The Taming of The Shrew*, 5.2.165-168)

In saying so, Kate "sees a direct correlation between a woman's physical condition and her social status", Floyd-Wilson argues, which, at the same time can be a manifestation of Shakespeare's own conception about womanhood (783). He must have seen this correlation too, and perhaps found it controversial or unjust. However, according to Traister, Shakespeare did not directly express his opinion on the issue. Traister argues that Shakespeare seems aware of the ambiguities and confusions over gender but, "takes no position on the subject" (783).

3.3. Elizabethan Theatre and the position of women

According to Stephen Orgel, the stage in Shakespeare's time was "an exclusively male preserve", of which he writes extensively in *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (10). Although most European countries tended to favour male professional performers over female ones, England was a notable exception in that matter,

Orgel notes. Continental theatres used to be less strict than English ones – they allowed women to act, whereas in England female performance on stages was forbidden by law. The unquestioned male domination in theatres was just another effect of a tight patriarchal world organization, which aimed at expanding the activity of men in all possible aspects of English life. In contrast, it can be observed that – as Orgel writes – "no contemporary continental public theatre restricted the stage to men" (10). French and Italian public stages, for example, allowed women to perform professionally, while in Elizabethan England women's presence in theatres was limited to the audience floor or galleries where they could stand or sit to watch the shows (10).

Another observation of the low status of women in Elizabethan theatres is made by Alison Findlay. In an essay "Women's Culture" published in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, she notes that "theatrically speaking, women were not even a minority" (529). In fact, women were not even allowed to play the female parts – all of these were usually performed by young boys whose still boyish bodies – and presumably still immature voices – could suffice for a believable representation of a woman. In spite of some private shows which occasionally allowed women to perform, the professional performative career was out of a girl's reach (Orgel 11). On the other hand, women's participation in shows as spectators was in no ways limited, and they were frequent and numerous theatregoers, which has been also commented by Orgel. "The theatre was a place of unusual freedom for women in the period; foreign visitors comment on the fact that English women go to the theatre unescorted and unmasked, and a large proportion of the audience consisted of women" (Orgel 10). Women's participation was an important economic factor in the development of the entertainment industry, as their demand for new plays and productions influenced the development of English popular drama, Orgel argues. What is more, the feedback of female audiences also seems to be a decisive factor in the promotion of new plays. In fact, "the success of any play was significantly dependent on the receptiveness of women" (10). Hence, women had a defined place on the entertainment business ladder, but it was not to be moved any step higher than needed and determined by the patriarchal organization of English society.

However, women's place in the English entertainment business hierarchy was not always as limited as in Elizabethan England. The stage was exclusively male especially in the time of Shakespeare, but before that period, performances used to be given by both male and female casts. Orgel argues that at least up to the 1530s, there were such public performances as

civic pageants and guild plays that "demonstrably did include women" (11). Yet Elizabethan England did not see women on professional stages, except for some random occasions when the court was visited by Italian troupes that included female actresses. English women, however, were forbidden by law to perform in public. They were only allowed to take part in semi-professional performances, such as masques and other private forms of entertainment, about which we can learn from Louise McConnell (310). Originally, a masque was a court entertainment in Renaissance Italy, in which masked players, so called masquers, performed a short play interluded by dance and song (182). As Renaissance England was a meticulous follower of all Italian trends, masques were soon imported into the courts of Queen Elizabeth I and later of King James. Masques were more concentrated on visual effects and music than on text; therefore amateurs could take part in them, as no professional actors were needed to speak the lines. The amateurs were often members of the court, including women and children from the Royal choir schools. This short-lasting opportunity for women to act was soon to cease, as the court gave up such shows due to the enormous costs needed to pay for the visual effects. The first time that women appeared on professional stages came in 1660, when King Charles II was restored to the throne and theatres in England were reopened after their closure in 1642 (Gay 156). "The earliest public performance by a woman in a Shakespeare role was given, probably, on 8 December 1660, when an unnamed actress played Desdemona in a production of *Othello*", as one can read in Penny Gay's chapter "Women and Shakespearian Performance" published in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage* (157). That historical moment proved to be successful – "the King's Patent issued in 1662 soon made the new practice obligatory" (Gay 157). Female presence on stages appealed to the King – the patent contained the declaration that "such spectacles (i.e. women) provided 'not only harmless delight, but useful and instructive representation of human life'" (Gay 157). Since then, women were regularly cast in the plays of Shakespeare and female roles started to be taken by professional actresses (Draut 289). Their presence on stages was also an important factor in shaping the overall imagination of certain types of women. "They played Shakespeare as they played the many new roles written for them, and in so doing, established models of femininity that remained dominant for the next century: the tragedy queen, the virtuous heroine of sentimental drama and the witty heroine", as Gay observes (158).

As mentioned before, in the Elizabethan theatre all the female parts were played by men – precisely by "boys whose voices had not yet broken" (McConnell 3). Gay refers to this fact – in truth, female parts in Shakespeare were meant to be played by men already at the stage of

writing a script – "Cleopatra, Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, Viola and Olivia, and all the rest of the approximately 140 named female roles in Shakespeare, were written as roles for boys or young men" (Gay 155). In Shakespeare's time, there was also a popular opinion that "only a 'whore' (that is, a woman who behaves promiscuously, but not necessarily a prostitute) would want to display herself on stage, showing emotion freely, for all to see" (McEvoy 92). Therefore, the overall absence of women on the public stages was nothing particularly strange. It can be presumed that Elizabethan audience was even quite accustomed to the view of males playing female parts, and these practices were common, but also expected by culture. Moreover, boyish performances might have been quite convincing. According to Gay, in the early seventeenth century young men reached adolescence "probably later than it is today; and the adolescent boy can often seem androgynous, his voice not fully broken, his body slim and childish" (155). Also "Shakespeare's boy actors could have been as old as eighteen, quite able to comprehend and embody the emotional complexities of an Isabella, a Juliet, a Rosalind, a Cleopatra" (155), Gay argues. Nevertheless, the practice of boys' playing female roles was strongly criticized by Puritans who were severe opponents of theatre, regarding it as highly immoral means of entertainment (Gay 157).

Puritans had a strong aversion towards the idea of women performing publicly as well as to theatre itself, which may also have contributed to the masculinization of the entertainment business. This popular form of entertainment stood in conflict with their fundamental attitude to life aimed at contemplating only these joys and pleasures that were yet to come – not those that were available at hand. Playhouses which delivered pleasures of the flesh were seen as a manifestation of evil. Puritans maintained that "tragedies would incite audiences to murder and violence, and that performances of comedies would lead to lax sexual morals" (McConnell 234). Thus, when the Globe Theatre burnt down in 1613, Puritans perceived it as a manifestation of God's anger. Also the idea of boys wearing women's clothes was considered controversial. It was believed that the Bible condemns cross-dressing. According to Puritans, enabling men to play female parts could cause considerable damage to male reputation, as "a man was a more developed type of being than a woman – because his sexual organs were on the outside rather than still hidden within his body(!)", and he "possessed reason and emotional control" (McEvoy 91). Therefore, dressing as a woman was a shameful practice as "such transvestism was forcing the male to regress to an inferior state" (91) and it could encourage "lustful thoughts among men, who would, through their confused perception of them as women, become sexually attracted to boys" (92). Nevertheless, the Puritans' fear of homosexual

behaviour "was only one aspect of their larger phobia", as Gay argues. In fact, they could not accept theatre as a whole for evoking "universal sexuality […] a lust not distinguished by the gender of its object" (Gay 156). Driven by this scorn, they finally succeeded in closing "the sexually and politically disruptive theatres in 1642" (Gay 157).

On the one hand, the apparent provocation of homosexual behaviour threatened Puritans, but on the other, it was considered as either neutral or even profitable by others. Gay argues that "the love of Elizabethan men for boys was often thought of as less dangerous than love for women, whose sexuality was considered to be voraciously overwhelming, making men effeminate" (156). Furthermore, the presence of a boy-actress on stage did also function as a reminder that, as McEvoy puts it, "gender roles were shown to be *performed*, not God-given or natural" (93). In line with that claim, the boy-actress might have functioned as a tool which, apart from denying women, "subverted the typical construction of gender" (Drost 12). Thus, while male and women were often presented in Renaissance culture as binary oppositions (Orgel 13), the border separating them turned vague by the means of the boy-actresses who used to "wink" to the audiences saying that gender is in fact a matter of agreement. What is more, as Gay argues, dressing up as a woman was a proof of the artificiality of the divisions of gender in society. She believes that the audience might have had "an underlying, even unconscious (but nevertheless powerful) recognition of the artificiality of such apparently immutable concepts as femininity and masculinity, if they can be put with a costume and wink to the audience" (Gay 156). Everything seemed to be a matter of convention and that was an obvious aspect of theatre for all those who did not subscribe to Puritans' distaste. If a convention could let men pretend to be women, then the gender roles could have also been constructed and they could, thus, be renegotiated. Perhaps in this way Shakespeare's plays were trying to break with stereotypes and conventions, welcoming at the same time practices that could challenge the fixed social hierarchy. Theatre seemed to be saying that any role might be swapped, as it is only a matter of a convention (Gay 156). In the end, even Shakespeare's role – the role of a writer – is now being taken by the others. Today it is women who are free to play that part.

3.4. A continuing debate

In connection with the discussion of various representations of women in Shakespeare's time, there still persists a considerable disagreement among historians and critics, as McEvoy argues, about the position of women in English society of the era. Some feminist critics stress the oppression of women in all domains of life: "economic, domestic, sexual, familial and personal" (McEvoy 128). Others, including the British feminist critic Juliet Dusinberre, suggest that the Puritan doctrine that made men and women spiritually equal once they got married was a trace of "feminist flowering" in this period (128). Other contemporary feminist critics hurry into the argument with a radical disagreement, challenging Dusinberre's view and claiming that the period was marked by a "male backlash against the freedoms which ... women had in fact enjoyed in the late medieval period" (129). In fact, as Orgel puts it, "Renaissance women are often described as commodities, whose marriages are arranged for the advantage or convenience of men, either their fathers, or the male authority figures in their and their prospective husbands' families" (Orgel, *Impersonations* 13). Also, Louise McConnell in the *Dictionary of Shakespeare* underlines that in Shakespeare's time a wife was the property of her husband, and his plays should be read in that context (282). On the other hand, McEvoy argues that there is a considerable amount of evidence that women were, in fact, quite active in economic life, of which one can learn in Stephen Orgel's work *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*. The author argues that in Shakespeare's time women could already take positions as skilled workers, and managers of large domestic organizations and small businesses (128).

As regards marriage, however, there is considerable p evidence supporting the claim that married women were in a very weak economical position. In "Gender Relations and the Position of Women," Adelaide Meira Serras writes that all the property a woman was expected to bring into her marriage was automatically and legally owned by her husband (644). In the event that a marriage was annulled, only the woman's financial dowry was returned, but her belongings were no longer treated as hers. "As a matter of fact, the husband was entitled to everything else" (Serras 644). On the other hand, Serras underlines the fact that the Protestant emphasis "on the holiness of matrimony as superior state in comparison with a life of seclusion and chastity" entailed a major change in women's lot (644). However, at the same time, the Anglican Church established *The Book of Common Prayer* which defined the husband's and wife's roles and duties, "highlighting the male's hegemonic position" (644). Women's roles were therefore constantly re-shaped and re-negotiated, but it was to take generations until

societal standards accepted the thought that female roles and rights go beyond the "primary purpose of marriage: to ensure procreation" (644) that was emphasized by *The Book of Common Prayer* from 1559.

Knowing the strong traditional context, in which wives legally belonged to their husbands, it is especially important to remember that patriarchal society put considerable limitations on the ways Shakespeare presented his female characters. These representations, in fact, mirror the authentic status of women in the period. With this background in mind, the modern reader of Shakespeare can understand the complexities of these characters better. Such knowledge can be also helpful in avoiding a perhaps misjudged conviction that Shakespeare was a "male chauvinist with little regard for the status of women", which might be a common impression for less aware readers of Shakespeare, as Conley Greer argues in "To Be A Woman: Shakespeare's Patriarchal Viewpoint." In truth, the situation which characterized Elizabethan England was paradoxical, as although the country was ruled by the queen, it relied on, as Greer argues, "the male notion of socially accepted norms" (135). Shakespeare as a playwright connected to the royal court was, therefore, conditioned to present women in a manner determined by imposed social standards. On the other hand, however, the complexity of the female characters he creates proves that he was, most probably, a sensitive observer of feminine psychology and aware of the difficulties involved in being a woman in a   patriarchal society (136).

3.5. Shakespeare rewritten by women

Being able to write, and to take profit from this activity was a rather distant if not entirely unattainable dream for women of the Elizabethan era. Virginia Woolf ponders on the condition of women in a literary tradition dominated by men in her long and ground-breaking feminist essay *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf is convinced that it is money which in many ways determines the life of a woman, and that it influences the whole chain of actions and circumstances which may allow a woman to become a creatively prolific person. Woolf is assured that wealth has an impact on the mind, but she also takes into consideration the opposite position, asking herself what are the effects of poverty, with which she is far more acquainted, and which, she argues, is a familiar state of being for the majority of women of the time. Woolf writes her essay surrounded by the immense wealth and splendor of the university, which itself is a solemn testimony of the power of money, money which had been entirely transferred from the pockets of men. Woolf is aware of the fact that the beautiful architecture and furnishings

and appointments of the university rooms are the visible effects of immense investments made with the wealth of men. In the age of reason "the gold and silver", as Woolf writes, came not from the resources of kings, but from "the chests of merchants and manufacturers, from the purses of men who had made, say, a fortune from industry, and returned, in their wills, a bounteous share of it to endow more chairs, more lectureships, more fellowships in the university where they had learnt their craft."(5). Therefore, the university has become a place where men could feel at home and always welcome. "Hence the libraries and laboratories; the observatories; the splendid equipment of costly and delicate instruments which now stands on glass shelves, where centuries ago the grasses waved and the swine rootled" (5).

As her analysis continues, Woolf tries to reverse the situation, hypothetically imagining how women could have developed if it was they who were able to invest. "I pondered why it was that Mrs Seton had no money to leave us; and what effect poverty has on the mind; and what effect wealth has on the mind." (12) The author continues:

> Now if she had gone into business; had become a manufacturer of artificial silk or a magnate on the Stock Exchange; if she had left two or three hundred thousand pounds to Fernham, we could have been sitting at our ease tonight and the subject of our talk might have been archaeology, botany, anthropology, physics, the nature of the atom, mathematics, astronomy, relativity, geography. If only Mrs Seton and her mother and her mother before her had learnt the great art of making money and had left their money, like their fathers and their grandfathers before them, to found fellowships and lectureships and prizes and scholarships appropriated to the use of their own sex, we might have dined very tolerably up here alone off a bird and a bottle of wine; we might have looked forward without undue confidence to a pleasant and honourable lifetime spent in the shelter of one of the liberally endowed professions. We might have been exploring or writing; mooning about the venerable places of the earth; sitting contemplative on the steps of the Parthenon, or going at ten to an office and coming home comfortably at half-past four to write a little poetry. Only, if Mrs Seton and her like had gone into business at the age of fifteen, there would have been—that was the snag in the argument—no Mary. (13)

In chapter three, Woolf plays with the thought of a hypothetical Shakespeare's sister. What would have happened if he had one, a gifted sister named Judith in the times when not a single woman was able to have such an impressive literary career as he did? According to Woolf's hypothetical thinking, the gifted sister could not have been able to develop any of her many interests, as the burden of a socially ascribed role – the role of a domestic creature who is needed to stir soup or mend a stocking - would not let her flourish. Soon, the girl would be married to a husband she did not love or approve of, but that would be how her life would run – defined by custom, scheme and structure. Meanwhile, her more than lucky brother William was living in the centre of the universe, practicing his wit on the street, performing on the stage and becoming a successful actor. He could even visit the palace of the Queen. But that was how the world was structured according to Woolf, and nothing could change it (647).

In fact, Woolf's meditation is supported by a piece of evidence which proves that a woman was not perceived as an intellectual partner for a man. Serras writes about this fact in "Gender Relations and the Position of Women". In spite of the Renaissance emphasis on learning, "most educated men were not prepared to consider women as equal companions in this intellectual pursuit" (647). In the majority of cases, women had no entrance to a career in many fields. "The requirements and levels of education according to gender reflect precisely this way of thinking: women were not supposed to enter a career in the civil service or in any liberal profession. Actually, they were not allowed to be medical doctors or lawyers … Likewise, they were not supposed to meddle in politics, nor was it thought they should receive instruction in these fields" (647). Thus, almost all the domains of life except the domestic, were out of women's reach. When it comes to learning, no one saw the need to let women enter university, as on a daily basis they belonged to the area of home, so there was no need for them to study. However, the only way a woman might, in fact, study was at home, "under the supervision of the male members in control" (647). Serras argues that for the same reason – the requirement to stay modest – women were forbidden to become professional actresses. For the prevalent patriarchal ideology, such possibility was out of question.

3.6. Female writing today

Although four hundred years divide us from Renaissance England, there still occur situations in which some old customs and male-dominant ways of thinking prevail, and there are other signals and behaviours which suggest that thinking of a woman as an inferior to man is as common as it used to be. Erica Jong, one of the many female writers who wrote a novel

based on a Shakespeare play, describes an example of a situation when female potential to think creatively and imaginatively was being overtly diminished by a man. The novelist would later refer to that moment as one of her most horrifying memories – the offence that was thrown to the female listeners did not receive any rejection nor a single comment. Jong recalls the following scene: "a distinguished critic came to my creative writing class and delivered himself of his thundering judgment: 'Women can't be writers. They don't know blood and guts, and puking in the streets, and fucking whores, and swaggering through Pigalle at five A.M…' But the most amazing thing was the response—or lack of it. It was 1961 or '62, and we all sat there, aspiring women writers that we were, and listened to this claptrap without a word of protest" (Jong). The lack of women's reaction was shocking to Jong and it proved that they had become accustomed to such a mentality and reactions and had learned to remain silent. Nevertheless, the books discussed in my dissertation do not support such silence, nor do they let their female protagonists remain passive. Quite the opposite – most of the female characters presented in the modern texts became "translated" into the contemporary context, therefore they try to act independently from men, at least in the areas where it is possible.

In contrast to earlier times, the women pictured in the contemporary retellings of Shakespeare have been given an audible voice and a much broader area for expressing themselves. It is also significant that – at least in the vast majority of this dissertation – it is women who rewrite the dramas, which, at least in the times of Shakespeare, was not a common occurrence. Most of the rewritten female characters who will be discussed and presented in this dissertation have become elaborate versions of their predecessors and have acquired more complex characteristics. Tracy Chevalier, the author of *New Boy*, admitted in an interview that she decided to give them (the female protagonists in *Othello*) much bigger parts than in the original play, as, according to her opinion, women in Shakespeare are very underwritten (Chevalier, "Tracy Chevalier") . However, the many reasons that motivated this underwritten portrayal lay in the social, ideological, and cultural background of the time, and they have been extensively discussed in this chapter. It is also worth mentioning that in such a form of expression as a novel, the female roles are self-sufficient – they become "visible" in the imagination of the reader, and do not need to be played by men, which was a frequent phenomenon in the Elizabethan theatre.

"Every age creates its own Shakespeare."

Marjorie Garber *Shakespeare After All*

4. Contemporary Shakespeare as an example of the reconstruction of the literary canon.

The following part of this dissertation is devoted to a comparative analysis of chosen novels based on the dramas of Shakespeare. The arrival of all of the novels that appear in this part coincided with the 400th anniversary of the playwright's death, which in itself is significant and worth more extensive commentary. Four of them were created within the Hogarth Shakespeare Project, a publishing initiative aimed at refreshing the old dramas and bringing them closer to a contemporary readership. It is important to notice though that similar literary initiatives reappear once in a while in publishing markets, particularly under the flag of a special date, such as an anniversary – especially an even-numbered one – which has a greater significance, such as, for example, the date of birth or death of a particular artist. This interesting literary phenomenon, which will be commented on later in this chapter, was an influential factor in the Hogarth idea of rewriting the plays, and it resulted in a proliferation of several newly adapted novels in which Shakespeare's dramas are been entirely recreated and retold from a modern perspective (Hogarth Shakespeare, about). However – as Sofia Muños-Valdivieso notices, "in the anniversary year Shakespeare's cultural capital keeps on circulating more energetically than ever" (Muños-Valdivieso 2017: 107) – the practice of rewriting the playwright's works has a long tradition and far deeper roots than in a sole idea of a yearly memorial. These roots are particularly well-grounded in the iconic status of Shakespeare which has become solidified throughout the centuries.

Apart from the fact that Shakespeare plays offer abundant, adaptable material for reconstruction – which in itself creates favourable creative conditions – the long tradition of rewriting the dramas is well-grounded in a convenient and supportive atmosphere of an overall admiration for these plays. In fact, referring back to the plays started considerably early. According to Manfred Draudt, "the first great wave of adaptations of Shakespeare came after the period of the closing of theatres in 1642" (Draudt 289) which shows how vast is the time span in which this tradition has its roots. Today, as Ruby Cohn notes, referring back to Shakespeare is still remarkably popular and appears in a number of names: "abridgments,

adaptations, additions, alterations, ameliorations, amplifications, emendations, interpolations, metamorphoses, modifications, mutilations, revisions, transformations, versions" (Cohn 3). Over the centuries, Shakespeare has become a figure with an archetypal status, an immediately recognizable figure and image that is known worldwide. A natural consequence of this fact is his frequent reappearance in culture – be it in a form of quotation, rewriting, film adaptation, or translation. Scholars keep on highlighting the playwright's significance in the world's literary canon and culture as well as the greatness of his works –works which remain autonomous and independent both of the time of their creation, and of the intention of their author (Kott 1). Decidedly, Shakespeare's plays belong to the category of great works of art – they remain timeless, universal stories which, if readjusted to our contemporary time and languages, become stories of our own, tales which can serve as a mirror to the miscellaneous issues that matter to a new generations of readers. Consequently, Shakespeare – understood not only as a prolific writer but also as a a umbrella term for the immense canonical literary capital he left – becomes our "contemporary", as Jan Kott wrote in his famous work under the same title (xi). Scholars and literary critics refer to Shakespeare's iconic status in culture in many ways. Kott argues that "only the Bible rivals Shakespeare in this aspect of archetypal significance" (xii). A similarly-sounding phrase is coined by Dusinberre, who agrees in the preface to her book *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* that "Shakespeare then, as now, had the status of the Bible in British culture" (xii). However, from her point of view, this consideration for a long time blocked authors from a free, innovative rereading of Shakespeare. Bloom, on the other hand, argues in *Shakespeare: The Invention of The Human* that "after Jesus, Hamlet is the most cited figure in Western consciousness" (xxi). Proudfoot, at the same time, observes a remarkable influence of Shakespeare not only on the human consciousness, but also on literary market mechanisms: apart from being a key component of the activities of theatres and schools, Shakespeare is also a powerful trading stimulus – "a brand-name, a logo, an image that appears on T-shirts and credit cards […], a label that sells thousands of books" (Proudfoot et al. 1). The latter aspect of Shakespeare's presence in culture seems to be of particular importance for numerous rewriting initiatives, such as for the Hogarth Shakespeare project, which was "undoubtedly hoping to ride the wave of greater Bard visibility and enhanced interest in his work this year" (Muños-Valdivieso 2017: 107).

An interesting aspect of the popularity of Shakespeare's canon in different countries is the varied value that is ascribed to it. According to Kott, Shakespeare has tended to be even more vital for those countries which knew him mostly from translations. "The significance of

Shakespeare is very different in the English-speaking countries from what it appears to be in Germany, Scandinavia, France, or Eastern Europe" (Kott 1). Non-English-speaking countries value Shakespeare mostly due to his plays' powerful potential to express the issues that matter to them, whereas in the English-speaking world, as Kott observes, "the great thoughts have become eroded into the clichés and commonplaces of the school essay" (Kott 2). Once a target culture has succeeded in finding an adequate language to express the content and the sense of the original Shakespeare, it has been able to identify itself with his works firmly, thus building around them its own consciousness of a text. A successful match of a vernacular language with the original text could turn the plays into the material of supreme utility – it could serve "as a vehicle for the highest flights of thought and poetic expression" (Kott, 2). Translations have, therefore, pathed the way to the huge popularity of the dramas in the non-Anglophone world and have confirmed Shakespeare's central status in the canon. Since the nineteenth century in Central and Eastern Europe, Anna Cetera observes, "the reception of Shakespeare had been key to high culture" (Cetera 20), for the plays could mirror current political tensions. The dramatic texts used to be often processed quite radically in order to address particular political issues (Cetera 20). Before the nineteenth century, however, Shakespeare also inspired other writers. John Elsom, who refers to Kott extensively in his *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary*? points out that the playwright's influence was enormous on foreign authors especially in the Romantic period. Authors used to idolize him and follow his footsteps. "They started to imitate him – as did the founder of modern Russian literature, Pushkin, who wrote the famous tragedy *Boris Godunov*, which is not exactly an imitation but written under Shakespeare's inspiration" (Elsom 43). It is therefore clear that both circulation of Shakespeare's dramatic creations outside Anglophone culture, and his immense influence on the mentalities of other countries and cultures have contributed considerably to the prolongation of his popularity among readers and writers of many generations.

Not only can the value attached to Shakespeare be varied, but also how he is approached. That approach can depend on the particular perspectives of Shakespeare's interpreters and of their need to address certain issues within a play. Any issue that appears in a play can be either explored and developed, sometimes in an original, unexpected way, or just the opposite, reduced and oversimplified. Brian Gibbons writes in *Shakespeare and Multiplicity* that falling into a trap of oversimplification is a frequent occurrence: "in every generation there are interpreters who cut and simplify, unable to cope with the wealth of ideas and experiences in the plays, or supposing their audiences incapable of doing so" (1). That apparent lack of trust

in the intelligence of a future audience can, therefore, be a bad adviser that can keep the potential of Shakespeare either dormant or reread in a cliché-ridden way, which in consequence may lead to a repetitive, boring rereading. Yet, anything that seems difficult in Shakespeare may at the same time be the key to undiscovered paths of thinking about his plays –thinking which can break with standardized ways of perception. Gibbons believes that that abundance, which might seem overwhelming, is in fact "a great strength of Shakespeare's plays" which are "designed deliberately to expand the mind – to generate a sense of concentrated vigorous life in emotions and ideas" (1). Exploring the creative potential hidden in that vigorous life can be a highly rewarding starting point for making new interpretations. The rewritings which are discussed about in my dissertation very often put a stress on the inner life of protagonists thanks to which well-known plays achieve new dimensions. An example is a third-person perspective which allows writers to relocate the action partially to the minds of the protagonists and to weave the narration from their point of view. Such a widened perspective can result in an equally captivating story as anything that could be shown on stage. The novels that allude to Shakespeare's works in this manner are the central focus in my dissertation, and may be regarded as examples of rewritings whose authors did take advantage of Shakespeare's wealth, not the opposite.

Although the rewritings of Shakespeare as novels are the subject studied in this dissertation, the practice of creating contemporary fiction based on Shakespeare's plays is not unprecedented. Among the examples of modern retellings are, for example, Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*, a reimagining of *Hamlet* from 1973, and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, a modern retelling of *King Lear* from 1991 taking place in post-war America (Özmen 36). Özlem Özmen also notices that there are titles which seem to be most frequently selected for rewriting , such as *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Tempest*, which "stand out as the most frequently adapted ones in general" (Özmen 36). Among other significant examples of retellings as novels, there are: Marina Warner's *Indigo*, a rewriting of *The Tempest* from 1992; Erica Jong's *Shylock's Daughter*, a fantasy, erotic novel based on *The Merchant of Venice* from 1987; Margaret Atwood's *Cat Eye* from 1988; or Angela Carter's *Wise Children* from 1992 (Özmen 37). As opposed to *Indigo* and *Shylock's Daughter*, which directly respond to particular Shakespeare plays, the latter two refer to the source texts quite loosely, offering "a combination of various Shakespearian characters or plays in a single work" (Özmen 50). The novels selected for my study, however, are located within the frames of the original stories quite firmly, so that a reader can recognize them easily. Apart from that, all of the retellings offer an extensive

exploration and development of the female characters, whose presence, thus, becomes much more prominent than in the originals. In the majority of cases, the manner in which women used to be portrayed in Shakespeare's plays not only mirrors the patriarchal organization of society, but also supports the English Renaissance's stereotypical consideration of genders and of their roles. Although there are heroines in Shakespeare who are portrayed as extremely dynamic, such as, for instance, Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, "a freedom fighter rebelling against the marriage market" (Elsom 3), her development over the course of the play does not go upwards but rather downwards. In the end she surrenders to the plan of males and, in consequence, as a character becomes flattened, not deepened. Therefore, the overall manner of presenting female characters needs definite reconstruction if they are to be situated in a contemporary context. The authors of modern retellings try to refresh the old portrayal by re-contextualizing the plots and by offering female characters who are more representative of the (modern) world they inhabit.

Literary critics often point to the imbalanced division of powers between male and female characters in Shakespeare plays. Hatice Karaman notes that absence and argues that even if women are present in the plays they are often placed in a strong masculine environment and next to "powerful masculine characters" (39). In a general sense, criticism voices the fact that female characters garner much less attention than male ones, have limited agency and are given much less insight than the key protagonists, who are mostly male. Yet, even if that imbalanced division of gender prominence may seem odd, or perhaps unfair to modern audiences, in the times of Shakespeare it was entirely grounded in the conceptualization of a man as a privileged living being. In the chapter "Fiction and Friction" in *Shakespearean Negotiations,* Stephen Greenblatt highlights that among the male writers of the period, gender was regarded "as an enduring sign of distinction" (76). The Renaissance considered man as having "symbolic and material advantages that no woman could hope to attain" (76); therefore literature must mirror these beliefs more or less directly. The discrepancy of attention given to male and female protagonists is visible in many Shakespeare plays. *The Tempest*, for example, according to Ann Thompson who analyses it from the perspective of feminist theory, is a play which not only denies "the importance – and even in some cases the presence – of female characters", but it also "attributes enormous power to female chastity and fertility" (239). Miranda, in fact, is the only woman whom the audience encounters in the play, but the overall lack of female characters in it, except for Miranda, does also say much about male conceptualization of women as decisively less valuable. According to Thompson, such a male-

dominated story can lead to an appropriation of the reading perspective – it can be too overwhelming because it may "privilege male experience and allow its voice to speak for women as well" (Thompson, *The Warrant of Womanhood* 83). Today, Shakespeare does no longer have to be read only through the lens of a male perspective. The texts offer enough abundance to be uncovered and understood so that the weight of the text may switch also onto the female protagonists who can turn out a good means of expression to voice matters relevant to contemporary readers and authors. The male-oriented narration is, therefore, an opportunity for a literary reconstruction. Paradoxically, it may give much space for re-contextualization and rebuilding of the female characters, who can become more representative of modern audiences, and probably more satisfactory at the same time.

However, ways in which Shakespeare is approached and how much attention is given to female protagonists or, for example, to a female perspective in a text, are also varied and dependent on many circumstances. Much depends on the rewriter - to whom some issues might appear particularly relevant, while others do not. For instance, in Kott's interpretation of *Hamlet*, the text is reimagined as "fundamentally political" and each character is ascribed a "contemporary sub-code: 'a Krushchev', 'a Cyrankiewicz', 'a Kliszko', all well-established members of Communist elites" (Cetera 26). Kott's re-visioning of Shakespeare is therefore subjective and responsive to those issues that were crucial to him at the time. As far as female protagonists are concerned though, no particular emphasis is put on them by Kott, as he – most probably – does not need to highlight their presence in his interpretation. "Women are not central to Kott's design: they hang about in the background, knowing little more than their own sentiments" (Cetera 27). Although, like many other interpreters of Shakespeare, Kott reads *Hamlet* subjectively, through his own lens, Cetera's observation serves as a good example of a frequent underestimation of female protagonists in re-readings. Rewriters may easily fall into a trap of oversimplification: reducing heroines to being preoccupied with their emotions, bringing no particular impact to the development of the action. A lot can also depend on who is rewriting a text – a male or a female author. In *Women Making Shakespeare* the editors, Gordon McMullan, Lena Cowel Orlin and Virginia Mason Vaughan, focus on the female perspective in rewriting, arguing that "the power of women's engagement with Shakespeare from the sixteenth century to the present" (x), their point of view, as well as their energy and literary sensitivity, have brought considerable insight into the plays and helped in discovering them from a new angle. Female artists' achievements have influenced and still influence our understanding of the playwright's work (x). An activity like "writing Shakespeare-inspired

fiction" (x) is an example of the ways in which that change has been brought about. The female rewritings as fiction – except for one title which was written by a male writer – that I were selected for this study may serve as an example of that difference, as most of the attention is given to the female characters whose agency is a substantial factor moving the action forward. Although McEwan's novel is an exception in the corpus, the female protagonist of his story is also given considerable power, although it is manifested in an unexpected way, which makes her a pivotal character on whom depends the development of the action.

In the rewritings that are discussed in this dissertation, the Shakespearian heroines speak with a more audible voice than in the dramas. As young boys no longer have to play female parts, unless there is a decision in a particular production to have them do so, the female characters created in the novels are authentic women who take a far different place in culture, family, religion and society than they did in Elizabethan England. As Shakespeare's dramas offer stories which are open to remodelling and reinterpretation, the novelists involved could rework them in multiple ways, changing the imbalance between the female and male characters. The female parts have been definitely given much more space for expression than they have in the original plays. Although, as Dusinberre argues in the preface to her *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, Shakespeare has long been read in a rather conservative way in British culture, currently his numerous interpreters have started to re-read him in unlimited ways. "Critics now accept that there is no single authoritative and authentic way of reading Shakespeare", the author adds (xii). The fame attached to Shakespeare is also the reason why his works are continually rewritten, reinvented and restaged. The plays are often adapted in such a way to be read for pleasure, so that even an inexperienced reader can explore them and detect Shakespeare in them with ease. By means of rewriting, canonical stories get a chance to reach new communities of readers who operate via very different means of expressions that those that were natural for the Elizabethan writer.

Initiatives aiming at reconstructing the literary canon – such as, for instance, the Hogarth Shakespeare – are not unprecedented however. An example of a similar project that aimed at reviving old tales, was the Canongate Myth Series initiated by Canongate Books, an independent Scottish publisher. The launch of the series was deliberately planned for the year 2000, which was to accentuate the long-expected millennial turn. The project's objective was to reconstruct ancient myths from various cultures ("Canongate Myth Series") into contemporary stories written by professional authors from the whole world, trying to explore the relevance of myths for today's audiences. Interestingly, two of them – *The Penelopiad* and

Weight – were written by the authors who also participated in the Hogarth's project – Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson. Although myth might be often seen as a "synonym for a lie" (McMillan 12), for Winterson it is "alongside science and history, another story, the construction of which aids the generation of identity" (McMillan 12). The feminist narratives that were released within the project proved that this identity might also be reshaped by the literature that is rewritten, and that the myths might also undergo changes – just as Shakespeare's plays which evolve by way of rewriting. Harriet M. McMillan comes to the conclusion that "engagements with ancient mythologies may in time yield results which are beneficial for representations of femininity and may, in turn, help to destabilise the masculinised model of the subject" (3). She observed that "mythology can act as a framework through which female authors can evaluate the gendered implications of the personal, public and meta aspects of mythmaking and storytelling more generally" (3). Her observation points to the potential of the practice of rewriting which, merely by telling the story again and by telling it differently, may reconstruct long-held and sometimes stereotyped ways of thinking, which have become fossilized by a continuous repeating of the dominant interpretation of a certain text.

Assuming that Shakespeare is considered a high-status, representative writer, and therefore a mythic figure – in the sense of belonging to a telling universal, timeless story which shapes our existential experiences – the story of his life has proved an especially suitable tale for retelling as well. The phenomenon of that retelling – the bestselling biography *Will in the World* written by Stephen Greenblatt – is, therefore, discussed by critics, who have debated over the question as to why one should write another story of Shakespeare, as everything that s available to our knowledge has already been told. Paradoxically, even if Greenblatt's book does not reveal any new piece of evidence about the poet's life, nor does the author discover "a single new document written by or about Shakespeare", as Gary Taylor who reviews the book in *The Guardian* comments, the volume was acclaimed with frank enthusiasm. Why write another biography of Shakespeare, Taylor asks? Why were the publishers eager to invest a million-dollars in an advance to its author? The answers may lie again in the value of rewriting practices. According to Greenblatt, the extent to which we can imagine the possible events in which the playwright might have participated is more important than *the facts*. "Let us imagine", Greenblatt writes in the first chapter of his book, "that Shakespeare found himself from boyhood fascinated by language, obsessed with the magic of words" (*Will in the World* 23). By inviting his readers to picture a possible story, the author makes them participants in his

narrative and in his literary creation. Even if the plot sometimes must be built on suppositions rather than on reliable data, the reader remains involved thanks to the imaginative potential of an incident that is narrated. Lefevere, too, underlines the importance of "the image" which a piece of literature projects onto and into the reader. For the non-professional reader, who most often knows about the "original" story from a retelling and not from the original source, the most vibrant shape of any story is its image, regardless of whether it stems from the original, pioneer text, or from its retelling. The manipulation of that image appears to be the essence of rewriting. Hence, the success of *Will in the World* may stem from the fact that Stephen Greenblatt, as Taylor puts it, "tells good stories" (Taylor) which seems to be decisive in a skilful recreating of a certain image – especially of the image of literary classics.

The practice of launching artistic projects on the occasion of commemorating an artist's date of birth or death are not only restricted to literature, but are especially widespread in the field of music. Frequently, various kinds of concerts, musical events or competitions take place during the years flagged as years connected with a particular person's name, such as, for example, the Chopin Anniversary Year that took place in Poland and worldwide in 2010, or the Lutosławski Anniversary Year which was celebrated in 2013 (The Witold Lutosławski Society, about), not only in Poland, but also in countries where the composer's works were known. Usually, such years are not only filled with series of various events, but are also endowed with a specific aura of celebrating something uniquely rare, happening once in one or two hundred years – as in the case of the two anniversary years mentioned above – which must be attended urgently and ahead of anything else, for such an opportunity is not going to be offered again. That particular atmosphere of uniqueness may work especially well for the circulation of art, as it acts like a leverage of promotion, or like a magnet attracting not only connoisseurs, but also the non-professional audiences to whom the art of a certain artist might not have been known before. Moreover, the mechanisms of such anniversary occasions are very often used for a more intense than usual publication of CDs or cover albums of a chosen set of music works. In consequence of this active distribution of an artistic potential, particular kinds of art are popularized on a huge scale, which in itself is a positive effect. Also, at work is the specific festival-like ambience of such initiatives, which oftentimes might be even regarded as a form of magic that can revive the spirit of an artist, thus enlightening modern performers, so that they can achieve their highest level of artistry.

The Hogarth Shakespeare Project can also be regarded as an event which took advantage of that characteristic festival-like aura of celebration It certainly resulted in the publication of

the novels chosen for this study. Launched in October 2015 by the British publishing house Hogarth Press, the project's objective was to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the writer's death. The press invited professional novelists to rewrite chosen dramas with modern narrative frames. Artistic initiatives of such considerable visibility in the media usually raise discussion over the necessity and value of a project. On the occasion of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project, numerous critical voices were raised, discussing why in fact other authors should bring the old plays into their workshop and multiply the stories which had already been told. Why rewrite Shakespeare? Not only because of the unquestioned popularity of his surname and characters who successfully function in pop-culture. From the mercantile point of view, the name "Shakespeare" coupled with the surnames of respected authors is a combination which is bound to bring a certain profit. The Press must have taken into consideration the following economic factor – in British culture Shakespeare has already become a name that works like a magnet attracting the attention of the reader – the potential client, the buyer of a book.

Although the Hogarth project had already received a positive reception, some commentators disapproved of it. Viv Groskop, who reviewed one of the novels in *The Guardian*, calls the initiative a pointless marketing operation, which makes selected authors write under pressure, and sets unnecessary limits on their literary creativity. Groskop argues that, for example, Anne Tyler, the author of *Vinegar Girl*, is "perfectly capable of creating her own world and really doesn't need to borrow someone else's" (Groskop). Another commentator, Adam Gopnik, who reacted to the Hogarth Project in *The New Yorker* ("Why Rewrite Shakespeare?") not only questions the artistic value of the project, but also refers to the largest discrepancies between Shakespeare's practice of rewriting classic texts and the analogous practice of modern authors. Although his criticism is quite sharp, it is well-grounded in the historical background of Shakespeare's creative activity and supported by arguments that are worth mentioning in the two following paragraphs

The first major issue which Gopnik refers to concerns the different rewriting strategies that Shakespeare and his contemporary followers adopt. As scholars often underline, Shakespeare used to borrow mostly from the literature that was available to him, and which was popular at the time. Moreover, in the English Renaissance the understanding of authorship and of rewriting was far different from how these terms are perceived nowadays, and the level to which the poet borrowed and copied from other sources was limitless (Gentzler 23). "Borrowing, rewriting, adaptation, even plagiarism, were more permissible", Gentzler argues (23). Moreover, England in the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages was under a strong influence of

Italian culture and longed to imitate Italian style in every aspect of life, including literature. That longing was reflected, for instance, in the setting of the plays – many of the scenes in various Shakespearian plays take place in a hot Mediterranean climate. *Romeo and Juliet,* for example, takes place in Verona, which additionally resonates with the dynamic changes of the action and of the emotions which drive the protagonists. Additionally, if Shakespeare wanted to maintain his popularity as an author, and keep the plays attractive, he had to follow the most influential literary trends. Moreover, he was working under strict time constraints set by his commissioners and could not ponder too long over what to rewrite or how: "as the 'ordinary poet' of a working company of players, he sought plots under deadline pressure rather than after some long, deliberate meditation on how to turn fiction into drama" (Gopnik par.1). In consequence, the outcome of Shakespeare's writing was to answer several distinctive calls and needs, which are not comparable to the conditions in which the modern retellings emerge. Having in mind these numerous differences, Gopnik rates the project as "an odd enterprise" (par. 1), especially because Shakespeare – as he argues – "grabbed his stories more or less at random" (par. 1).

Gopnik's second critical argument concerns the matter of the transfer of the essence of Shakespeare's dramas. If the focus in rewriting is laid mostly on refreshing the plot – which, as he argues, is the main objective of the Hogarth Project – the other equally essential elements of Shakespeare's "music", such as literary motifs, quotations, or puns become lost in translation (par. 2). These aspects were obvious to the audience of Elizabethan England, who must have been also more accustomed to listening to the spoken word than to reading. The plays, moreover, were not stories meant for silent reading, as such an ability – so natural to contemporary people – was an uncommon, elite skill. As the audience was well accustomed to listening to long speeches and passages of dialogue, Shakespeare could fill his plays with a whole repertoire of hints, nuances, puns, or digressions, which together constitute the unique music of that literature. Moreover, all the sources which he "dropped" into his writings – Homer, Plutarch, Chaucer – were familiar to the audience, and these, according to Gopnik, are very often far more important than the stories themselves (par. 2).

Although Gopnik's arguments appear logical and are well-supported by his knowledge and experience in criticism, including of those forms of art that are built on the Shakespeare canon, it is difficult to compare to each other the rewriting techniques and approaches of writers who live in two entirely different epochs. Even if they became juxtaposed, the list of differences in their writing motivations or styles would be vast, as the historical background, as well as the

cultural contexts, are non-identical. Both the audience and the authors have changed over four hundred years, as much as the issues that matter to them have changed. At the beginning of his essay, specifically – in its subtitle – Gopnik puts forward the thesis that "when psychological novelists adapt the bard's play, they impose a value that he didn't share" (Gopnik subtitle), but this accusation runs the risk of being challenged easily. Perhaps no artist who approaches Shakespeare excludes reading it through a psychological lens. On the contrary, such a perspective can be especially attractive, as the psychological depths presented in the plays may become highly effective vehicles carrying ideas that are relevant both for the rewriter, as well as for his or her future receivers. The plays do not exclusively serve to express political discontent, as they used to do at the time of detailed Stalinist censorship when theatrical productions "became a way of commenting on political events without running the risk of banning or imprisonment" (Elsom 2). "Shakespeare is an elastic writer", as Elsom puts it (4); he grows with the generations, one might say, and "can be stretched in many directions before he snaps" (4). No definition nor rule has ever been established as to how Shakespeare should be read, he still is "our contemporary", which in Kott's explanation means, that he "has become contemporary to our changing times and that these times have affected our perception of Shakespeare" (Elsom 12). Such an understanding of the playwright's work may be the key to reading his works today. New approaches to Shakespeare are needed especially to address those layers of the dramas which originally were underdeveloped and occluded, such as for example the presentation of female protagonists.

5.   Shakespeare now – a close reading of selected rewritings.

The following chapter presents close readings of five chosen retellings of Shakespearean dramas. The first part of the analysis focuses on the characters who become rejected from their groups, or who cannot for various reasons meet the standards imposed by their families or society. The chosen novels are the following. The first is *Vinegar Girl* written by Anne Tyler, a contemporary novel based on *The Taming of The Shrew*. The second one is *New Boy* by Tracy Chevalier, which is a transposition of the narration of Shakespeare's *Othello* to Washington, DC, in the 1970s. The third book is *The Gap of Time* written by Jeanette Winterson and is an interpretation of *The Winter's Tale.* All the books are part of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project, the initiative launched in 2016 by Hogarth Press to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the playwright's death. In the second section, my analysis focuses on novels picturing characters who suffer the status of a victim. Two books are analysed here: *Nutshell* by Ian McEwan, based on *Hamlet*, and *Hug Seed* by Margaret Atwood, based on *The Tempest.* Atwood's novel is a modernized story about imprisoned men who struggle with different kinds of isolation.

Womanhood in all of these novels is foregrounded with a varied intensity, as in each case the female protagonists play different parts and are set within different contexts. All of the authors of the rewritten versions tend to develop these characters giving them more "lines to speak" than in the original plays. The manner in which the particular heroines were rebuilt in all of the retellings can also support Thompson's supposition that Shakespeare was, in fact, an author with a wide perspective and not as misogynistic as he has been thought to be (Thompson 76). According to her, Shakespeare "held more progressive views about women than his contemporaries, was able to see through the limitations of conventional gender definitions" (77). The portrayals of women in the new novels prove her thesis right. Furthermore, the female perspective of four of the writers creates a supplementary dimension that expands the original texts perhaps because of the different life experiences, nature and perspective which the female professional writers have. Nevertheless, *Nutshell*, although written by a man, does not particularly stand out in this group. The narration stems from McEwan's first thought of inspiration which was: "Here I am, upside down in a woman" (McEwan interview). That kindled the idea to weave the narration from the unusual point of view of a foetus who is inseparably connected to his mother and her physicality. Such an extraordinary point of view corresponds with author's openness to the issue of gender. In a conversation with Julia Vitale, McEwan also admitted that he had been thinking of keeping the foetus's gender unspecified at

first, until it became clear that the story lying beneath his narrative was clearly gravitating towards *Hamlet*. In the discussion, the author also recalls a childhood conversation with his mother which is a very suggestive testimony of his good understanding of women: "When I was eight years old, I said to [my mother] what I thought was an incredibly reasonable proposition: 'Listen, I think I'd rather be a girl.' In the playground at school, the boys either played football or hit each other, [while] the girls stood around, having the most extraordinarily interesting conversations" (McEwan interview). Although outside the line of Hogarth Shakespeare series, the novel found its place within the selected novels, as it tells a story about a woman, though from the unusual perspective of the omniscient foetus.

5.1. *Vinegar Girl* by Anne Tyler

The first novel discussed in the work is *Vinegar Girl* written by Anne Tyler which is a modernized retelling of *The Taming of The Shrew*. Tyler uses a well-known narrative model to retell a similar story, but in an entirely different context with a set of newly invented characters. The modern tale takes place in the contemporary United States and focuses on a girl, who, in spite of her innate charm and intelligence, finds it hard to get into a satisfactory relationship with a man. From this perspective, *The Taming of The Shrew* – although by many critics consider it misogynistic and offensive to women – is an understandable choice. Conflicted relationships and the feeling of not fitting the "mainstream type" is not a rare problem among, for example, the young people or teenagers. Additionally, the novel taps into a timeless discussion over the conflicted dichotomy of woman and man, and of the much-discussed imbalance of the powers between the two. In 1984 bell hooks wrote in her work *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* that "women are the group most victimized by sexist oppression" (hooks, 43) and *The Taming of The Shrew* is a drama which – if taken entirely seriously – can be viewed as supportive of that belief. Regarding this, an initiative to transpose a classical story of a shrew tamed by a man into a contemporary reality is a good test for contemporary reception – it can show us how the story has become affected by history, whether its interpretation has changed over time, and finally, it can show us how this narration can affect us today.

5.1.1. The background

The text of Shakespeare's play *The Taming of the Shrew* was first printed in the First Folio in 1623 as the eleventh of the comedies (Proudfoot 1041). However, the exact date of its writing has not been definitely settled, and little is known about its early performances. However, according to Louise McConnell, the author of *Dictionary of Shakespeare*, a play under the same title, from which Shakespeare's version probably derived, is believed to have been performed in 1594 (McConnell 281). In fact, as various scholars writing about the play argue, Shakespeare was most probably inspired by earlier shrew-taming stories that were widely known and popular in folklore in the sixteenth century (Proudfoot 1041). For instance, Charles Harold Herford writes in the introduction to a contemporary edition of the play that "recipes for the management of wives were the theme of a series of popular plays during the last decade of Elizabeth's reign" (189). In spite of the popularity of the theme, it was the Shakespeare's play that won the highest acclaim of the Elizabethan playgoers, most likely because, as Herford believes, it focused on and developed the portrayal of a "shrew" who is

tamed by "the sheer strong will of a masterful spouse" (189). The whole scheme of wooing and taming the main protagonist was, in fact, the axis upon which the comic effect was built, as Herford argues. Although the very idea of taming a woman no longer has funny connotations , it should not be astonishing that an Elizabethan audience could find it amusing. As McConnell reminds us, in Shakespeare's time "a wife was property of husband," which the reader of today should remember in order to avoid being the provoked by the play. After all, it is in this context in which it is important to read it (282).

As was mentioned before, *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of the best known of Shakespeare's comedies, perhaps especially well-known from Kate's so-called "obedience speech" (Garber 57) at the end of the play in which "the headstrong and independent woman, the supposed shrew of the title, enjoins her fellow wives to "serve, love and obey" their husbands" (Garber 57) and to "place your hands below your husband's foot" (*The Taming of the Shrew* 5.2. 178). Though, as Garber argues, the contemporary readers of the play probably would not appreciate of "a hierarchical social model in which husbands rule and control their wives" (67), it must be noted that the play, and especially the speech mentioned above, were created in a particular context "within Shakespeare's historical period" (67) that differ from the context in which the text would be read or staged nowadays. Also, "like other works of art", Garber writes, plays "are living things that grow and change over time and in response to changing circumstances" (67). With these aspects taken into account one is not obliged to perceive today *The Taming of the Shrew* as a laughable piece of dramatic arts. Most probably, the expectations of audiences today differ from those that were current in Shakespeare's time, hence the delivery of the play would be different too. For example, "modern actresses have often delivered Kate's 'obedient' speech with a wink, or with a tone of irony" (Garber 67). Tyler's recreation of the "taming" theme points towards comedy too, yet the amusing potential, which oftentimes is embedded into humorous dialogue scenes, is closely connected to the contemporary context and circumstances that create the narration of the retelling.

The original play begins with an "induction" in which a nobleman meets a drunken beggar, Christopher Sly, and decides to play a trick on him. The Lord takes Sly home, treats him as if he were a nobleman too, but persuades him that he just lost his memory. Having Sly as his audience, the Lord, together with a company of travelling players, stages a play for Sly – *The Taming of The Shrew.*

In the play within a play, set in Padua, Baptista Minola has two daughters – Bianca who is sweet-natured and has plenty of admirers, and Katherina whom no one will marry because of her reputation of being bad-tempered. Baptista insists that Katherina must marry first, then there will be turn for Bianca. Meanwhile, Lucentio arrives in Padua and immediately falls in love with Bianca. Under cover of being a schoolmaster, he offers to teach her privately for the sake of regular meetings. Luckily for Baptista, another bachelor comes to Padua – Petruchio from Verona, determined to merry wealthily. He begins to court Kate by taming her. He seems not to be discouraged by Kate's shrewish temperament – quite the reverse, he even finds ways to convince her he is the best candidate to become her future husband. After some time, Katherina and Petruchio discover that Lucentio has married Bianca secretly. They attend their celebratory banquet in the course of which Petruchio and Lucentio put Bianca and Kate to the test of obedience and loyalty. Surprisingly, Katherina, now thoroughly "tamed' and in love with her husband, wins the bet by obeying her husband, while the apparently "sweet-natured" Bianca refuses to obey, finding the bet too silly to be taken seriously. In conclusion, Katherina appears to have become the ideal, subordinate, and mild wife.

5.1.2. The shrew of today

Tyler's task was, without a doubt, not an easy one, as she had to find adequate means of expression to retell an "unequivocally misogynistic" play, as McEvoy calls *The Taming of the Shrew* (129). To get a feel of the anti-female elements, let us recall the final speech, the "obedience" speech (Garber 57) of the play in which Kate overtly glorifies her husband and humiliates herself. After the marriage with Petruchio, which – according to McEvoy – "was designed to humiliate Katherina and break her spirit" (130), Kate begins to accept his authority over her, to the point that she accepts naming the sun the moon – "(…) it is the blessed sun./ But sun it is not, when you say it is not,/ And the moon changes even as your mind."(*The Taming of the Shrew*, 4.5. 18-20). However, apart from reading Kate's words literally, one can also find in her speech a dose of irony, a subtle laugh from an unrealistic image of the male and female relationship, which is "a kind of fantasy of male wish-fulfilment" (McEvoy 132). The wink might be also reinforced by the fact that many of the characters of the play seem to be drawn from the stock types of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* which also "undermines any confidence the audience might have that they are supposed to regard those characters as a representation of the world as it is"(McEvoy 132). That comical potential is undoubtedly used by Tyler and revealed in the modern retelling, although the overall message of her novel can be seen as a truthful picture of the real longings of a contemporary human.

Nevertheless, in order to understand the undeniable weight of misogynist tones of the original drama, we should remember that in Shakespeare's time, thinking of a woman as inferior to a man was nothing uncommon. In some stereotyped beliefs a woman appeared as a creature unable of critical thinking, as all her behaviour was thought to be controlled by her menstrual cycle which may serve as an explanation why "fluidity and excess were qualities that were often attributed to women in literature" (McEvoy 69). Puritans, on the other hand, "disapproved of an unstable marriage situation not only for spiritual reasons, but also for economic ones: middle-class men cannot afford to run two establishments (Dusinberre 4). Planned marriage was therefore a frequent practice. On the other hand, in Shakespeare's time the attitudes to women, together with the stereotypes society imposed on them, started slowly changing (Dusinberre 5). The society already new that the "orthodoxies about women and about marriage must give way to a treatment of women as individuals" (Dusinberre 5). Thus, Shakespeare's writing did reflect that change offering many intelligent, witty and determined heroines who stand in opposition to the stereotypical tendencies. It is sufficient to mention Lady Macbeth, a clever, influential personality whom Macbeth choses for his guide.

Kate Battista is another female character who can be added to this forceful group of Shakespearian heroines. She is a young woman "who always speaks her mind and is not afraid to be rude and aggressive when she needs to be" (129) as McEvoy succinctly describes her. For the contemporary reader, these characteristics may seem virtuous – they are abilities sought-after in times when a lack of assertiveness is often seen as a problem. From this perspective, Tyler's and Shakespeare's texts differ entirely, as silence is no longer seen as the "highest female virtue" nowadays. Nevertheless, Tyler uses all the strengths of the classic Kate while creating her new protagonist. The contemporary Kate lives in Baltimore where she works as a preschool teacher, a job she authentically hates. Tyler gives her an ability to engage in complex analytical thinking coupled with short tongue, but this combination deprives her of a place in a college, as she overtly challenges a poor explanation of photosynthesis delivered by a teacher. Kate's strong interest in science seems to be highlighted by Tyler on purpose. By creating a sharp-minded female character, Tyler tries to say that science is a field no longer reserved only for men. At the end of the novel, Kate is awarded a prize for brilliant research in botany – thus illustrating how important her impact is in that field.

In a transportation of the classic plot into a modern context Tyler inevitably loses certain aspects of it, as she has no intention of recreating a faithful copy of an original text. At the same time, she invests in her story a lot of freshness which gives it the status of an independent

creation, and here the discussion about the point of rewriting Shakespeare is surely a secondary issue. Above all, while discussing the change of a drama into a novel, we can already talk about translation, as one mode of expression is translated into another, governed by different set of means of expression. Theatrical aspects, for instance, are bound to be lost, as the novel, by its nature, is meant for silent reading by one person at a time – the reader. The world depicted in the novel becomes reconstructed in the reader's imagination, which is, in a way, her or his private theatrical stage. While meeting Shakespeare captured in a novel the reader does not become deprived of anything, but is rewarded with a set of new sensations: new images of the characters, extensive descriptions of their internal and external features, and psychological analysis of their actions. In the case of *Vinegar Girl*, the reader may also experience pleasure in spotting the differences between the classic tale and its contemporary sister. The characters, too, are interesting: for example, Kate's younger sister Bunny, the equivalent of Shakespeare's Bianca, who is disrespectful towards any standardized rule concerning proper behavior. Bunny is a teenage vegetarian, meeting boys at times she is not supposed to, and ignoring Kate who attempts to perform the empty role of their mother. The two male protagonists are also fascinating: the father, who is a workaholic scientist approaching a breakthrough in his research, and his indispensable laboratory assistant Pyotr Cherbakov – the equivalent of Petruchio – a Russian immigrant who, unfortunately, is just about to be deported back to Russia, as his visa is going to expire.

At the beginning of the story, the reader meets Kate who feels stuck, but not because of her vigorous temperament, but due to her deeply rooted shyness and introversion. Having no specific idea how to live her life, Kate ends up keeping house for her eccentric scientist father and her pretty yet irritating younger sister Bunny. At work she is always in trouble. Although the children like her, the adults do not approve of her too straightforward style of communication. The kindergarten is not the fulfillment of her wishes, but Kate does not have any plan to rearrange her life. Circumstances change after meeting Pyotr, a Russian-émigré biologist whose imminent deportation becomes a burning stimulus to begin the intrigue. The father knows that without Pyotr he will not be able to finish his promising research, and the only solution at hand, which may keep him in the United States for good is to marry him to one of his daughters. As Kate is the older one, the choice is obvious.

In the construction of her new portrayal of Kate, Tyler does not choose the straight path of creating a stereotypical, difficult-to-like, rebellious woman, who needs the hard hand of a dominant, equally stereotypical male. Neither does she create a "grotesque feminist professor"

which could have seemed tempting, as Gopnik notices (par. 9). Instead, Tyler focuses on two important aspects of Kate's psychology – her social oddness and her difficult relationship with Bianca, here represented by her sexy younger sister Bunny. In Tyler's interpretation, Kate gains a friendly and subtle framing, and her "shrewd" self is, in fact, made up of a good sense of humor, straightforwardness, and intelligence. She is also a person of deep, intense insight; frequently the reader becomes witness to her inner speech, in which she analyses her own self, the problems of the family, and the logic of the world around her. This perspective differs from the Shakespeare story, where Kate is mainly described from the perspective of others, mostly men. Tyler's Kate is often self-analytical. Many times, she recalls Hamlet, as she is an equally intense thinker. In the whole story there are numerous cases when the reader can observe her inner words. For instance, Kate is once criticized for not being sufficiently mature to work with children; her head teacher advises her to develop some "tact, restraint and diplomacy" (30). Afterwards, she asks herself: "What was the difference between tact, restraint and diplomacy? Maybe *tact* referred to saying things politely while *diplomacy* meant not saying things at all. Except, wouldn't *restraint* cover that? Wouldn't *restraint* cover all three? People tended to be very spendthrift with their language, Kate had noticed. They used a lot more words than they needed to" (30). This example of a slip into the first-person narration, into free indirect speech, helps Tyler built a "subjective and personal style" (Tearle). The author very often lets Kate speak from her own perspective and with a usage of her own words, thus enabling the reader to observe the manner of her thinking. Being able to sense Kate's individual language and style lets the reader know her more directly. Additionally, Kate's inner thoughts are extremely helpful in understanding her longings. We are able to notice how much she lacks maternal support: "she wished she had had a mother. Well, she had had a mother, but she wished she'd had one who had taught her how to get along in the world better" (29). Kate is aware that she needs a change, but somehow she is unable to move. Just like Hamlet – she is an individual thinking intensely, yet too much to eventually make up her mind and start acting.

The aforementioned lack of maternal support, as well as the overall absence of the figure of mother in the story, is another aspect of Kate's development that is certainly worth noticing. That lack is detectable to such an extent that Hatice Karaman speaks about "Shakespeare's preference for creating powerful masculine characters while burying mothers" (39) which, as she believes, is a natural consequence of "patriarchy founded on the oppression of women" (45). As Karaman puts it, there is a "missing maternal genealogy in Shakespeare" (39) which, for example, is very well presented in *The Taming of the Shrew* where the representation of

mother is definitely missing. Instead, the central female figure is taken by Kate who, as Karaman concludes, "is perplexing and threatening to the patriarchal order" (44) and from this reason Petruchio aims at taming her – at "desubjectifying" her (Karaman 44) – in order to fit her into the vision of a woman expected by men, in order to turn her into "subservient wife" (47). Tyler's Kate does also play the part of a missing mother, especially in the relation with Bunny whom she tries to raise and educate, but her "being" a mother does not threaten the men around her. Quite the reverse, performing the mother part acts rather as a bond which tights Kate close to her family home, as she is also a right hand to her father to whom she seems irreplaceable. Additionally, Kate's "shrewishness" is nothing but a threat to Pyotr who is rather attracted to Kate's assertiveness and definitely likes it. Paradoxically, he is also the one who helps Kate detach from her father. In Tyler's interpretation the "taming" element appears as missing in the relationship between Kate and Pyotr. She is also far from ascribing to Kate the role of a subservient woman. Instead, one can see that the two benefit from each other, and that Kate can find emotional security not in a dominant husband, but in a figure of a mother whom she finally becomes (Drost 50).

Pyotr is also the person with whom Kate becomes able to share many of her problems. In many ways, Pyotr is Kate's alter ego, similarly awkward, critically thinking, and frank. He, too, is an outcast, not a mainstream type, and unwilling to bend to external requirements. His English is far from perfect; he talks with a strong foreign accent and mispronounces words: he has "troubles with *th* sounds and his vowels didn't seem to last long enough" (7). In the second part of the novel, Kate starts to sympathize with him. She imagines "how she herself would feel if she were alone in a foreign country, her visa about to expire, no clear notion of where she would go once it did expire or how she would support herself. Plus the language problem!" (121). What Tyler indicates is that this arranged marriage is in many ways the optimum match, as it unites two remarkably similar people. Kate suits Pyotr perfectly: he likes talking to her, admires her independence, and her long dark hair that "avoids beauty parlors" (88). The sweet, younger sister Bunny does not attract him at all. In the end, marriage does not make Kate submissive, but quite the reverse. She does not surrender her identity. By taking Pyotr as her husband, Kate finds a counterbalance to her own talent and strength. With Pyotr she finally becomes fulfilled both as a woman and as a promising botanist. In Tyler's eyes, this harmony is the foundation of a successful marriage.

For Tyler, the concept of taming is without a doubt an anachronistic one, and she extracts from Shakespeare much more than the idea of a masterful man who makes his wife

obedient. In her interpretation, there is obviously no room for a male triumph over a foolishly rebellious woman, as this is presented in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In Tyler's version "taming" morphs into achieving a kind of compromise between two people, into uniting. By uniting with each other, Kate and Pyotr gain a chance to become more themselves, and for both of them their marriage works as a stimulus to growth. What is also different in the two texts is Kate's attitude towards men, which becomes fully visible and audible in her last soliloquy closing the drama. In the original text, Kate declares women's submissiveness and inferiority to men and to her husband, but in the modern retelling Kate from Baltimore admits to a feeling of compassion towards Piotr, an émigré with a far more difficult path to success in any field than that of a US citizen. In order to see these differences in the ways of thinking of both Kates, let us look at the passages where they reveal their opinions. In the longest speech in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate offers a simplistic and banal explanation of the reasons why man should have authority over woman:

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, thy head, thy sovereign;
>
> one that cares for thee, and for thy maintenance;
>
> commits his body to painful labor both by sea and land,
>
> and craves no other tribute at thy hands than love, fair looks and obedience.
>
> (*The Taming of The Shrew*, 5.2. 147-153).

In Tyler's interpretation the speech – which is a part of a dialogue with Kate's sister - becomes "a feminist statement", as Gopnik observes (par.11), and an opening towards equality and freedom:

> It's hard being a man. Have you ever thought about that? Anything that's bothering them, men think they have to hide it. They're a whole lot less free than women are, when you think about it. Women have been studying people's feelings since they were toddlers; they've been perfecting their radar—their intuition or their empathy or their interpersonal whatchamacallit. It's like men and women are in two different countries! I'm not "backing down," as you call it; I'm letting him into my country. I'm giving him space in a place where we can both be ourselves. (Tyler 227)

Tyler's interpretation of the speech does not seem to be maintained in a comic tone, but rather involves a deliberate change of places. It is Kate who thinks about herself as "superior", and it is rather her deliberate choice to merry Pyotr. Another time, the author may by trying to

underline the potential of a woman to make her own choices, which is a picture much more welcome to the modern reader than that of a woman humiliating herself in front of a husband (even if for comic effect). Nevertheless, as Garber argues, even in its original form the monologue does not have to be read as an act of deliberate surrender, but may be rather seen as a moment in which Kate awakens into action "and perhaps also into passion, by her breaking away from her father and sister" (70). In Garber's view, Kate has long been assigned to a role of an "Ugly Duckling in the household of Baptista" (70) where she was the "bad daughter" contrasted to the "good" one, her sister Bianca (70). Thus, Garber argues that Kate's final speech is in fact dedicated to Petruchio, "and seems to represent not an abandonment of her earlier independence, but a revised understanding of what freedom means, in sexuality and in marriage" (70). In the modern retelling, Kate does indeed regains her freedom, what is accentuated by the fact that she returns to college and that she starts thriving as a scientific researcher. She definitely "does not become the happy, pregnant stay-at-home mother to her dominant scientist husband (Drost 51). As far as the speech itself is concerned, Tyler decides to turn it into a truthful manifest of a self-aware woman, who means what she says. This choice appears strategically and technically safe, as such an interpretation of Kate seems to be touching a common ground with contemporary women who would like to identify with Kate at least to some extent.

As Lefevere argues in *Translation, Manipulation and Rewriting of Literary Fame*, "all rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (Lefevere vii). *Vinegar Girl* is such a manipulation of a classic tale, showing in how many different ways resistance may be shown. Delivering the play to the modern audiences certainly demands from the rewriter creativity, as the "taming" theme will reach the audiences whose expectations have definitely changed since "the initial writing and staging of *Taming*" (Garber 67). The modern audience's expectations and reactions have a large background sustained by the consciousness of "women's rights, women's independence, and cultural and political feminism (Garber 67). Hence, the modern Kate Battista is an example of how an anachronic theme of "taming" may become translated into the contemporary language. Kate from Baltimore speaks with a subtle yet intriguing voice, filled with intelligence and charm, which is a new quality, opposed to a vibrant yet slightly worn-out image of the loud, out-spoken girl, shouting her claims out loud, impossible to be liked. Tyler's Kate is intriguingly certain about her own intuitions, and this confidence gives her a pleasant allure – another new characteristic added to the classic image.

The modern portrayal of Kate is also a picture of an outcast, a kind of a person quite well known and recognizable in contemporary society. She is also a thoroughly modern, independent woman, with whom many could identify.

At the end of his essay on *Vinegar Girl*, Gopnik ponders on what Shakespeare would say once he saw the retellings of his works. What would be his reaction to *Vinegar Girl*? Playing with the thought, the reviewer presumes that Shakespeare might be amazed that a fable based on inner action*,* on the *"*anti-dramatic movement of Anne Tyler's imagination" (par. 17), is a story which sells. To understand Shakespeare's hypothetical reaction we should bear in mind that the playwright was a member of a dynamically functioning entertainment industry, and he – to quote Gopnik – "was used to getting half of London on their asses for a play, and he knew you needed bloody scenes and children baked in pies to do it" (par. 17). That was certainly expected from theatre scripts. The novel, however, is constructed for silent reading by an individual reader who can recreate depicted stories in her or his imagination. Certainly, one can depict the female characters who became much more explored than their predecessors, as Tyler allowed herself for a "more nuanced and liberating representation of womanhood" (Drost 51) than it is presented in the original context where the presence of women "is often lacking both in presence and in quality" (Drost 51).

If we look at these issues, the essence of Shakespeare's plays appears universal, hence transferable into new times. Although the setting changes, the substantial elements of the plays – the characters and the roles – stay the same, motivated by similar desires, and tormented by similar dilemmas, which haunt protagonists created four hundred years ago. Whether the entire richness of Shakespeare's plays regains an adequate representation in contemporary retellings should not be the main issue when discussing such newly written versions. What is more interesting is to observe the solutions which an author has chosen to make the classic protagonist live in the setting of the twenty-first century, in conditions which could not be within the reach of the imagination of the people of Elizabethan England. At the same time, it should be remembered that any novel is only a fictional story, inviting the reader to participate in an imagined universe just for the while spent in reading. This same practice was used by Shakespeare who wrote his dramas for people who would come to the theatre for some time, and who would later return home. Tyler also invites the reader to attend the performance she has created. She deliberately extracted Kate from the patriarchal context thanks to which the character may "fit a more modern definition of womanhood, where outspoken women are not necessarily 'diseased' and are even considered positive in some context" (Drost 50). Presented

as such, both sisters may be read as positive, "in contrast to *The Shrew* where Katherina's characteristics would have read as negative to the audiences at the time" (Drost 70). Additionally, Tyler presents a picture of a woman, who in spite of her talent and interesting personality feels lonely and outcast. Thus, the text shows that loneliness acts against a person's potential, and instead of promoting woman's independence, is rather a repressive factor.

5.2. *New Boy* by Tracy Chevalier

"*Othello* is a dynamic organism that is affected by every hand that touches it."

Ayanna Thompson

The second novel chosen for analysis, besides foregrounding its female focus, also tackles the problem of alienation and social ostracism. *New Boy*, based on Shakespearean *Othello*, was written by Tracy Chevalier, an American historical novelist. Chevalier builds her own interpretation basing on the tragic voice of the play. According to Ayanna Thompson who extensively discusses the topic of genre in the introduction to the third series of the Arden *Othello*, the way that Shakespeare mixed together the elements of different genres within one play can be seen as a distinctive feature of his writing. First of all, it demonstrates the experimental status of his work, but second, it shows that Shakespeare invited his spectators to question their expectations regarding characters and story, and prompted them to see the themes from a perspective not frequently experienced. As Thompson writes, "*Othello*, in the end, is a play about how well or how difficult it is to integrate disparate people, personal narratives, culture and cultural narratives" (Thompson ch.1). All those difficulties, one after another, are mirrored in the story told in *New Boy*. A struggle for integration and acceptance is centred on the main protagonist who enters the hermetic and unwelcoming territory of his peers.

5.2.1. The background

The traditional date for the composition of *Othello* is, according to Proudfoot, around 1603-1604. The two first written editions of the play were published after Shakespeare's death: in the Quarto in 1622, and later in the First Folio in 1623. Although published shortly one after another, the two version are different in many aspects, such as the length of certain passages, spelling, verse lineation, and punctuation (Proudfoot 941). As if influenced by these early changes, *Othello* continues to be a text open to remodelling, "a dynamic organism …", receptive to the impulses of its re-creators, as Ayanna Thompson argues (1). Today's Arden Shakespeare edition is mostly concerned with presenting the play as a text for performance, which reminds the reader about the fundamental venue for Shakespeare's work (Proudfoot 941).

Although *Othello*, as Bloom puts it, is "Othello's tragedy", the play is "Iago's play" (Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention* 433), as well as "the world is Iago's" (Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention* 444), as it is Iago whose malicious intensions move the action forward. For Bloom, Iago, who exists "at the constant expense of others", is in fact motivated by "the love of power" (432) which may justify his ease in destroying happiness of others. In Bloom's another work, *Iago: The Strategies of* Evil, the author argues that the character has even more to offer for performing arts than the role of Othello. Othello, although noble and of high social status, "seems to be rather absentminded or short-sighted and frequently asks Iago what is happening" (Bloom, *Iago: The Strategies* 2). For Bloom, Othello demonstrates also certain characteristics of immaturity which perhaps make him an easy prey for Iago's intrigues. Thus, one may read that Othello is "at once a magnificent captain general of a mercenary army and a kind of child-man given to weeping" (2). Finally, it is Iago who conquers him. Moreover, by doing this Iago proves that the virtues Othello represents are entirely wrong. While Othello claims that "the world is beautiful and people are noble" (Kott 109), Iago demolishes this worldview and promotes his own – the one which "consists of villains and fools; of those who devour and those who are devoured" (Kott 109). Clearly, Iago is the one who reckons himself as the strong one. He is capable of undertaking any idea budding in his mind. Kott refers to him as "a Machiavellian stage manager" (108), who not only creates the tragedy of malicious events and distributes all the roles among the rest, but who also wishes to act in it himself. Paradoxically, although being cruel, Iago, as Kott observes, is not a demon, but rather a pragmatist who uses others as tools and believes that any plan can be fulfilled just by following appropriate intentions. Demonstrating this self-determination, Iago appears as a character deeply convinced about the power of his will of which he testifies by saying:

> Our bodies are gardens, to the which
>
> Our wills are gardeners. (*Othello*, 1.3. 313-314)

Justifying his behaviour by the power of his will, Iago "implies causality where none exists, encourages agency where it should not be asserted" (Streete 2) thus legitimizing his satanic nature. In the modern retelling, Tracy Chevalier offers a character of Ian – the counterpart to Iago – who seems to believe in a similar code of virtues. "Because I can" (Chevalier 112) is Ian's audacious motivation for evil.

5.2.2. *Othello* – the original

The action of *Othello* starts on a street in Venice. There, Iago appears for the first time, frustrated, as he has been unfairly overlooked for advancement to the title of lieutenant in the army. Knowing his price, as he confesses to Roderigo, Iago believes that his rival to the post, Cassio, is unsuited for the rank, and has no experience on the battlefield. As if that were not enough to upset him, Iago's commander, the noble Moor Othello, has secretly married Desdemona, the beautiful daughter of Brabantio, a Venetian senator. Obsessed with hatred and envy, both for his rival Cassio and for Othello, Iago commits himself to ruin them both.

Although Iago's cruel intentions are known to the audience, the other characters remain unaware of them, as he skilfully pretends to be an honest and true friend. Well-thought-out and calculated behaviour is part of Iago's military-like strategy. Firstly, he attempts to destroy Othello's happy marriage by telling Desdemona's father that Othello used witchcraft to win her. Put under pressure, Othello honestly explains to Brabantio that he won Desdemona not by witchcraft but by telling her "the story of my life / from year to year – the battles, sieges, fortunes / That I have passed" (*Othello*, 1.3. 130-132). Brabantio accepts the explanation, and Iago gets no satisfaction. But then, there comes an opportunity to dishonour Cassio. Iago takes advantage of his weakness for wine, purposely getting him so drunk that he ends up in a fight. The fight is witnessed by Othello, and Iago persuades Othello it was Cassio who has initiated it and who attacked the others. The angry Othello dismisses Cassio from his post. "Cassio, I love thee, / but never more be officer of mine", he says (*Othello*, 2.3. 240-241), and Iago, thus, accomplishes his first goal. But, still, Othello's presence keeps tormenting Iago's broken ego, and another step in destruction is directly oriented to hurting him.

This stage now takes place in Cyprus, where Iago subtly sows seed of doubt in Othello's mind, hinting that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio. To support what he says, Iago steals a handkerchief, which Othello previously gave to his wife as a souvenir, and hands it over to Cassio, as apparent evidence of her love for him. Presented with this piece of evidence, Othello, without any rational analysis, becomes convinced that Iago is telling the truth. Overwhelmed by uncontrolled jealousy, he accuses Desdemona of adultery in front of witnesses. Later in her room, he forces her to pray and beg for mercy. Finally, infuriated, he stifles her to death.

After its culmination, Iago's plot is revealed by Emilia, his wife. Certainly, the most tragic realization is experienced by Othello, as he becomes now aware of his terrible mistake.

Heartbroken, he commits suicide. Later, Iago's intrigues are made explicit too, in consequence of which he is taken under arrest and sent back to Venice, where his punishment will continue.

5.2.3. Foregrounding in *Othello*

Rewriting Shakespeare, as has already been mentioned in previous chapters, may often meet with criticism involving a comparison of a new interpretation with the original. Robert McCrum, who reviewed Chevalier's retelling in *The Guardian* shortly after the book *New Boy* was published, expressed scepticism as regards the idea of novelizing the complex *Othello,* as in his opinion this attempt is bound to flatten the play, depriving it of an opaque multidimensionality, which is an essential part of Shakespeare's theatrical vision (par. 6). However, Thompson presents an opposing view. In her opinion, *Othello* is not only open to absorb new energies, but it even invites revision, as it has no fixed or dominant perspective of reading. In her Introduction to the Arden edition of the play, Thompson argues that the complexity of *Othello* offers several topics equally valuable, difficult and worth elaboration (Thompson ch.1). What is more, an attempt to fit it into definite narrative frames is in her opinion a limiting approach that overshadows other possible ways of interpretation (Thompson ch.1). For instance, Chevalier focuses on alienation and foregrounds this problem, emphasizing the tensions which in her opinion are relevant to the story she creates.

The theme on which Chevalier focuses mostly is the experience of otherness, the feeling of not fitting into the system. Although Osei (Othello's counterpart) is the only one black-skinned boy in the school, Chevalier does not choose to focus on the signs of racism which are directed towards him. What is especially interesting in relation to her interpretation is the fact that, according to some critics, it is not clearly defined that Shakespeare intended to discuss racism in the first place (Thompson ch.1). According to Thompson, today's re-reading of Shakespeare has neither to be focused nor centred on analysing that particular aspect. What is more, it is rewarding to notice, that – as Thompson suggests – the term Moor was very inconsistent in Shakespeare's world and was used not only to distinguish skin colour, but also to indicate religious affiliation. According to her, "Moor was an elastic term in the early modern period that could encompass Muslims, Africans, blacks, atheists and others" (24). Also theatregoers when hearing the title of the play, as Thompson writes, "probably had various and potentially contradictory definitions and corresponding images in their minds" (25). Today the play does not have a single, definite reading either. Re-reading *Othello* must be different also because the play has passed through and been affected by various historical moments. For

example, together with *The Merchant of Venice, Othello* was once used to promote anti-Semitic and racist beliefs (24). On the other hand, as we know from Thompson's introduction, *Othello* was employed as a tool either to mock blacks, or to combat racism (4). In modern times, Thompson argues, reading *Othello* is challenging, as there is no definite instruction how to handle it, or how the play "should" be handled. Readers, as well as directors and all artists wishing to rework the play are free to choose among the possibilities of interpretative of framings. In Thompson's opinion , there is not a specific key which would make us prioritize one topic of *Othello* over another. She also recommends staying sceptical of adhering to one frame – in this case racism – or to one particular narrative discourse, as in her view "the act of framing something narrowly often makes it impossible to accept other narratives and other perspectives" (ch. 1). In fact, each interpretation of Shakespeare introduces new variation of the base text. As Virginia Mason Vaughan asserts: "every time the play is produced, debated in critical periodicals and conferences, taught in school, or read privately for pleasure, the text is inscribed with a new and unique set of attitudes and values" (237).

Although Thomson argues that Shakespeare did not intend to discuss racism in the first place, Ernst A. J. Honigmann, the author of an extensive introduction to the Arden Shakespeare's *Othello* from 1996, argues something opposite. In Honigmann's view, it is just in this play where Shakespeare begins to fight with racism – "an emerging social problem, one that many critics of *Othello* have passed over in silence" (27). Honigmann maintains that the drama does not stop being a story on otherness at any point, and the otherness of Othello is a problem which he is not able to get rid of. Despite having high qualifications and military skills which are highly appreciated by the demanding Venetian army, Othello is still black and foreign, without any status. Just because of this, as McEvoy observes, he cannot be accepted in the hierarchy of Venetian state (190). Brabantio cannot accept him as a husband for his daughter mostly because of the colour of his skin. In consequence, his foreignness and blackness are emphasized by others. That is the key argument underlying the racism in *Othello*. "Be he a black or a north African Moor", Honigmann writes, "Othello's otherness remains" (27). He is "more than a stranger, he comes from a mysteriously 'other' world, a world that lies beyond our reach, hinted at rather than defined" (27). The mystery attached to him is a "by-product of his dark skin" which he cannot shake off, regardless of his self-identification with Christianity or his marriage to Desdemona, which, in fact, even amplifies his contrasting origin. In Honigmann's opinion, Shakespeare was especially attentive to the problem of racism and knew more about it "than modern critics have cared to admit" (31). Chevalier follows a similar

intuition as she also is especially sensitive towards the problem of otherness stemming from stigmatization because of skin colour. In her rewriting, racism is at its centre. What is more, it is projected with a specific brutality characteristic of the environment in which the action takes place – the schoolyard – where animosities escalate with impulsiveness characteristic of children. The panoply of both negative and positive emotions which torment the adult characters in the classic tale, is here experienced and manifested by children. The young characters equivalent to Iago and Othello – Ian and Osei – suffer from similarly intensified jealousy, envy and hatred.

Although the novel focuses most of all on Osei as a person equivalent to Othello, the original play seems to be much more concerned with the character of Iago. From the beginning of the play, we know how much he suffers from being underestimated as a soldier, and consequently, as a person. Bloom notices that the pain Iago experiences has its beginning long before the play starts: "before the tragedy commences, Iago has sustained a tremendous shock that has unmanned him and devastated his state of being. He has been passed over for promotion to Othello's lieutenant and suffers from what John Milton's Satan, who owes much to Iago, calls "a Sense of Injured Merit" (4). Chevalier does also discusses Ian's past to contextualise and explain his motifs. Also, she puts much interest in showing the roots of Ian's rage – he is infuriated by Osei's presence therefore moves him "through spasm of adolescent jealousy by prodding him to believe that Dee, the golden-haired girl Osei asks to "go with" on his very first day, is more interested in the "appealing face and bright blue eyes" of Casper" (Hancock 31). Chevalier also follows a similar dramatic pattern in building the relationship between Osei and Cassio, who becomes his preferable schoolmate, while Ian is left rather unnoticed. In the classical play, Othello did not promote Iago as he did not consider him a warrior skilled enough to serve during peacetimes – he reckons that the latter "does not know the limits that separate war from peace" (Bloom 4). As the play evolves, one can see that Othello's intuition about Iago's rebellious tendencies proves true; from the act I, as Bloom remarks, one can see "the gradual emergence of Iago's demonic role" (7). His feeling of being rejected transgresses into envy which finally empowers him to destruct everyone and everything without hesitation. Adrian Streete asserts that, in fact, "Iago embodies the play's most intense exploration of the causality of evil and of how it is willed into language" (4). Evil, Sreete writes, is a "metaphysical problem" (2) which "acts through the will of secondary agents such as Satan or individual sinners" (2). And here comes Iago entitling himself such a sinner who corrupts the human nature which God initially created as good (Streete 3).

5.2.4. The cover version – *New Boy*

The protagonist of *New Boy*, who is named Osei, is a dark-skinned boy whose otherness is accentuated by the fact of his being the only black child in the school. Not fitting into the school's model, the boy experiences great emotional struggle, mostly from his main antagonist Ian who tests indirect forms of abuse on Osei. According to Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, "Chevalier took the most emotionally charge of Shakespeare's plays and transplanted it in time and place" (par. 1). This opinion seems reasonable if one takes into consideration the fact that the destructive forces depicted in the novel hit childish feelings which, by nature, are unarmed and, hence, easily targeted. Just as in the source play, the two negative feelings which push the boys into hurting each other are jealousy and envy. It is interesting to mention that, as Honigmann notices, for the Elizabethans these two emotions, as well as the two characters – Iago and Othello – might have been regarded as alike, almost complementary to each other (33). At the base of this belief lies an assumption that, according to the psychology of humours, "jealousy and envy were closely related, jealousy being a species of envy, which is in turn a species of hatred" (Honigmann 33). In consequence, we may perceive Othello and Iago – here Osei and Ian – as both opposites and similar to each other (33). Both are tormented by the same obsession and can be seen as parallel studies (33). Both are outsiders struggling to adapt to external circumstances.

In Chevalier's story, discrimination, betrayal, alienation and jealousy gain a special weight as they are generated by children who dare to act before they think analytically about possible negative consequences. Moreover, their emotional problems may often appear inflated to extraordinary dimensions. While they grow, their feelings escalate and slip out of control. Teenagers may often adapt impulsive behaviour which has a twisting trajectory, and the decisions taken in a zeal of ideas provoke actions that may be regretted afterwards. Moreover, children often establish certain sets of rules, their own politics, sometimes brutal, the secret codes of their playgrounds through which they must navigate to achieve acceptance, respect and their place of belonging. Whenever they fail in any of these aspects, they suffer a personal catastrophe which leaves a painful imprint in their sensitive nature. The narration constructed by Chevalier is founded on these facts. It utilizes vulnerable teenage and near-teenage psyches (all the characters are eleven years old) as a target and source for the work of evil. Herself, in an interview for *Shakespeare and Beyond*, Chevalier admits that all the strong feelings she writes about in *New Boy* "children feel deeply – and without the filters adults carefully construct

to appear neutral" (Chevalier, "Q and A" par. 3). From this reason, she decided to locate her narration in the schoolyard which is a territory entirely belonging to children. She explains:

> I thought about where children have some control over their own world, and the school playground became the obvious choice. It is a very intense place, full of passion and intrigue, where adults have only nominal control. Things also happen fast on a playground. It's like a laboratory. Kids test out romance, switch friends, fight, make allegiances, and start wars—all in the course of a day. Once I chose that setting, it was easy to bring out discrimination, betrayal, jealousy. Kids live through those things every day and they feel them hard. (Chevalier, "Q and A" par. 3)

Setting the action on a playground has also a personal resonance for Chevalier, as she herself grew up in a neighbourhood where the majority of children were black, and she was the one who could experience the feeling of being the outsider. "I often felt different […] I was able to reference some of those feelings in the novel" (Chevalier, "Q and A" par. 4), she admits.

The main protagonist of Winterson's story, Osei Kokote – "O" as he asks his new schoolmates to call him – is the eleven-year-old son of a Ghanaian diplomat. His father's profession demands frequent relocations, and in consequence the boy must face frequent changes of schools and classmates. The action takes place within one day, in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., in the 1970s, at a school playground. The boy arrives at a "typical suburban elementary school" (4), joining the sixth grade just a month before the end of the schoolyear. His assimilation is difficult: the boy enters a solid group of peers shocked by his arrival, as he is the only black child in the school. However, Osei does not expect a warm welcome from any of his schoolmates; he has already been affected by a sequence of humiliating acts on the part of peers and teachers. This time, the new teachers seem inexperienced in welcoming a black student, and are reluctant to initiate the process of his acclimatization. On the day of Osei's arrival the two main teachers – Miss Lode and Mr. Brabant – wonder if they have to prepare the students for meeting Osei. "Do you think we should – well say something to the students about him? About – I don't know – about him being different?" asks Miss Lode (13). Their careful steps reveal insecurity – it is part of their duty to suppress any unexpected impulse of discrimination, which now has a pretext to break out. While the action develops, Mr. Brabant shows even less compassion, claiming: "Life is not easy for anyone. If anything, he has it *too* easy. He'll grow up and walk right into a good job, thanks to affirmative action. A good job that someone more qualified should have done" (148).

The author's motivation behind writing *New Boy* was not only external, provided by the publisher, but also personal. Chevalier herself was born in Washington, D.C., and went to an elementary school with many black students where she experienced a range of unfriendly behaviour, expressed in the novel. Her literary intuition seems to be convergent with the opinions of Honigmann and Thompson who both perceive *Othello* as a story of otherness beyond the colour of the skin (27). Certainly, *New Boy* deals with the problem of exclusion originating from racism, but as the action develops, we can notice that the pain of feeling lonely and misunderstood affects every character. Their loneliness is intricately connected with their age. All of them are on the verge of maturation, dealing with difficult emotions, such as adolescent jealousy (Hancock 31). Their tumbling feelings often find no escape, as a difficulty lies also in finding a suitable person to listen to what they have to say. Mostly, the protagonists rely on their friends who stay equally helpless with regard to their problems. Chevalier portrays this loneliness very acutely, sending a message that the problem with rejection can start at an early age. She states: "We have all at one time or another stood on the edge of a playground, with the bullies circling, wondering if we are going to be accepted" (Chevalier 189). The playground is governed by brutal politics and codes, through which it is often extremely hard to pass.

The narrative of *New Boy* is very condensed, similarly to the emotional life of its characters. The whole action takes place within one day, which is divided into five parts: *Before School, Morning Recess, Lunch, Afternoon Recess,* and *After School.* Each part is divided into four entries in which the action is narrated from the points of view of four children – the main characters, Osei, Dee, Mimi (her best friend), and Ian. Dee, a childlike version of Desdemona together with Osei are the main victims of Ian who is the main agent provoking troublesome events. On the first day of school, Dee becomes Osei's first ally, helping him to survive in the group of peers. Unlike the others, Dee interprets his otherness with fascination, in her thoughts comparing him to a bear: "it was his skin that stood out, its colour reminding Dee of bears she'd seen at the zoo a few months before, on a school field trip. Though they were called black bears, their fur was actually deep brown, with a reddish tint at the tips" (4). Against the criticism of other girls, she becomes Osei's loyal supporter, but also because of that, she is most brutally injured.

Gradually, both children step into an intimate relationship, provoking hatred in Ian, who is watching this unfolding. As he does not want a newcomer on his territory, Ian will take any opportunity to prevent Osei from gaining too much respect from his schoolmates. Moreover,

Dee's popularity amplifies Ian's suffering, as, in his view, she represents a type of a person that he would never become. He perceives her and Casper – another "perfect" looking boy – s ideals, "like the Teflon pan his mother used to fry eggs in – nothing stuck to them" (114). In Ian's view, they are both "on a level above his activity". His awareness that everyone admires them is also painful; they are admired "in a way he would never experience" (114). This unbearable feeling of inferiority evokes envy and motivates Ian to destruction.

The characters' unawareness of Ian's motivation builds up the tension in the story, and its tempo is amplified by the rapid changes in the children's mood, which Chevalier modulates. Their emotions often change drastically over the course of a day, they fall in and out of love rapidly. When it comes to racism, they perform what they have picked up from their parents and teachers. They are emotional; their behaviour is not filtered analytically. The jealousy felt by Ian blinds him too: he cannot stand watching the budding relationship between the new boy and the most popular girl in the school. In consequence, he does anything he can to destroy all the friendships which exist between the children he knows.

At this point, it is worth noticing that Chevalier employs the childish tendency to excessive talk. A whole variety of speaking behaviour becomes a tool by means of which the tragic events are recorded. Telling a good story is also crucial in *Othello*. In fact, Thompson argues, it is the art of storytelling which enables Iago bring Othello within his power. Moreover, the idea that stories are crafted is, in her view, "another way to frame *Othello*: it is a story about storytellers, their tall-tales and their effects on gullible listeners" (2). After all, Thompson argues, Othello won Desdemona's heart by telling her "the story of my life / From year to year – the battles, sieges, fortunes / That I have passed" (*Othello*, 1.3. 131-132). "Storytelling matters in very explicit and tangible ways in *Othello*, and Othello is not the only character who is attentive to this fact. [...] From the beginning of the play Iago recognizes that the best way to exact revenge is to 'abuse Othello's ear' (1.3.393). He realizes that once a person is characterized or pigeonholed within a certain narrative structure [...] it can prove difficult-to-near impossible to escape that plot, or to recast oneself (or others) into alternative narrative structures. He who controls the storytelling controls the world in *Othello*" (Thompson 2). Narrators are rule the playground in *New Boy* by means of creating intrigues, talking behind characters' backs, whispering in characters' the ears, and of course lying. Just as in every narrative which organizes passing time, all these speech acts move the action forward.

5.2.5. The feminine archetype in *Othello*

Before discussing the newly narrated, re-constructed female roles of *Othello*, it is especially important to look back at their prototypes. The key figure here to discuss is Desdemona, who, according to Conley Greer, is a representative of a new model of female characters in Shakespeare. In the article "To Be A Woman: Shakespeare's Patriarchal Viewpoint", Greer explains what the reasons are that motivated Shakespeare to create a female protagonist equipped with attributes that differed from those that were known and expected among contemporaries. He argues that, although Shakespeare's "primary purpose in his representation of women was to support the male patriarchal beliefs", the female characters he created in the tragedies are special, as Shakespeare had "the astonishing insight […] into the human experience, be it male or female" (Greer 145). What is more, Shakespeare's women in the tragedies differ considerably from the ones presented in the comedies. The author argues that in the comedies women are usually depicted as strongly dependent on men, and they stay within men's control, trying "to make life interesting for their male counterparts in the quest of love" (135). Desdemona, who is an example of a new trend of female representation, "personifies the new social attitudes sweeping across England. She chooses to marry an outsider," which is a refusal of a traditionally established and accepted father's right to choose a husband for his daughter. In a pioneering way, Desdemona expresses her individualism, which mirrors the greater changes occurring in the intellectual climate of England and Europe. Martha Andresen-Thom, whom Greer quotes in his article, argues that the source of Shakespeare's changing conception of femininity lay in the blooming of Humanist ideals personified in "splendidly educated and accomplished aristocratic ladies" (136).

Such a situation, in which Shakespeare could model his female characters on a living example observed in his daily life, was also a new one, because in the majority of his plays he mostly elaborated on the female representations that were provided by his written sources. Desdemona is an example of a woman who, in spite of being married, and therefore submissive to her husband in the understanding of male-dominated society, is at the same time rebellious towards her father, boldly executing her individuality and a will to marry a stranger. Greer mentions a situation in the play in which Desdemona overtly declares to her father that by choosing Othello for her husband she, in fact, has followed an example given by her mother, who also choose Brabantio independently of her father's will. At the same time, however, Desdemona does not stop being an entirely paradoxical character, as she, for instance, willingly admits that she owes her life to her father, and remains in his debt for giving her the comfortable

way of life that she enjoys (Greer 137). Because of these complexities and dualities of her character, Greer argues, Desdemona is "an ideal representative of the new Shakespearian female" (138). Her analysis may certainly, in the opinion of Greer, baffle critics who discuss motivations for her mingled character, searching for the sources of her liberating tendencies that coexist with traditionally cherished attributes, including utmost respect for her father. The answers, according to the author, lie most of all in the changes that were taking place in the mentality of English society. On the other hand, Desdemona may also offer some insight into Shakespeare's conception of women, who, as Greer puts it, "through his development and portrayal of the female persona, [...] shows how fully he appreciates the difficulties involved in being a woman" (135).

However, all these new ideas that Shakespeare implemented in Desdemona had to be launched skilfully. Traditional thinking about a woman as an obedient possession of her husband was still prevalent and socially accepted. Shakespeare could not ignore this. Also, he could not risk dismissal of his work by the people who paid for it. Due to these facts and to achieve some balance between the old and the new attributes of a woman, Shakespeare enabled Othello to follow his fury to punish his wife for her too liberated behaviour. According to McEvoy, many feminist critics could also read Othello's violent jealousy "as the product of a social system where women are dominated and possessed by men" (184). Nevertheless, Desdemona is a character who demonstrates no self-doubt (Garber 598) and is decisively open when talking about her love towards Othello. Also, she is convinced about the priority of her feeling towards Othello over the feeling towards her father, and is also determined to declare it. Desdemona is one of the Shakespearean women "who face what seems to them to be a choice between father and lover" (Garber 597), but she, similarly as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, dares to admit to choosing the lover:

> My noble father
>
> I do perceive here a divided duty.
>
> To you I am bound for life and education.
>
> My life and education both do learn me
>
> How to respect you. You are the lord of duty,
>
> I am hitherto your daughter. 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. (1.3.179-188)

Here, Desdemona, while remaining respectful towards Brabantio, is in fact manoeuvring her way towards independence. Although maintaining and acknowledging the narration of submissiveness here, she definitely wants to detach herself from her father. This kind of behaviour with budding assertiveness is what Karaman observes as "perplexing and threatening to the patriarchal order" (44). Moreover, Desdemona is no artificial while speaking of love towards Othello, and where he "speaks of something like hero worship, Desdemona speaks of love, and of a love that is frankly sexual as well as romantic" (Garber 578). For Shakespeare, presenting a woman behaving „outside of her role as the subjective wife was cause for alarm", as Conley Greer argues (139). Therefore, while presenting Desdemona as distinguishingly unambiguous and brave, Shakespeare must have also contrasted this portrait of a confident woman with a tinge of negativity. As Greer puts it, if Shakespeare had presented to male audiences "any portrayal of suspicious behaviour of women without harsh consequences or punishment, he would have placed himself in opposition to the patriarchal society that supported his work" (139). Hence, Desdemona's aspirations towards independence must have been balanced with the destructive wave of jealousy directed towards her. Thanks to this balance, Shakespeare could satisfy "the expectations of his male audience" (139) making it feel secure that their position remains stable. Technically in the drama, Brabantio finds his way to keep his subservient daughter with him a little bit longer. Desdemona and Othello become caught during their wedding night, and the Duke "proposes to send Othello to Cyprus to quell the Turks, leaving Desdemona behind" (Garber 598). This way, Desdemona is again made submissive, made to beg Brabantio go with Othello. On the other hand, as it turns later in the drama, Cyprus welcomes Othello with no work, as all the Turks have been drowned before he arrived. His absence though let Iago plot his evil scenarios about infidelity of Desdemona, thus making her "a promiscuous whore unworthy of trust" (Greer 138)

.   In Othello's jealousy there is also embedded another notion, somewhat disappointing and sad, concerning the attitude to womanhood at the time. In line with it women cannot be trusted; moreover, they are "prone to cheat their husbands" (Greer 140). That was the overall assumption acknowledged by the society, to which Shakespeare also had to pay attention. Following this notion, in *Othello*, as Greer argues, two concepts are underlined: "women should express themselves as individuals as long as they did not cross the lines of accepted female behaviour, and men should never whole-heartedly trust a woman because of her unpredictability" (140). Nevertheless, Desdemona tries to balance between the stiff patriarchal

order and "the new Shakespearean female" (Greer 137) whom she tries to be. She, as Greer puts it, "combines traditional beliefs with modern ideas" (137), but her individual expression is foreign to Elizabethan society that simply cannot handle such a duality in a female (137). Desdemona "recognizes the authority of the constrictive patriarchal hierarchy in place through her homage to her father, but she also expresses the will to choose her own husband while operating within the established boundaries of the same hierarchy" (Greer 138). Acting between those two extremes, she simply remains a woman "beyond comprehension" (Greer 138). Hence, *Othello* is a play which, unavoidably, supports the male patriarchal beliefs regarding women, but that was the context imposed on the playwright by the surrounding standards.

5.2.6. A modern representation of the female

Just as in the original drama, the female protagonists in *New Boy* play unquestionably important roles, but in the retelling, due to the change into prose, they are portrayed more extensively, and their parts naturally become expanded in the narration. The novel gives space not only for a broader exposition of a protagonist, but it also offers another, additional layer – insight into a character's psychology, where their inner voice is presented in narrative. Chevalier prepares a deep study of her characters' psyches. It is especially interesting, as the most part of the suffering they undergo takes place in their minds. Also the bullying behaviour of Ian takes the form of psychological rather than physical violence. While observing those decision-making processes, the reader is able to learn a lot about the problems the protagonists experience, such as, for instance, the problem of Blanca, who is convinced that she should break up with Ian, but is terrified of the consequences of this decision and his rage, which is certain. Apart from the reader, no one in the action is aware of the conflict she goes through. At this point, it is worth mentioning that Shakespeare also treated the female protagonists of *Othello* in a distinctive way. According to Honigmann, the three main women – Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca – are portrayed as emotionally more mature than men, "more far-sighted and resolute in the pursuit of love" (54), which stands as a proof of Shakespeare's innovative presentation of women, of which I wrote above. The characters in Chevalier's text seem to mirror this positive feminist bias. The reader is aware of that contrast, which prompts one to judge the girls positively. Dee is treated as disloyal, although it is clear that she honestly supports Osei. Her emotions and behaviour are more mature than his; she likes him unselfishly and with no prejudice.

The importance of female protagonists is also accentuated by the order of introducing the characters into the text. It is Dee who begins. We witness her running to the school, with

"braids thumping against her back" (3). The way she is represented in the novel also goes beyond tendencies evident in past portrayals of Desdemona, as Chevalier has chosen a child girl to play that part. This would appeal to Honigmann, who observes that Desdemona was too often played by mature actresses, although there are many hints that she is meant to be noticeably young, "almost childlike" (41). By casting all her characters as children, not including the teachers, Chevalier does not make this mistake. She also points out that Dee is a uniquely beautiful child, a feature not quite common among the girls her age, who can mostly be described as "cute" or "pretty". Yet Dee is beautiful: she "had a cat-like face shaped by her bones – her cheeks, her temple, her jaw – angular as origami where most girls were pillow-soft" (32). Osei is attracted by her magnetism, as she is "lit from within by something most kids either did not have or hid deep inside: soul" (33). The reader witnesses his thoughts about her: "She was there to make things better. And she was already making things better for him: talking to him, laughing with him, responsible for him" (33). This relationship is almost an ideal, having something in common with the relation of Romeo and Juliet, in which it is also the girl to whom Shakespeare attributes more emotional maturity than to the boy. According to Honigmann, this disproportional division of maturity between the genders is Shakespeare's deliberate way to probe stereotypes, which many critics have traditionally overlooked (Honigmann 56). In his opinion, the apparent gentleness of Desdemona is also proof of her strength, which – he maintains – is very often irritating to feminist critics (56). For Honigmann, the best form of capturing Desdemona's moral strength is a short passage from the poem 'Virtue' by George Herbert:

> Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
>
> Like seasoned timber, never gives;
>
> But, though the whole world turn to coal,
>
> Then chiefly lives. (Herbert)

Chevalier consciously expands the female characters from *Othello*, as in her opinion they are not adequately presented in Shakespeare's play. In one of the interviews she admits to being a sceptical reader of Shakespeare because of his imbalanced structuring of male and female roles. Her response to this imbalance has been to give them (female protagonists) "much bigger parts", and so in consequence "they have almost equal voice with the boys" (Chavalier "Tracy Chevalier"). Chevalier underlines that what is especially important to the girls is the journey they go on. To describe that journey, the author purposely reveals much of their intimate

worlds by making each of the girls participate in the narration. This way the reader can shift the perspective of looking at events but is also able to explore the rich characteristics of the female protagonists, which is rather occluded in the original play. By adapting the play into a narrated story, Chevalier obtains the needed space in which she can focalize a female consciousness, through which we can "see" events in the narrative. Moreover, several times she changes the focalization during the course of a narrative, which makes the story a multidimensional one.

Another example of a deep exploration of female consciousness is the novel *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood, which is not a close rewriting of a Shakespeare play, but a story that relates to *King Lear* most of all by the name of one of the key character, Cordelia. The novel is given as an example next to *New Boy* because of the strongly foregrounded childhood bullying which gravely influences the adult life of Elaine Risely, the narrator of the novel. The key agent of that bullying is Cordelia, who acts with a whole repertoire of abusive techniques used upon her favoured victim, Elaine. Just like Osei in *New Boy*, Elaine is also a "new girl" in Cordelia's surroundings where the other girls must show respect to the bossy one and behave obediently. In both of the stories, in spite of the proximity of their parents, children's lives run secretly far from the reach of adults. They keep their problems secret, often under the veil of psychological violence executed by the toughest offenders, the ones who "rule".

The narration of *Cat's Eye* is given by Elaine Risely, a painter, who visits her home town Toronto where she is about to have a retrospective gallery exhibition of her work. The visit pushes Elaine to recollect the still vivid memories of childhood spent in the city, especially those related to Cordelia and the abusive practices she used to inflict upon her. Caroline Cakebread who analyses the novel in an essay entitled "Escaping From Allegories: *Cat's Eye* and *King Lear*" notices that this journey forces Elaine to "experience not only a visual retrospective in the form of her paintings but, on a larger scale, an emotional and psychological retrospective of her life, a mental journeying back into her past" (100). That past had a considerable influence on Elaine's life, as well as on all her choices which, in spite of proving successful, left the protagonist with a feeling of lack of fulfilment and doubtful satisfaction. Regardless of her status as an acclaimed artist, Elaine is reluctant to acknowledge that fact. In the opening chapters of the book she says: "(…) I have a career which may not qualify as exactly real. I am a painter (…) It's an unlikely thing for me to have become; in some days it still makes me cringe. Respectable people do not become painters: only overblown, pretentious, theatrical people" (15). Such a realistic or even sceptical reasoning stems from harsh childhood experiences that are now revisited by the narrator in detail. The journey backwards serves also

as an act of self-analysis helping Elaine to explore the motifs which once determined her choices. Cakebread observes that the narrator "uses her recovered memories of the past in order to examine the person she has become in the middle age: alienated from others, she finds that her troubled past acts as a painfully accurate mirror for her life in the present" (100). In this way, the protagonist begins her "Lear-like quest to find out who she really is"(Cakebread 105), which is an aspect resonating with the Shakespeare play.

Throughout the narrative, Elaine peers back into the past in order to understand her identity. She looks in the mirror of her memories – not only by ruminating over a painful childhood friendship and her own weaknesses, but also by admitting the contrast between the experiences of her family and of the pretentious families of her Canadian friends who were constantly struggling to become more English, more European. This longing, the ambition to become someone else, is in fact reflected by the name Cordelia, which, according to Cakebread, symbolizes Canada's persistent aspiration to become a European country. These aspirations are well manifested by Cordelia's family which "aims hard to achieve middle class sophistication in the form of perceived or stereotyped imitations of English life" (103). This artificiality, even theatricality, correlates with the fact that Cordelia's name never gets shortened. She is a dramatic, pompous character who pretends to act a role that would be respected. By contrast, her two older sisters – whose names also stem form Shakespearian plays – are called Mirrie and Perdie, although their full versions are Miranda and Perdita. By means of this literary allusion, Atwood offers a comment about human hypocrisy: the mysteriously sounding name is nothing but a cover for a thoughtless, merciless bully. Cordelia also symbolizes the "middleclass aspirations of post-war Toronto, a city trying to live up to its British colonial past" (Cakebread 103), aspirations which are not fulfilled. In truth, it can be only an empty imitation. Lastly, there is another weight attached to Cordelia's name, which dooms not the others – her victims – but her own self. Observing the analogies between Atwood's character and her Shakespearian predecessor, Cakebread concludes that Cordelia is "a woman who is unable to develop herself outside of the boundaries of her name" (106), and in a sense she is a tragic figure, because "nothing she can do or say will ever be enough because she is somehow the wrong person" (Atwood 249), as Elaine reflects.

5.3. *Gap of Time* – the cover version of *The Winter's Tale*

"It was a straightaway match. […] I've always loved that play because of the idea that whatever is lost will be found, which seemed to me to have a redeeming quality to it" (Winterson "Jeanette Winterson"). This way Jeanette Winterson explains to Alex Clark her motivation for choosing *The Winter's Tale* as a basis for *The Gap of Time* – her new version of Shakespeare's play. Winterson's title does also have its roots in the source text. As she puts it, "everything that you want to know about the play is left unsaid, and I thought for a fiction writer to go into those gaps, and fill those gaps, would be a fascinating process" (Winterson "Jeanette Winterson"). Thus, the author revives the play filling it with a considerable amount of her personal experiences as she – similarly as Shakespearian Perdita – was an abandoned child which was the reason why the play resonated with her strongly throughout the years. How important the source text was for the writer and what a big impact it made on her reception of literature in adult life, was also overtly declared by her in a postscript to the novel, in which she writes the following:

> I wrote this cover version because the play has been a private text for me for
> more than thirty years. By that I mean part of the written wor(l)d I can't live
> without; without, not in the sense of lack, but in the old sense of living outside
> of something.

> It's a play about a foundling. And I am. It's a play about forgiveness and a world
> of possible futures – and how forgiveness and the future are tied together in both
> directions. Time is reversible. (285)

This confession does not only uncover the author's intimate emotions, but it also points to a characteristic feature of the late Shakespearian dramas, which is the motif of forgiveness that comes at the end of the plays. In the analytical part which the author added at the end of the novel, Winterson observes that towards the end of his working life Shakespeare became interested in forgiveness (285), of which *The Winter's Tale* is a good example. Unlike in *Othello* with the hero "who would rather kill the world than change himself" (285), *The Winter's Tale* does without the necessity of killing the heroine "in the service of the hero's delusions" (285).

None of the protagonists has to die at the play's closure, but their future becomes secured, as the next generation that will come after "won't behave like their fathers" (285). It is they, the following generations, who are enabled to redeem the mistakes of their fathers. Their conscious living without being subject to the burden of the past is for Winterson a manifestation of the healing power of forgiveness. Present actions, if motivated by good, can reverse time, so that the past no longer determines the lives of the young. Here, Winterson offers the observation that, paradoxically, time "that sets all limits, offers our one chance at freedom from limits", and that relief may come from a conscious living against a burden from past mistakes. In light of this, Shakespeare anticipated Freud, says Winterson, as he understood "how the past mortgages the future, or that the past can be redeemed" (288). The redemption of which she is writing about is the power that is able to reverse time. "We were not trapped after all. Time can be redeemed. That which is lost is found", Winterson writes (288). This inspiring conclusion embodies the lens through which *The Winter's Tale* is re-read by Winterson. The journey of the lost one ends successfully. The abandoned Perdita, "the little lost one" (Winterson 16), finds her own way to live.

5.3.1. The background

The Winter's Tale belongs to one of Shakespeare's last plays. Although traditionally classified as a tragicomedy, it was first published in the First Folio edition of 1623 as the last play in the Comedies section (McConnell 309). The characteristic feature of the play is its mixed genre construction. The play opens with a set of three tragic acts which suddenly change into a pastoral filled with fantasy and magic. The time which lapses between the two presented worlds – the so-called gap in time – is an interesting device possessing a truly symbolic meaning. Marjorie Garber explains its presence by arguing that "Shakespearean romance requires a mature second generation, a marriage, and a redemptive union – hence the need for many years to pass between the original act of disruption and the final consensus" (Garber 842). For Winterson, the understanding of the gap of time is very similar. The laps of time in her retelling becomes also a substantial means of healing the destroyed past. She puts much interest both on the future as well as on the past, believing them to be two interconnected worlds. As she argues, *The Winter's Tale* is a play "where the past depends on the future just as much the future depends on the past" (Winterson 286). The past, as she believes, is not a history, but a tragedy, and "tragedy can't happen without consciousness" (286). When the violent and painful first part of her retelling is over, there comes another part, "with its dancing shepherds and easy pastoral" (286) and with people who cherish "right-minded virtues compared to the self-

justifying sophistries of metropolitan minds" (287). This sharp contrast of the two different worldviews is possible just because the time has passed, and in this passing of time – "the gap of time" from the title of her novel – Winterson sees the healing power of redemption and forgiveness, which are able to reverse time and heal the past wounds which are kept in the memory of subsequent generations. Psychoanalysis, as she observes, "begun to understand how the past mortgages the future, or that the past can be redeemed" (288). And, although the past lies in *The Winter's Tale* "in wait as an ambush, or as a beggar in disguise" (Winterson 288), Shakespeare's play does end with forgiveness, as "time can be redeemed" (Winterson 288)

The original play is divided into three main parts, differing in terms of place, time of action, and the age of the protagonists. The first one, definitely the most tragic, takes place in Sicily in an invented time. Polixenes, King of Bohemia, who has been staying with his childhood friend Leontes, King of Sicily, for the past nine months, wants to return home to his kingdom and his son, Florizel. Leontes tries and fails to persuade him to stay. Meanwhile, Leontes's pregnant wife, Hermione, manages to convince him, and Polixenes finally agrees to stay a little longer. Although there is not even a hint of sexual tension between Polixenes and Hermione, Leontes suddenly erupts with insane jealousy, believing that these two are having an affair, and that the child which Hermione is about to deliver is the child of Leontes. At that point the plot recalls *Othello* in a most direct way. In fact, the violence and irrational suddenness of Leontes' passion soon find their outlet. Meanwhile, Leontes makes plans to kill his old friend, and orders his servant, Camillo, to poison Polixenes. However, Camillo behaves unexpectedly and instead of following his master's order he warns Polixenes, and they escape the island together.

Their sudden disappearance ignites Leontes's rage. Immediately, he publicly charges his wife with infidelity. Blinded by his passion and deaf to the protests of the entire court, he throws her in prison. Even Paulina, a brave woman ready to confront him, is helpless to change his senseless decision. Meanwhile, Hermione gives birth to a daughter whom Leontes rejects, believing her to be a bastard. Again, Paulina intervenes and prevents Leontes's sentencing the child to death. Leontes orders that the child must be abandoned some place away from the kingdom. After getting rid of her, he humiliates Hermione in front of the royal court, openly accusing her of giving birth to a bastard. "You speak a language that I understand not" (*The Winter's Tale* 3.2.79), says Hermione, steadily defending herself against his madness. In the middle of the trial there comes a shift of the action, as the Oracle from Delphi declares that

Leontes is a jealous tyrant, and that Hermione, Polixenes, and the baby are innocent. Moreover, the judgement claims that Leontes will have no successor until the lost baby is found. This statement is, in fact, a most dangerous one, as it destabilizes the future of the monarchy. However, the little Perdita has already been left on the inhospitable shores of Bohemia, carried there by Antigonus, the executor of Leontes's order. Eventually, she is discovered by an old shepherd and his son, who take pity on her and bring her up as their own.

Sixteen years later Perdita makes her first appearance in the play. Here, the action of the drama suddenly skips into a different genre – a pastoral comedy. In this metaphor of life of "uncorrupted simplicity" (McConnell 213) Shakespeare arranges the first meeting of Perdita – "not only a shepherdess, but the very princess" (Orgel par. 21) – and Prince Florizel, son of Polixenes. Florizel falls in love with her, believing her to be a shepherd's daughter. In order not to scare her, he tries to behave as an ordinary person, not a rich prince. Following an impulse, he offers to marry her, asking two older strangers to be their witnesses. Unexpectedly, the two strangers turn out to be his father Polixenes and Camillo in disguise. It is the first time when they show up after the escape from Sicily.

Like the star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet, whose first meeting also took pace at a masked ball, Perdita and Florizel declare their love to the happy acclaim of the guests gathered there. Also just as in the case of Romeo and Juliet, they also fall in love unaware of each other's origin and of the past conflict between their fathers. The carefree atmosphere of their engagement is abruptly broken, as Polixenes shakes off his disguise and threatens the whole party with instant death. Enraged, he orders Florizel never to see Perdita again, which for an observant Camillo becomes a good chance to escape Bohemia and go back home. He offers Florizel and Perdita to assist them on the way back to Sicily. They agree and escape.

Back in Sicily, Florizel and Perdita live in a fast-moving present. Leontes realizes that Perdita is his own daughter, assured by a box of proof brought by the Shepherd. Leontes finds relief in the reunion with his daughter. At the end, Paulina invites everyone to her house to look at a statue of Hermione, which Leontes attempts to kiss. Paulina, however, prevents his action and the lifelike statue steps down from her place becoming resurrected Hermione. At the end of the play Perdita and Florizel get engaged.

5.3.2. Romance and the role of women

In *The Winter's Tale*, as well as in other Shakespeare's romances, women and their relationship with men are central themes. Above all, it must be noted that women's role in romances is much more significant to the narrative than the one ascribed to the female characters in Shakespeare's comedies. This characteristic aspect has been observed by Conley Greer who describes these two variants of the contextualization of women in "To Be A Woman: Shakespeare's Patriarchal Viewpoint". The author argues that in the comedies women are usually depicted as strongly dependent on men (135). The tragedies and romances, on the other hand, break with this schema, revealing women as "much more complex creatures involved in greater philosophical struggles" (135). *The Winter's Tale* definitely presents such characters. Their analysis creates an opportunity to discuss the problems of womanhood characteristic for Elizabethan society, dominated by a masculine culture. Apart from the adult women who must fulfil their mission in Shakespeare's romances, the children, specifically the daughters, also have their tasks to perform. In an interpretation offered by McEvoy, this task is "to make good the errors of their parents and bring harmony where once was discord" (242). This same observation is provided by Winterson, who underlines many times that thanks to the children the past can be redeemed and the errors of the past redeemed (288). In fact, this task belongs mostly to the daughters. The love of Perdita and Florizel, similarly to that of Miranda and Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, is the means by which the conflicted kingdoms become reconciled" (McEvoy 242-243). The daughters, to paraphrase McEvoy, need to fall in love with their fathers' friends' sons in order to make the upcoming future better than the past. It is also interesting to observe that in *The Tempest* Miranda's falling in love with Ferdinand is not an entirely independent exercise of her freedom, as everything she does is meticulously controlled by the watchful eye of Prospero. A father's control over his daughter is therefore another manifestation of patriarchal power. As Alison Findlay argues in *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary*, that paternal power lays on the daughter a pressure to "perpetuate their father's patriarchal rule" (Findley: *daughters*). In light of this argument, the role of women in romances appears indeed serious as they become involved in greater political struggles.

The female protagonists in *The Winter's Tale* are presented in a world in which they constantly have to confront male supremacy over them. The juxtaposition of male and female is also readable in *The Gap of Time*. Dean Bakopoulos witing on the novel notices that "a subtle cultural critique of hypermasculinity, and the attendant violence fuelled by money (specifically the loss of thereof), ripples meaningfully beneath the novel's surface" (par. 4). Women, in the

classic play as well as in the retelling, must however function in the narration strongly influenced by those strong male characters. In an interview with Alex Clark Winterson discusses femininity in the following way:

> You know, Shakespeare's women tend to end up with men who are really not suitable at all, I think one of the ways that Shakespeare deals with the feminine is to show how dreadful lots of the men around them are. And yes, it's a terrible choice, but it's also a very modern situation, isn't it? Very often, women do choose terrible men, and we all look and we all think, "Why did you do that?" I think Shakespeare is good at showing that in this strange, non-judgemental way, so that we do have to make our own minds up. Also, when there are absent feminines in Shakespeare, that's usually a situation which is going to be richly problematic. Once an essential part of the female influence is removed, then what happens? And, of course, no matter how you barricade your daughter in, she is the symbol of new life, and the forward generation is going to escape. I think that on a symbolic level that's what Shakespeare is saying: you cannot barricade somebody in, because they're going to get out, and then what's going to happen is far worse than if you'd introduced them to a few nice guys in polite society. (Winterson "Jeanette Winterson")

Here, Winterson observes a substantial potential of the play for rewriting. She notices that Shakespeare can be a powerful starting point for narrating a story of an individual, of an individual woman who chooses a "terrible" man, or of a daughter who is "barricaded in" by a father (Drost 24). Nevertheless, although developing largely the female protagonists in her rewriting, Winterson does not place them as central characters of her narration. All the three main female protagonist in *The Gap of Time* – Perdita, Mimi and Pauline – build a sharp contrast to the male characters who, as Bakopoulos has noticed, are definitely empowered by destructive violent behavious and who struggle as partners in their relationships. The female protagonist in the original play take similar functions and they, as Drost puts it, "must sacrifice themselves" (38) in order to become that contrast for "the hegemonic nature of masculinity" (38).

Although the female protagonists in *The Winter's Tale* are presented in a world in which they constantly have to confront male supremacy over them, they create, however, their own society too, which is especially clear in the relation between Paulina and Hermione. The youngest victim of abusive patriarchal power is Perdita, Hermione's daughter. Though in line with the contemporary point of view her loss might be seen as a psychological torment for her

parents, he greatest tragedy lies in the fact that the king has lost an heir, the guarantee for the continuation of his family's reign. Hence, the finding of Perdita at the end of the story, as Orgel puts it, should not be interpreted as a filling-up of an emotional hole which her loss might have left. What is found is not precisely the missing daughter herself – of course, she physically returns home, but her return is the confirmation of succession which is the most essential thing. Perdita's return also re-establishes the "right" place for Hermione and Paulina at the court. Orgel emphasizes that Hermione is mostly happy because she "has preserved herself to see Perdita, not Leontes" (par. 22). She accentuates the fact that the continuance of the royal line is the crucial element. "And once the losses are restored, Paulina returns to her proper status of obedient wife – to somebody, to anybody, to whomever the king chooses" (Orgel par. 22). This seemingly sad conclusion mirrors the specific patriarchal climate of English society of the time, in which men were certainly in a dominant position. Moreover, though the play might seem to be situated in a family setting, it is in fact, as Orgel puts it, "informed by the political and legal history of Jacobean England—by questions of the perquisites and responsibilities of the monarch, the relation between royal authority and the will of the people, the limits of protocol […]" (par. 22). All the conflicts are connected to hierarchal issues, which were being actively debated in Shakespeare's time, and the play's focus on the king is a reflection of the political concerns that were current at the time.

In the case of Hermione, characteristic is her seemingly passive reaction to Leontes's accusations. Although definitely innocent, she remains rather unable to defend herself against Leontes's seemingly absurd outburst of jealousy. Moreover, his overwhelming emotion seems to appear, dramatically, out of nowhere. The reader knows that it has its source in Hermione's ability to persuade Polixenes to extend his stay in Sicily, while Leontes's persuasions have failed (Orgel par. 4). For critics and creators, however, this has appeared to be not enough for a serious motive, and they have tried, for instance, to justify Leontes's outburst by providing the play "with a rational basis for his delusions, arguing that Hermione, though certainly innocent, must have presented the appearance of impropriety (Orgel par. 4). Himself, Orgel argues that Shakespeare's explanation for Leontes's behaviour is "rooted in childhood and in the complex tensions between male bonding and heterosexual love" (par. 5). Nevertheless, Hermione's behaviour is passive, certainly submissive, even indifferent. Although showing dignity at court, she refuses to contradict the accusations against her. As Winterson observes, she "does the thing most difficult to do to right a wrong situation: nothing" (287).

Eventually, Hermione relies on the Oracle, thus depriving herself of agency and showing another sing of helplessness. According to Orgel, in Shakespeare's times, there was a considerable literature "denying any inspiration to the ancient oracles, and Leontes' rejection of Apollo's word is entirely consistent with orthodox Christian opinion" (par. 9). In light of these arguments, Hermione's behaviour may seem an escape from taking responsibility for her words, which shows passivity. However, her behaviour, on the other hand, is justified if one takes a look at the role the world of oracles had for Shakespeare's audiences. This argument is highlighted by Orgel in his essay "The Winter's Tale: A Modern Perspective", in which he explains: "For Shakespeare's audience, the crucial testimony, the word of oracle, would have been rather like the word of the ghost in *Hamlet* – something the play requires you to believe but that you knew, as a good Reformation Christian, you were supposed to reject" (par. 9). Since there is no discussion about what the Oracle says, Hermione's decision to "employ" that means appears wise. At the end, however, it must be stated that all of Hermione's actions are motivated within patriarchal ideology. Moreover, Drost observes that her role in the play is merely functional – she falls into a position where she must "sacrifice" herself "in order to tell a story primarily about men" (Drost 38).

Another female character, a slightly more assertive representation of a woman in *The Winter's Tale* is Paulina. Paulina is a counterbalance to Hermione. In the first place, she gives substantial support to her while she is imprisoned. She also is her best companion throughout sixteen years of imprisonment. In the context of the play, as Orgel notes, Paulina "sums up everything this patriarchal culture finds dangerous in women: she is shrewish, refuses to obey to her husband, meddles in the affairs of men, has no respect for the king's authority" (par. 16). This behaviour, a "masculine" behaviour, Orgel argues, is, in his opinion, a projection of masculine fears about women. She "does speak out against the king's absurd accusation", but because of this behaviour she is "quickly accused of sexual infidelity" (par. 16). Here, again, as in the case of Desdemona in *Othello*, impertinence cannot go unnoticed or unpunished – men must react to uncommon activity on the part of a woman, matching her out-spoken behaviour with accusations of sexual looseness. At this moment one can ask why in fact, to quote McEvoy, "female silence and patience in the face of injustice should be regarded as chaste and virtuous, and the willingness to speak out against injustice be seen as a sign of sexual looseness, or even witchcraft?" (245). The answer lies, of course, in English patriarchal ideology, long supported by myths and legends which, McEvoy argues, "emphasized the virtues of silence and patience in the face of suffering" (246). In the understanding of men, women could not fight back, even

if they wanted, as they were physically unprepared for that. They might, however, talk, and just because of *talking* they "had to be controlled under patriarchy", McEvoy argues (247). Female speech, "it was thought, if unrestrained, could become a torrent of scolding and nagging which could wear men down" (247). As absurd and shocking as it seems, this conviction, according to the argument presented by McEvoy, stemmed from Christianity. "It was Eve's tongue, after all, that had persuaded Adam in Eden and led to the Fall of mankind" (247).

5.3.3. The cover version

"So many stories of lost and found.
As though the whole of history is a vast Lost-Property Department"

Jeanette Winterson, *The Gap of Time*, 127

The modern rereading of the play by Jeanette Winterson is radically more feminist in the sense that it focuses on the development of female characters as well as on exploring the relationships between the protagonists. For example, the opening of the book has a sequence of scenes where Perdita is found by her soon-to-be stepfather, Shep. From that moment on, the man narrates the story, telling about the events in an especially tender way, moved by the occurrences that have made him become the father of a foundling. The action of this part takes place in New Bohemia, where the man finds the baby in the BabyHatch. The hospital in which the hatch is installed brings back bad memories to him. His wife died in this building a year before. As no one from the hospital seems to realize that the baby has been left, Shep opens the window and picks little Perdita up. Already, his son Flo is present at the place, having arrived by car. Shep realizes how instinctive his behaviour is: "I walk towards the hatch and my body's in slow-motion. … I realize without realizing I've got tyre lever in my hand. I move without moving to prise open the hatch. It is easy. I lift out the baby and she's as light as a star" (9).

The finding of Perdita fills an emotional hole left in Shep's life after the death of his beloved wife. It is interesting that Shep, to some extent, is a parallel character to Felix in *Hag-Seed*, as they both manifest an ideal relationship between a loving father and his daughter. This sort of a relationship does not exist between Leontes and Perdita in the Shakespeare play. As I

mentioned above, Perdita's exile is perceived negatively only in terms of the destabilization of royal continuity. When it comes to the relationship of Shep, his emotional attitude very well matches the atmosphere of the joyously affirmative life of rural Bohemia in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. It gives the reader the impression that a better parallel world exists in this play, as well as in the retelling, and it stands in contrast to the harsh monarchy that rejected the baby. This better world can be palpably achieved only by Perdita, not by others. In the retelling, Shep's interest in the abandoned child becomes rewarded in many ways. Firstly, it helps to "reverse" time, as his grieving becomes calmed down: "As I walked down the street carrying the baby I fell into a gap of time, where one time and another became the same time. My body straightened, my step lengthened. I was a young man" (12). Another parallel may be drawn: Perdita, just like Miranda, possesses a real "magic" able to "undo" the past and heal ever-painful wounds that neither Shep nor Prospero nor Felix are able to cure on their own. Both daughters release their fathers; they give them freedom – the greatest gift. The second benefit for Shep is material, as in the case that has been left with the baby he finds fifty thousand dollars and a velvet bag of diamonds. There is also a handwritten piece of sheet music with a song titled "Perdita". This is a trace of her mother, of which Shep cannot be aware. With these occurrences described above, the action of the retelling starts and steps into another world – the world of Perdita's father, the immensely wealthy Leo.

The moment when the reader meets Leo – the equivalent of Leontes from *The Winter's Tale* – he is a prosperous businessman owing an enterprise called Sicilia. His financial career started in banking but was interrupted by severe bouts of alcoholism. Leo suffered from low self-esteem, attended therapy, but, he declares, stopped once he realized he was paying 500 pounds a week for a session of fifty minutes just to learn that he had not been loved as a child. That, in short, is the condition of Leo's childhood, but, whether he had been loved or not ought to be left in the sphere of speculation. What the reader knows is that Leo grows up without his mother and at the age of thirteen is sent to a boarding school, where he first meets Xeno, the parallel character to Polixenes from Shakespeare's play. The boys learn that they are, surprisingly, remarkably similar to each-other. Both have been sent away by their fathers who, as the story goes, "had gained custody over unfit mothers" (Winterson 26-27). The mothers of the boys are unstable emotionally, and they never see each other. Leo's experiences from childhood could serve as an explanation for leaving his daughter in the future, but this also is to be only speculated about. The reader does not know whether Winterson intends to include such motivation here. Nevertheless, the boys become inseparable, as they rarely go back home

for the weekends. As the school goes quiet then, they "invented the worlds where they could live" (27).

In adult life, however, Leo cannot manage this friendship, nor the jealousy he cherishes towards Xeno and his wife Mimi. Just like Leontes in Shakespeare's play, he is convinced that the two are having an affair. In order to catch his wife red-handed, Leo decides to install a web camera in Mimi's bedroom, and even though no particular trace lets him believe she is deceiving him, Leo is persuaded that Miranda, the new-born baby, is the child of Xeno.

Unaware of the surveillance, Mimi lives the successful life of a singer, of which the reader learns from the Wikipedia entry which Leo is reading, obsessively searching for a trace of betrayal. In the design of this passage, Winterson keeps the characteristic format of a Wikipedia note, thanks to which the reader follows the familiar pattern of such a page, reading in succession about Mimi's early life, musical career, personal life – the labels often used in the well-known source. Thanks to this technique, one can have the impression of reading about an authentic person, even if Mimi lives only in the novel. Nevertheless, in the fictional Wikipedia note the reader, together with Leo, learns of the following facts: Mimi's real name is Hermione Delannet, which clearly echoes the original play. She is a French-American singer and songwriter, born in 1977 in New York and raised in Paris. Her father was a Russian diplomat – perhaps an unintended analogy with the career path of Osei's father from Chevalier's *New Boy*. The bilingual girl, skilled in many musical styles, soon started to attract the attention of record companies and began and signed her first recording contract with Virgin Records in 2001.

Under the label "Personal life" there appears, for the first time, a piece of information about Leo. There is a date of their marriage, 2003, and an actual place of settlement, the UK. Another important remark concerns their first son Milo, born in 2004.

In this Wikipedia narrative Winterson achieves a modernized re-contextualization of that character, thanks to which one can have an almost perfect illusion of reading about some authentic events and people. Adaptation done this way facilitates Shakespeare to such an extent that the knowledge of the source text is definitely not necessary, although an awareness of *The Winter's Tale* echoing in the distance delivers additional pleasure drawn from comparing and searching for analogies between the two texts. The impression that the knowledge of the sources is rewarding is shared by Julie Sanders, already mentioned in the introductory part of this work. Sanders argues that the awareness "brought into play in the process of understanding could

enrich the spectator's experience and may indeed enhance or complicate the pleasures involved" (28). Although the argument rather concerns film adaptation, it can be universally applied to literary rewriting, including that in a novel.

Another re-contextualized female character, and indeed a very modern one, is Pauline, the parallel of Paulina from *The Winter's Tale.* Like the one in Shakespeare, Pauline in Winterson's narration appears strong and unshakeable. Winterson pictures her in a most detailed way, accentuating her more than common intellect:

> Men in Leo's position had personal assistants who could moonlight as supermodels in their celery and cottage cheese lunch breaks. Leo had Pauline ... fluent in three languages with a degree in economics, an MBA, and she had just passed her accountancy exams for fun. She was much better educated, much better qualified, a much better person than Leo, but she was never going to cut it as a trader. Detail was her strength – she could rip through two hundred pages of due diligence in an hour and give him a list of bullet points to fire at the other side. She'd saved him from the worst of a few deals more than a few times. And when he was dumped from the bank, she was the only one of his colleagues who went on calling him to see how he was doing. (Winterson 34)

Elsewhere in the novel, the narrator says that Pauline is "a woman of her time" (98), with no free time for relationship, all her life being focused on her career. "She made her choices. No regrets. But there were losses. There always are" (98). These words appear as an especially accurate confirmation of a thesis offered by Marjorie Garber in the introduction to her *Shakespeare After All.* In this thesis Garber summarizes an idea of the universality of Shakespeare's works, which has also been very often underlined in this dissertation. The sentence goes as follows: "Shakespeare is in a way always two playwrights, not one: the playwright of *his* time, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England, and the playwright of *our* time, whatever time that is" (28). In line with this conclusion it can be argued that the narrative about women in Shakespeare continues into a modern context, and that context, obviously, changes all – the way women live, what their relationships with men look like, and what choices they make. *The Gap of Time* is a deliberate citation of *The Winter's Tale*, and we, as readers, know it, but if the source text were missing, Shakespeare would still be there, as he, in fact, was an observer of a human nature, who is now transposed in contexts he did not know. Paulina from *The Winter's Tale* already presents Shakespeare's more progressive

view on women, but in *The Gap of Time* she is a decisively "a woman of her time". Through this shift, the Shakespearian character is no longer a representation of a woman from the traditional Renaissance world order where woman's life was "a continuous lesson in submission", as Diane Elizabeth Dreher writes in *Domination & Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare* (16). Pauline represent progress, a new kind of woman.

Another important female character is Perdita, the lost one. She is the only one among the three female characters who retains her Shakespearean name. She is also the only one privileged to have "her own narrative perspective" (Drost 26). When the reader is introduced to her for the first time, Perdita is just an abandoned baby whom Shep passes by left in the baby hatch attached to the nearby hospital. While the girls grows up, she becomes naturally adjusted to living with her step-family. She takes the role of a sister to Clo and is being taught how to play the piano, most importantly – the song *Perdita* that was written on a music sheet which has been attached to her in the baby-hatch. The reader also learns that she followed her mother's footsteps and became a musician. Later on, Perdita is presented as a girlfriend to Zel, however none of them is aware of their ancestry.

The way how Winterson portrayed the pair dating each other is full in detailed observations. At the moment she meets Zel for the first time (Florizel's counterpart) there is much revealed about her through the way she eats. Though a bit clumsy, the way Perdita behaves while eating is a meaningful activity in Winterson's story, telling something both about her and Zel. Firstly, as Zel observes, Perdita is utterly carefree: "Nothing about her was self-conscious", Zel tells himself (172). Perdita is a girl who eats and smiles, a combination in a girl which for Zel is a rare one. In the past he met with girls who "didn't eat. … They ordered food but they didn't eat it" (240). Perdita is a contrast of them – not pretending anything, even eating more than him: "She was unselfconscious. She wasn't trying to please him" (240). On other occasions she shows her charm: "Perdita was eating gracefully and messily – he wasn't sure how this combined but even noodles she dropped she dropped elegantly" (172). What is especially peculiar in such a portrayal of Perdita is the combination of her apparent clumsiness and grace which in itself is a trace of her origins, of which she has not been aware until Leontes uncovers the truth for her. In Shakespeare, in fact, Perdita is a dual character, a royal princess and a shepherdess, which Winterson also tries to portray in her retold narration.

Perdita's presence in the novel does also function as an element needed to mend together the people whose relationship with each other became fractured. She is, as Drost puts it, "a

symbolic solution to a larger problem, rather than an individual person in a narrative" (28). As has already been mentioned, the finding of Perdita heals the emotional wound left in Shep's life after the death of his wife. He used to struggle emotionally after losing her, not only personally, but also as a father, but regained the purpose just in raising Perdita who "closed the gap between father and son" (Drost 28). Apart from this, Perdita helps to "mend" the heart of her father, as she moves the action forward so that Leo finally can see Mimi again. She, as Drost argues, is the person who "builds bridges" between the people whose intimacy become broken (29). A similar function is given to Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* where she seems to hold a role of "the catalyst to love's liberation" (Neely 181). Moreover, Neely argues that Perdita, similarly as other women in the play, uses "wit and realism in the service of passion to mock male folly, to educate men, and to achieve a fruitful union with them (181). He believes them to work "in league with time, nature, and the plays pagan gods" (181) in order to let men transform. All the play's female characters "teach men to accept life's rhythms" (181). Winterson's Perdita does also have a special role to play in the retelling, as she is the representative of the next generation who can remedy "the nuclear wastes of Leontes's fallout" (Winterson 288).

This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge,
keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise
would heal and do well.

Sir Francis Bacon, "On Revenge"

5.4. *Hag-Seed*: *The Tempest* retold

Another rereading chosen for this dissertation is *Hag-Seed* by Margaret Atwood, a retelling of *The Tempest*. It is one of the two novels chosen for this study, which picture characters who suffer the status of a victim, and who stay imprisoned in a certain kind of isolation. *The Tempest* is also another example of Shakespeare's romances, and, according to the sources, it was composed in the years 1610-11. The play was published in 1623 and, as McConnell argues, it was "one of the first of Shakespeare plays that were performed at the private stage of Blackfriars Theatre" (283). Although no written source for the plot is known, critics believe that Shakespeare might have been inspired by the exploration of the New World which was taking place at the time he was working on the play. As McConnell writes, "Shakespeare might have been influenced by accounts of those on board of *Sea Venture,* who were shipwrecked off the Bermudas on a voyage to America in 1609, and who landed safely on an island" (283). Her suggestion is supported by another piece of research presented by B.J. Sokol in her essay "The Shock of The New" published in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of* Shakespeare. In the essay, the author explores numerous innovations that were happening in Europe during Shakespeare's lifetime, including overseas exploration and settlement. Sokol argues that "the overall structure of *The Tempest* was suggested by contemporary news of the survival of settlers bound for Jamestown who had been shipwrecked on an island in the 'haunted' Bermudas and reported as dead" (784). All these novelties had an immense impact on Shakespeare's work, and the plotline of *The Tempest* is one of his responses to them, as Sokol argues (784). Another important source of inspiration, Proudfoot argues, Shakespeare took from the essays of Michel de Montaigne, and *The Tempest* reflects his knowledge of these texts. Proudfoot claims that the play is highly likely influenced by one particular essay entitled "Of the Cannibals", in which Montaigne describes his vision of an ideal commonwealth in the newly discovered world (1071). Also, the essay discusses such issues as the "distinction between civilization and barbarism and probably suggested Cannibal's name" (1071).

The Tempest is a play in which Shakespeare observes the unities of place and time for the first time. These principles of unity were also known under the name of the Doctrine of the

Unities (Meagher 185). The Doctrine was based on the theories of Aristotle which argued that the action of the play should be enclosed within a single plot (Unity of Action), the time span of a single day (Unity of Time), and a single location (Unity of Place). Shakespeare usually neglected these conventions in his plays, with *The Winter's Tale* being particularly criticized for not adhering to them (McConnell 298). To some extent, *The Tempest* breaks away from keeping the location single, as some occurrences include Naples and Milan. However, apart from this detail, the action does indeed concentrate on the island inhabited by Prospero and his little court.

As Proudfoot observes, *The Tempest* is a work of synthesis and retrospection. Apart from that, "it explores themes of social order, the supernatural, and the relationship between man and his so-called civilized world of art and learning" (McConnell 283). Indeed, this junction of a man and his art is the key aspect foregrounded in the retelling. It is also worth noticing that throughout the centuries, literary criticism has changed the focus of its interest while looking at particular aspects of the play. For example, "nineteenth-century interest found its focus on Prospero, who was increasingly identified with Shakespeare, in the late twentieth century, attention shifted towards Caliban and colonialism, or towards Miranda and the oppressions of patriarchy" (McConnell 283). That Shakespeare was often identified with Prospero is of a special importance in the context of the modern re-reading, in which the equivalent of Prospero is also a master of the stage, a director. Prospero controls most of the actions of the play. In the Epilogue to *The Tempest*, Prospero draws attention to himself as a fictional character in a play, as the one who created the world presented on the stage, saying: "Now my charms are all overthrown, / And what strength I have's mine own, / Which is most faint." (*The Tempest* Epilogue 1-3).

5.4.1. The Background

In the story of *The Tempest* Prospero, the former duke of Milan, is removed from the throne by his brother Antonio, the King of Naples. Together with his three-years-old daughter Miranda, he is placed in a leaky boat and cast away on the open sea. He has, however, a secret supporter, Gonzalo, who supplies the boat with food and books, thanks to which Prospero and Miranda drift safely to an allegedly Mediterranean island, where they live in a cave-like "cell" for twelve years. The island has become Prospero's mini kingdom of his art and magic. He learns to take control over the powers of nature and a wild Caliban – the only inhabitant of the

island, who becomes his servant. Prospero is also in control of the island's spirit, Ariel, who obediently fulfils his needs, in exchange for his freedom, which Prospero promises to give him.

In this environment , Prospero raises Miranda for twelve years. After this time, Prospero causes a storm, thus destroying a ship with his former political enemy, Alonso, aboard. However, Prospero arranges the storm so that none of the people on board the ship is lost, but all the travellers arrive on the island, in consequence of which they are trapped in his private kingdom. With the situation arranged that way, Prospero can take his revenge, and improve the fate of Miranda. One after another, the castaways from the wreck begin to appear on the island. The first one is Alonso's son, Ferdinand, who immediately falls in love with Miranda. Prospero approves of their love, but secretly, as he plans to put the pair to the test. He enslaves Ferdinand, but carefully observes the pair flirting with one another. Pleased with this development, Prospero accepts Ferdinand as the soon-to-be-husband of his daughter. After all, having all his enemies in control and within his reach, Prospero decides to forgive them. Alonso is reunited with his son - with some relief, as he feared he had not survived the storm. Then he restores Prospero to the throne of Milan. In the end, all the castaways leave the island, except Caliban and Ariel.

5.4.2. *The Tempest* rewritten

Atwood's retelling takes place in the world of performing arts, mingled with parts of a criminal world, as some parts of the action take place in a correctional institute. The narrative starts at the moment when Felix, a theatrical director, is unceremoniously fired from his position as the artistic director of the Makeshiweg theatre festival. The dismissal is especially hurtful, as he is just about to stage the most significant production of his career – *The Tempest*, which is to be most ambitious, most innovative and – most importantly – most personal theatrical performance he has ever directed. *The Tempest* is intended to be "the lushest, the most beautiful the most awe-inspiring ... the most inventive theatrical experience" (18). From a personal perspective, the show would not only boost his reputation, but it also is meant to serve as a metaphorical resurrection of Felix's daughter Miranda who died at the age of three. In his adaptation, Felix casts himself as Prospero, hoping the production will help him reconnect with his daughter. Grieving after Miranda's death is a tormenting experience for Felix, one that he can rework in no other way but through his art. After her death, he devotes himself entirely to reading *The Tempest*. This act is a way to escape from sorrow, but also a desperate way to find a means of cutting himself off from pain through an elaborate transformation of the trauma.

Staging the relation between father and daughter is meant to be the sought-after remedy. Miranda would be brought back to life in this invented illusion. She is to become a daughter who has not been lost, but found, like Perdita in *The Winter's Tale.* By staging the play, Felix, in a way, finds a way to re-write his own past, to undo it, at least for the time of a performance. In this personal, yet public therapy, his imagined Miranda is to appear as a small angel to protect her grieving father and to bring back his hopes. Instead of dying, she grows into a beautiful girl. The premiere of the show is something he awaits eagerly, the fulfilment of his artistic desires and a promised relief from an unbearable deprivation.

Inspired by a desire to challenge death, Felix absorbs himself entirely in the preparation of his production. Meanwhile, his two-faced partner and rival, Tony, takes advantage of the situation, and plots to ruin Felix's reputation, in consequence of which he is dismissed from his position. Losing control over the situation and being not aware of the true intensions of his rival, Felix commits himself entirely to the production. He pictures ideal visions of the audience applauding the play with a great awe, leaving the theatre submerged in deep analysis of themselves. He desires to move people's consciences. Even Miranda is precisely imagined and already cast. The part is to be played by a former child gymnast, Anne-Marie Greenland, who will later help Felix in his alternative staging of *The Tempest* during his stay in exile.

In the description of Felix there are clearly many features of a self-absorbed artist, neglecting the environment around him. However, narration reveals his inner voice, in which he declares his awareness of his over-investment in his project, which, at the end, leaves him unfulfilled and lonely. He blames himself for his narcissistic attitude: "*The Tempest* would be too brilliant. The best thing he'd ever done" (24), he says to himself. Obsessed with the play, he perceives it as follows: "It was like the Taj Mahal, an ornate mausoleum raised in honour of a beloved shade, or a priceless jewel casket containing ashes" (24). That strong vision, however, later becomes the force that helps him take revenge on those who have stopped him fulfilling his dreams at the festival. After twelve years of living in hiding, talking to the imaginary ghost of his daughter Miranda, Felix decides to stage *The Tempest* in the correctional institute where he has taken a job as a literacy teacher to the prisoners.

5.4.3. Miranda

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a play in which female presence is especially foregrounded. In an essay "Shakespeare's Miranda", Marie H. Strugiss brings attention to the high frequency with which Prospero's daughter appears in the text: "although she speaks only

one hundred and fifty lines, she appears in four scenes out of nine and four acts out of five" (36). Above all, she is the only woman on Prospero's island, and the only one in the play at all. Without any other female characters who could compete with her for the audience's attention, she reflects the value which Prospero ascribes to her. Because of her isolation but also her youth, Miranda is in an innocent quite ignorant of the world surrounding her.

The special value Miranda has for Prospero is marked at the beginning of the play. She is his "dear one", as he addresses her in their first dialogue while explaining to her the causes of the storm he has evoked by means of his magic. The girl pities those drowning, but Prospero swears that no one has been harmed, and all has been done for her welfare. At the same time, he insists that Miranda understand that his person is much more special than she reckons – just as Felix in *Hag-Seed* realizes the value of his unfulfilled potential. At the same time, Prospero is frustrated with the unjust occurrences that have made him live in exile. Nevertheless, Miranda is informed that she is the chief motive for raising the storm, which, at the same time, initiates the action of the drama: "I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who / Art ignorant of what thou art, naught knowing / Of where I am, nor that I am more better / Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell, / And thy no greater father" (*The Tempest*, 1.2. 16-21).

This unbearable awareness of being no better than his circumstances let him be, is the cause of Prosp]ero's greatest suffering. A similar feeling torments Felix, smiling with "the illusion of a smile" (10), unable to live with a feeling of being reduced, "developing a paunch" (10). The frustration, however, is an empowering motive for Felix, who believes that there is still a chance to stage the play. *Let's make magic!* (10) he tells himself while looking at the mirror. Perhaps, he tells it also to Miranda, to whom she speaks all the time. Although physically absent, Felix's daughter appears in the novel both as a ghost and represented by an actress Anne-Marie. Constant talking to the imagined daughter deepens Felix's feeling of loss, but also works as a motivation for staging the play in which he could be reunited with her, as intended in the first project.

As mentioned before, Miranda is a specially privileged character in Shakespeare's play. Although she is intriguing as a person, most of the critics writing on Miranda in the past, focused on presenting her as an ideal embodiment of all the virtues of a young and untried woman, as Struggis observes. For example, "Coleridge refers to the 'calm and maidenly fondness of Miranda'; ... Cowden Clark calls her 'one of the perfect specimens that can be produced of

womanly trustingness, with innocence of motive'" (37). After reading these descriptions, one can have the impression that the vision which arises from them is a portrait of a good, not disturbing girl, a girl pleasant to look at, with a safe character that would not cause any interference. In fact, as McEvoy observes, she is on the island to be looked at, as her name (the Latin means "worthy to be wondered at") suggests (251). It can be argued that this portrait accords very well with patriarchal ways of thinking of woman as someone abiding under the sober control of men. Struggis argues that these views figure her as "innocent, artless and sweet" (37), which proves that critics used to see her as "an example of primitive unsophistication – indeed Eve in Paradise is a favourable parallel ..." (37). However, this perspective recalls the archetypes of femininity which McEvoy mentions when discussing the romances. In line with the idea of such an archetype, present in early twentieth-century criticism and elsewhere, girls like Miranda represent the submissive and chaste wife/daughter ("the angel"), the patriarchal image of an ideal woman.

However, Miranda is much more complex than such traditional interpretations suggest her to be. Struggis argues that she is a mixture: owing something "to the three traditions, to the Elizabethan female ideal, to the woman of the Golden Age, and to the actual noble lady of the time; yet she belongs entirely to none of them" (43). While behaving submissively, she taps into the patriarchal, masculine ways of thinking, that assumed a woman belongs to a man, in this particular situation, not to her husband, but to her father. On other occasions, however, she takes things into her own hands, demonstrating a lot of initiative and independence, which makes her closer to a contemporary humanist attitude. Miranda's learning, as Struggis observes, "may reflect the intellectual ideal of the Renaissance" (43). Also, she acts cleverly, as while behaving in a manner that is "innocent, artless and naïve" – as if modelling the traditional Elizabethan female ideal – she shows "a certain sophistication and some shrewdness" (43).

Miranda's mingling, compound personality, as Struggis notes, can often be left neglected in analysis, as in the play her erudition and her ignorance rarely appear in immediate juxtaposition (43). Yet, in creating Miranda Shakespeare perhaps follows a similar strategy as when, for instance, creating his other heroines who show an equal complexity in their characters: Desdemona, Paulina, and Hermione. He had to meet certain expected standards, making Miranda, on the one hand, primitive and innocent, to keep her within the vision acknowledged by society. At the same time, he manages to present an independently thinking noble lady, able to choose her own husband, who is entirely approved of by her accepting, loving father.

5.4.4. Miranda in the retelling

The contemporary presentation of Miranda in *Hag-Seed* is certainly interesting to look at, as she appears in the novel in two different manifestations – a physical and a spiritual one. The spiritual Miranda lives only in the imagination of Felix, is his constant partner in is conversations with himself , and slowly but steadily starts to take over more and more space in his mind, changing his already fractured psychological health into a slightly abnormal state. He is, in fact, haunted by her ghost. Although Felix is aware of how odd his imagining of Miranda starts to be, he cannot think of any other way to assuage his longing, and to fill his loneliness. In truth, as long as his wounds are kept green, the spirit will not leave him. This imagined relationship based on talking to himself starts with measuring the passing time by thinking of the age which Miranda would be if she were alive. Then, the sad daydreaming evolves somewhat into more real behaviour, such as reading children's books aloud, placing another chair for her at breakfast, playing chess "together", or testing her in the multiplication table. Once her imagined adolescence arrives, Felix readjusts his thinking of Miranda and also her picture in his mind. She is now a teenager behaving in a typical teenaged fashion – careful about her diet, maybe having a tattoo, or falling in love. Finally, he starts to take control over this delusional behaviour once he hears her singing in realty. Seriously scared by the level of his obsession, he decides it is time to change, to open up to the world, and to leave the solitary cave.

Another physical embodiment of Miranda is represented by Anne-Marie Greenland, the actress whom Felix chooses to play the part for the Makeshiweg festival production. Presented as eager and energetic, she is a repository of Felix' hopes of bringing his dead daughter "back to life", even for a while. However, once he decides to stage *The Tempest* with actors-prisoners, twelve years after his dismissal, the girl's presence is transformed into a much more important role, as she will help Felix to complete his work – in taking revenge on Tony, who is meant to come to see the show. Anne-Marie is a beautiful, young actress, specialized in dancing, still containing the "Miranda element" that makes her perfect for the role. Once she decides to accept Felix's offer, they became a team that works well together.

5.4.5. The island, the prison and temporary isolation.

As was already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Felix is a character who struggles with the status of a victim, trapped in a certain kind of prison, an isolation from which he has to escape to regain his dignity. This imprisonment has a dual origin, as it is not only

imposed on him by his unjust dismissal but is also self-imposed. It is an effect of his self-absorbance in his creation. Atwood, who writes on the retelling in her article "A perfect storm: Margaret Atwood on rewriting Shakespeare's Tempest", argues that this is Prospero's problem in *The Tempest*. He lost his kingdom through his only fault: "[Prospero] … neglected to take care of his realm, plunging himself into his magic studies instead and delegating his power to Antonio" (Atwood "A perfect storm"). Felix follows the same, but, obviously, re-contextualized scenario, ending up in a never-ending loop of self-blame:

> That devious, twisted bastard, Tony, is Felix's own fault. Or mostly his fault. Over the past twelve years, he's often blamed himself. He gave Tony too much scope, he didn't supervise, he didn't look over Tony's nattily suited, padded, pinstriped shoulder. He didn't pick up on the clues, as anyone with half a brain and two years might have done. Worse: he'd trusted the evil-hearted, social-clambering, Machiavellian foot-licker. … What a fool he'd been. (Atwood 11)

Twelve years later his enemies are, finally, within his reach, and the only way to take the longed-for revenge leads through creativity – his only weapon.

Besides the literal interpretation of imprisonment, which in the original play is represented by an island, and in the rewriting by an isolated cabin somewhere in a Canadian forest where Felix exists under a changed identity, the play and the version retold open up to see imprisonment in a more metaphorical way. This metaphor helps us to see a prison in a state of psychological oppression, an intellectual or a spiritual deadlock. Once seen as such, the state of being locked up does not only apply to Prospero or Felix, but also to Ariel, Caliban, and Miranda. In the play, Ariel has been imprisoned in a pine tree by the witch Sycorax for not obeying her commands. His equivalent in the retelling is Miranda, the spiritual one. She stays under the constant control of her father, is present in his thoughts all the time, which at the same time immobilizes her. Felix cannot let her go, does not even want to, nor does he even ponder on whether this is a comfortable situation for her spirit. Again, what he knows is his own condition – being haunted by the ghost starts to irritate his mental health. But his focus on the self starts to shift once he finally gets his revenge. Once his dignity is restored and he gets his job back, Felix feels ready to release Miranda. Himself, he becomes released too, free from former ambitions and artistic obsessions, no longer desiring his old position, accepting it only in name.

Once his dreamlike *Tempest* has been done, Felix knows he is ready to let the spiritual Miranda go. In the *Epilogue* to the novel – subtitled *Let Me Go* – Felix opens up to listen to this unvoiced call, the spirit's begging for freedom. In the final scene of the book Felix comes to terms with an ever-present sorrow and realizes the deep sense of his isolation: to stage *The Tempest* after years was not meant to bring Miranda back to life, but to finally let her go:

> It comes over him in a wave. ... He picks up the silver-framed photo of Miranda, laughing happily on her swing. There she is, three years old, lost in the past. But not so, for she's also here, watching him as he prepares to leave the full poor cell where she's been trapped with him. Already she's fading, losing substance: he can barely sense her. She's asking him a question. Is he compelling her to accompany him on the rest of his journey?
>
> What has he been thinking – keeping her tethered to him all this time? Forcing her to do his bidding? How selfish he has been! Yes, he loves her: his dear one, his only child. But he knows what she truly wants, and what he owes her.
>
> 'To the elements be free,' he says to her.
>
> And, finally, she is. (Atwood 291-292)

It this farewell Felix separates himself not only from Miranda, but also from his art. He, too, sets himself free, like Prospero in *The Tempest*, who bids farewell to the island and the audience.

In the retold version not only the spiritual Miranda is set free, but also the physical one, Anne-Marie Greenland. After Felix's success with the theatre at Fletcher Correctional, she is employed as the chief choreographer for the musicals planned for the Makeshiweg repertoire.

As far as the Miranda from the play is concerned, her imprisonment may be understood also in the terms of keeping her under patriarchal control. McEvoy argues that Miranda uses power over men in two ways: by attracting them sexually and by using real magic as the only person in the play. "This is why," explains McEvoy, "she must be controlled by the man who seeks political dominance in the play, just as the new science had to replace the folk medicine of the past – even when such methods actually worked" (255). Male domination over women, McEvoy argues, is a domination motivated by both desire for and fear of "the mysterious but essential *other*". He also draws attention to the peculiar fact that the late plays of Shakespeare,

to which *The Tempest* belongs, reflect the particular moment in history when men started to devote a special attention to these aspects of female physiology which had long before been perceived as a "dark mystery" – conception, pregnancy and childbirth. "Doctors began to take precedence over midwives in supervising births" (254), McEvoy writes, and doctors started to regulate the practices of midwifes. However, this more than usual interest grew mostly from a fear that these "mysterious" attributes of womanhood might constitute a threat to male power and sense of identity (255). Again, Shakespeare's play can serve as an important piece of evidence for what the life of women looked like in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Although romances, according to McEvoy, portrayed woman as "either unruly creatures or merely beautiful and fruitful possessions" (256), at the same time, they presented the considerable potential of female qualities that can "ultimately redeem the destructive 'male' desire to dominate" (256). Did Shakespeare himself lay the ground for feminist re-readings of his plays? From the historical perspective, it is important to remember that the playwright witnessed a transition of attitudes concerning women and the family, and was given a chance to see a new model of a woman who could enjoy greater freedom than that embedded in in the traditional view. Those Shakespearian female characters who are more progressive than those defined by patriarchal ideology mirror that transition. Thus, the late Shakespeare plays, especially *The Tempest*, present a more progressive view of women and marriage, as Diane Elizabeth Dreher argues in her work *Domination and Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare* (6). Moreover, Miranda, like Perdita, proves powerful by bringing to her father back his freedom. In fact, each of the two daughters are the only means by which the kings could finally restore their peace of mind. In the end, Miranda's release also helps Prospero to give up his utopia, for he finally decides to radically leave his magic, which he demonstrates by breaking his wand and throwing his book of magic into the sea.

5.4.6. The father-daughter relationship

The father-daughter relationship is important in *The Tempest*, its modern rewriting, and in many other Shakespeare plays, especially in those chosen for this dissertation: *The Taming of the Shrew, Othello, The Winter's Tale*. This is also true of *Hamlet*, but in *Nutshell*, its retelling by McEwan, which is analysed in the next chapter, this relationship does not play the key part, nor is it especially strongly foregrounded. Dreher argues that the importance of such a relationship in Shakespeare's plays might have stemmed directly from the playwright's life

experience. Shakespeare himself was the father of two daughters and "explored this relationship throughout his dramatic career" (1). The same argument has been also used by another Shakespeare scholar, Deanne Williams , who discusses the issue extensively in *Shakespeare and the Performance of Girlhood* – a book focusing on how the playwright portrays female preadolescence in his plays. In a podcast interview titled "Why, Here's a Girl!" recorded for the *Shakespeare Unlimited* series from the Folger Shakespeare Library, Williams talks to Neva Grant about the influence of Shakespeare's daughters' presence on his late plays. Even though Shakespeare had not lived with his daughters, Judith and Susanna, full-time, Williams believes that "they certainly were part of his experience, and part of his imagination. By the time he's writing the late plays ... his daughters were teenagers, and their relationships with their father as they're moving into adulthood I think get reworked in the late plays, which are very much concerned with the loss of girlhood and its recovery" (Williams "Why, Here's a Girl!"). This particular moment of the transition from childhood into adulthood, about which Williams is talking, is a crucial component building the father-daughter relationship (Williams "Why, Here's a Girl!"), a component that very often causes tensions and conflicts which Shakespeare depicts in his late plays.

Another highly significant factor which might have had an influence on how Shakespeare presents the father-daughter bond in his late plays is the moment of history at which he wrote those texts. As Dreher asserts, that moment was special, as it was the time of a transition from conservative times to slightly more progressive ones. Shakespeare had an opportunity to work in times when "Renaissance discoveries gradually transformed the world from medieval to modern, authoritarian to individual" (Dreher 1). This, of course, had a significant impact on the position of woman, and on the ways society perceived her. The changes in the worldview stemmed from the development of humanism and, as Dreher argues, a rise in literacy (30). New philosophical trends were emphasizing the importance of learning not only for men but also for women, which, taking into account former attitudes, must have been a revolution. In the age of humanism, Dreher asserts, "young people were encouraged to improve their minds through a program combining classical learning with practical knowledge" (30). What is more, higher education for women became especially fashionable under Katherine of Aragon who – as Dreher informs – "carefully supervised the classical education of her daughters" (30). All of these transformations put a considerable stress on the formation of young girls, who were gradually escaping patriarchal control for a newly acquired independence. Their gradual emancipation, as well as a growing social and cultural assent to it,

must have been also quite a new occurrence for fathers, accustomed to the traditional view of womanhood which "defined love as obedience in a woman's relationship with her father or husband" (Dreher 16). With such a deeply ingrained and long supported worldview, the progressive discussion about a partnership in a father-daughter relationship was a challenge. Being exposed to this new social and cultural debate, Shakespeare was able to portray the difficult moment of a daughter's detachment from her father, such as stepping into adulthood and committing herself in marriage. In Dreher's opinion, Shakespeare's plays, in particular, depict fathers who are reluctant to release their daughters into maturity, and who experience this detachment as "personal rejection" which makes them "shocked and hurt", as the scholar observes (16).

In each of the plays and their retold versions, this characteristic father-daughter relationship has many different dimensions and cannot be described in terms of a universal model suiting all the narratives. In *The Tempest*, as has already been discussed, the relationship is complex, but, after all, Miranda helps Prospero to regain his kingdom and restore his dignity. Yet, Miranda's liberty appears debatable – although manifesting her independence, choosing her future husband, and even proposing to him, she is kept under the constant control of her father, who watches her carefully and, in fact, manages the development of her newly forming bond with Ferdinand. She stands at the threshold of her adulthood, and even steps into it, but Prospero is always there, as if underlining "the archetypal significance of the marriage ritual, which requires the father to release his daughter to another man", which Dreher mentions in her work (2). Nevertheless, Prospero is one of the few Shakespearian fathers who, as Dreher argues, learns "the wisdom of letting go, releasing their daughters into adulthood" (6). In a comparison, there are many fathers in Shakespeare's plays who exercise their tyrannical authority over their daughters. An example is Capulet, infuriated by the vision of Juliet defying him. Prospero, however, accepts Ferdinand for the future husband of his daughter and blesses her independence. *Hag-Seed*, the retold version, follows a similar narrative pattern. The majority of the novel shows the strong reluctance of a father to leave his daughter, but in the end Felix lives to learn the hard lesson of a necessary detachment. Although the bond is purely spiritual, it appears to be even more oppressive for Felix, than it would be if Miranda were alive. The daughter in this bond has an alter ego manifested in the physical Miranda, Anne-Marie Greenland, who steps into Felix's life to take the spiritual one away from him, cutting the bond no longer beneficial for either of them. The physical embodiment of Miranda, not only brings the dead daughter back to life in a performance – a fulfilment of Felix's desire – but also

stimulates his personal progress, as, after the performance is done, he can finally get free from the burden of his too oppressive memory. No longer haunted by the ghost, he can start another chapter in his life. At the same time, Anne-Marie Greenland releases the spirit, who as seemed to be ready to leave her constraints for a long time.

In *The Gap of Time*, the father-daughter relationship is similarly complex and multidimensional as in *The Tempest*, but in addition, it is also peculiar, as the bond gets broken as a result of a special demand by the father, crazily obsessed with jealousy. Leontes represents a Shakespearian father-tyrant. He orders Perdita be removed far away from his kingdom, but later he must face the threat of breaking a royal continuity which, in fact, he has provoked himself. In this paradoxical situation Leontes, from one perspective, might have been a tragic hero, as, if Perdita had not been found after sixteen years, he would have been deprived of an heir and condemned to leave the throne untenanted by one of his immediate family. On the other hand, he is redeemed, as the heir is brought back to the kingdom, and Leontes's family rule is preserved. Additionally, there is another interesting issue here in the background It concerns Mamillius, Leontes' son, whose loss, as Orgel observes, is much less important dramatically than the loss of his infant daughter (Orgel, *Impersonations* 17). This aspect may even reinforce the importance of the father-daughter bond in the play, although, as has already been mentioned, that bond is important mostly because of political reasons, and not emotional ones, as might be suggested by our contemporary point of view. In the chapter devoted to *The Winter's Tale*, I have argued that the most tragic aspect of Perdita's loss is not the loss of her company, or "opportunity to watch her grow", as Orgel observes while analysing the play. The greatest tragedy lies in the fact that the king loses his hopes for future generations. Hence, the finding of Perdita at the end of the story should not be interpreted as a filling-up of an emotional hole which her loss might have left, but as a confirmation of succession. The retelling, on the other hand, tries to step away from that worldview. Firstly, it achieves this through radical recontextualization – the action takes place in an entirely modern world. But secondly, it does this through the way in which Perdita's adoption is depicted. She gets into a loving and devoted family, found by a father for whom she is, in fact, a compensation for his emotional suffering. Via the example of this newly formed bond Winterson underlines the depth of the father-daughter relationship.

The Taming of The Shrew also has its particular version of the father-daughter relationship, different from in the two previously discussed plays, mostly because there are two daughters. Baptista, the girls' father, is reluctant to release the younger Bianca into adulthood,

but in the case of Kate he is nagging and desperate that she get married. However, the feeling of love understood as obedience, which Dreher mentions when writing on the traditional view of hierarchy, is not entirely missing in this play. It is transformed from the father-daughter bond into a husband-wife relationship, in which Kate declares herself to be accepting, sweet and humble. The retelling must, of course, break with such a model, and marriage is understood there as a partnership. But, naturally, her father's nagging that Kate get married to Pyotr Cherbakov, whom she does not even know, meets her fierce resistance. This relationship evolves in the narrative, as slowly and steadily Tyler transforms Kate's initial discontent into a deliberate acceptance of Pyotr, in consequence of which they both can develop as individuals.

Paternal love is definitely present in *Vinegar Girl*, although it is not too overwhelming, nor authoritarian as is characteristic of, for example, Leontes or Capulet. The father's anxiety about the fact that his younger daughter meets men appears understandable for the contemporary reader, as the girl is underage. The older daughter, Kate, is also dear to him, but her role consists more in being a faithful companion to the eccentric Baptista, who would not be able to commit himself to his science without her support in taking care of chores and the teenage Bianca. At this point, however, one can definitely notice that Kate has been burdened with too many duties and responsibilities, especially that all her sacrifices are made for the sake of her father's career. Disagreement about this situation grows even more intense when Baptista tries to introduce his idea of marrying Kate to his research assistant only to ensure the extension of his visa. Nevertheless, Tyler succeeds in embedding the narrative in the credible context of a home deprived of both parents. This is sufficient to explain Kate's natural motivation to protect her younger sister. The father, although immersed in his research to the level of being divorced from reality, is at the same time a likeable character, which might be seen as setting off his patriarchal inclinations. Taking all these arguments into account, it can be concluded that *Vinegar Girl*, to some extent, presents the daughter in the role of a rescuer, as it is mostly due to Kate that her father ensures the continuity of his scientific research. This element directly suggests *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, in which the daughters are necessary elements in their fathers' struggles for independence.

At the end, let me consider *Othello* with its portrayal of Brabantio and Desdemona. Brabantio is a possessive father tormented by various feelings towards his daughter. At the beginning of the play he is furious that she has married without his permission, but, after all, he must learn to accept that Desdemona's decision is irreversible. This lesson is unusually tough, but Shakespeare does not diminish Brabantio's discomfort. The status quo of an authoritarian

father is challenged by Desdemona's unexpected independence and assertiveness. In an analysis of the play, Thompson notices that Desdemona herself underlines that the balance of power between her and her father is going to be changed: she openly declares that by marrying Othello she shifts her obedience from the father to the husband. "Desdemona", Thompson writes, "makes it clear that she has been made wholly new through her marriage to Othello" (Introduction 37). On the one hand, Shakespeare presents an independently behaving woman, but on the other, he maintains her submissive social position in the relation with Othello. This compromise between such two opposing characteristics – assertiveness and submissiveness – has been extensively discussed in the section devoted to Desdemona in the chapter on *Othello* and its retelling. Shakespeare could not have presented a female character behaving in too frivolous a fashion, as this would stand in a serious conflict with patriarchal social norms and expectations. Thanks to the jealousy which is shown in the play, Desdemona – the representative of womanhood in Shakespeare's times – is shown as a person that cannot be trusted. However, that was the stereotype of a woman prevalent in contemporary male-dominated culture. By definition, women were thought to be too easily tempted, and therefore they should be kept under control. They were thought to be also inherently unfaithful; hence the theme of male suspicion of cuckoldry is prominent in *Othello*. That may explain why so many female portrayals in the tragedies demonstrate an anti-feminist attitude. The text of the play had to appeal to the patriarchal point of view, to which Shakespeare could not stand in opposition.

The growing independent assertiveness of Desdemona is a factor seriously challenging the unshakeable position of her father. Dreher explains that his fractured ego is the key cause of Brabantio's suffering after Desdemona has left him. Dreher draws attention to a characteristic cause and effect sequence:

> Shakespeare's fathers in comedies and tragedies react to their daughters' emerging sexuality and love for other men with pain and consternation. The threat of losing their daughters troubles them deeply. Brabantio, learning of Desdemona's elopement, is stricken with grief. 'O unhappy girl!' he exclaims, "With the Moor, say'st you? Who would be a father! ... O, she deceives me / Past thought!" (*Othello* 1.1.164-167)
>
> (Dreher 42)

Here, Brabantio sounds as "jealous lover" (Dreher 9), shocked and hurt by what he eperiences as "personal rejection" ((Dreher 5). The pain and consternation of which Dreher writes might perhaps be another name for a fear of a destabilization of male authority over women. This authority is especially clearly visible in the relation between fathers and daughters as a father's authority is a naturally given authority and lies at the basis of a stiff patriarchal order.

In the retelling of *Othello*, *New-Boy* Chevalier establishes an equivalent relation between the daughter, Dee, and her school teacher, Mr. Brabant, who is as helpless in managing the situation with the new boy as Brabantio is when left alone after Desdemona's declaration that she has married a stranger. Both of these male figures must face their competitors, but the fight is destined to be lost.

Among other rewritings of Shakespeare which touch on the father-daughter relationship there is a one that deserves mentioning at this point. That is *A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley, a Pulitzer Prize winning novel from 1991, written within the framework of Shakespeare's *King Lear.* In an interview at Point Loma Writer's Symposium by the Sea in 2018, Smiley admits that one of the motifs which made her rewrite that particular drama was the annoyance she felt with the fact that Regan and Goneril –Lear's two older daughters – have very little to say in comparison with their father who talks endlessly, and whose decisions and wishes – typically for a patriarchal family – appear ultimate and undisputable (Smiley 27:50–28:18). Thus, by making one of the sisters the narrator of her story – in the novel it is Ginny, the oldest one – Smiley rebuilt the drama into a dominantly female narrative, a tale told entirely from the female point of view, with a different optic than in the original story. In the retelling, the voice of a woman becomes much more audible than in the drama, as it is foregrounded in the most exposed position – in a first-person narration.

The plot of *A Thousand Acres* is built upon a similar starting point as in the play. Analogically, the father, a retiring, prosperous farmer called Larry Cook, wants to divide his "kingdom" – here a vast, fertile and definitely valuable piece of land – among his three adult daughters: Rose, Caroline, and Ginny (the one who narrates the story). The daughters would become shareholders in a newly formed corporation which Larry intends to set up on the farm. In fact, the plan he wishes to implement is a way to avoid paying taxes, not a kind-hearted act of paternal care for the financial future of his children. While the two older ones together with their husbands accept the wish without hesitation, the youngest one, Caroline – a character equivalent to Shakespeare's Cordelia – responds only "I don't know" (Smiley 19), which Larry

correctly understands as a refusal. Caroline, a vigorous young woman and a prosperous lawyer, does not imagine herself living on a farm. As Ginny comments, "Caroline would have seen my father's plan as a trapdoor plunging her into a chute that would deposit her right back on the farm" (21). Her refusal is a grave disappointment to Larry, as his pride, "always touchy, had been injured to the quick" (21).

The narrative reveals a portrait of the father as a tyrant, who could not have been anyone else towards his daughters, for their mother died early, losing a chance to become a softening contrast to him. In the perception of Ginny, Larry has always been distant: "my earliest memories of him are of being afraid to look him in the eye, to look at him at all. (…) If I had to speak to him, I addressed his overalls, his shirt, his boots" (20). Although the impression from childhood might have been changed in her adult life, it fossilizes and remains, translated onto a mature relationship. Ginny is an entirely submissive daughter, both physically and emotionally, which is even magnified in a contract with the emancipated, modern Caroline, who tries to act independently, despite being ostracised. Nevertheless, although all the three daughters try to separate themselves from the past related to their father, especially to the darkest facts about it, the father-daughter bond is one of the hardest to break. Each of their attempts is paid for, just like in all the Shakespearian dramas where this relationship is a motif upon which the plots are built and developed.

In his representation of the father-daughter relationship, Shakespeare tries to challenge the traditional views of hierarchy and patriarchal dominance. As the daughters grow more self-sufficient, the fathers must face a number of anxieties about their marriage, sexuality, and about the submissive position the daughters have long been taking in this unequal bond. The conflicts between the two generations which are depicted in the dramas and in their contemporary retellings, "cast new light," as Dreher writes, "on questions of moral development, male and female sex roles, traditional and progressive roles." What is more, Dreher observes that for most of Shakespeare's fathers the loss of a daughter is always a critical moment, but that crisis can be formative, as, when daughters leave, they give their fathers a lesson, because they learn to "release their loving and obedient subjects, confirmations of their masculine power and authority" (42). This happens mostly through marriage – a rite of passage – which, according to Dreher, is both a crossroads and an opportunity to grow. This stressful situation may act like "a catalyst, drawing out a person's inner strength or weakness" (42), which, most of all, is beneficial to the characters of Shakespeare's fathers, and a factor that develops them. Above all, a close analysis of the father-daughter bond invites a deeper psychological discussion.

Dreher rightly observes that Shakespeare "was far ahead of his time, anticipating the theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Erik Erikson, and others on the drama of human development and our enduring quest for love and meaning" (1).

Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

(*Hamlet*, 4.5. 43-44)

5.5. *Nutshell* – a contemporary retelling of *Hamlet*

At the end of the set of the novels chosen for this dissertation, there is one which spins around one of the best-known Shakespearian dramas, *Hamlet*. Besides being an immensely popular and well-recognized text, *Hamlet* is also a drama that offers one of the most interesting characters created by Shakespeare, the one that it is perhaps most common to reinterpret and re-read. There are many reasons for the enduring popularity of the play and its protagonist, Hamlet. The first one is embedded in the intriguing personality of the protagonist who suffers from a wide range of psychological tortures that destabilize his life. All the troubles Hamlet tries to overcome change him into an introspective and isolated figure, enigmatic and deeply pensive, which is definitely attractive for the receiver of the play. Another reason for the considerable admiration many hold for the play lies in the fact that Hamlet can be a potential everyman. The oppression in which he finds himself, the troubles he must solve are not problems of elites, for he struggles with the most mundane, painful dilemmas that need to be resolved, ones that might be a part of the life of any person. All the emotions Hamlet experiences, including disappointment with his mother's choice, unfulfilled love, his motivation, the pressure of the revenge he is made to carry out, and the unbearable pain of existence that he experiences, all these make him a hero who can definitely appeal to the contemporary spectator/reader. Many of the aspects of Hamlet's troubled personality may feel familiar to the recipient of the text. When translated into modern times, after re-contextualization, *Hamlet* still remains fresh. With its context changed, the play can still offer a story about a deeply suffering man that is certain to move a contemporary audience.

The medium that has always been taking the most out of the play is, undoubtedly, theatre. Jonathan Croall, the author of *Performing Hamlet: Actors in the Modern Age*, observed that *Hamlet* is "a hoop through which every very eminent actor must, sooner or later, jump" (1). Another great admirer of the play, Harold Bloom, argues that "after Jesus, Hamlet is the most cited figure in Western consciousness" (xix), which may partly explain the huge popularity of that part among aspiring performers. If the priority of the role is to acquire a deep insight with regard to oneself, *Hamlet* offers enough space for his. Without a doubt, actors playing the part can move on a truly fascinating journey while approaching the part, as the

personality standing behind this character is a complex human being, which translates into Hamlet's being an exciting role to play. In the introduction to his book, Croall provides an accurate, condensed description of the hero taking a look at all the aspects which make that part so exciting. We learn that Hamlet's mesmeric nature is built up of a mixture of qualities: "a potent brew of wit, melancholy, verbal dexterity, cynicism, charm, cruelty, sweetness, rashness, theatricality, energy and finally stoicism" (Croall 2) It is undisputable that Hamlet, as Croall argues, requires an actor "to bare his soul" (Croall 2). Moreover, when filtered by every individual's aesthetic taste, experience and sensitivity, the part gains different colours, in consequence of which every creation is different.

To play the part of Hamlet requires from an actor a specific attitude, which is focused on finding the real human being behind a written creation. This attitude has been discussed by Sir Derek Jacobi, an actor well-known for his versions of Hamlet, who talks about his experience in an interview for the Folger Shakespeare series of podcasts *Shakespeare Unlimited*. Jacobi has performed the role of Hamlet nearly 400 times and has devoted hours to thinking about his words, motivations and the best way to express them. An intense performing experience has led Jacobi to the conclusion that both the drama and the role need to be approached by exploration. According to Jacobi, the most vital thing in performing Hamlet is to lose the "paper". Speaking and performing must be natural, but in order to achieve that, an actor must integrate him/herself with the human in Hamlet, not with the fictional character on the page. This thorough research is the exploration about which Jacobi talks. One must explore the situation in which Hamlet finds himself, and later imagine one's own reaction while being in "Hamlet's shoes". According to Jacobi, this is the best way to explore a character's natural language and style, which make the performance authentic and successful. He argues that the key factor which "makes your Hamlet identifiably different is how you react to the situations in which Hamlet finds himself" (Jacobi interview). "Anybody can play Hamlet", Jacobi argues. "It can be fat, thin, male, female, black, white, whatever. (...) Hamlet is you: how you sound, how you look, your personality, your charisma" (Jacobi interview). This attitude may definitely be universal for art and it can be also incorporated in literature.

5.5.1. The origins

The sources usually state that *Hamlet* was written around 1600. In an on-line lecture on the drama (delivered during *SzekspirOn//line* – a digital panel on Shakespeare published by the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre in 2020) Jerzy Limon tells a story about the context of its first

staging. The premiere of the play was meant to be delivered at the great opening of the Globe Theatre, but, eventually, it turned out that the play was far too long – according to Limon the text ran to 4,000 lines, which made it the longest play that Shakespeare wrote. The decision makers at the Globe most probably asked the playwright to abridge the script, but he was not particularly eager to make any cuts to his texts. Eventually, he agreed to introduce some changes, but the abbreviation process took him about one year and the opening performance was postponed to another time. Finally, the Globe put on the play and *Hamlet* proved to be "an immediate and enduring success" (Proudfoot 291).

Similarly, as with many other Shakespeare texts, *Hamlet* is based on earlier sources. These sources include Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, often referred to as the *Ur-Hamlet* (Draut 290). The play is important in Elizabethan drama as it launched a fashion for the "tragedy of revenge", to which Shakespeare's *Hamlet* belongs. Taking the example of *Hamlet* and of the other plays discussed in my dissertation, we can come to the conclusion that Shakespeare was particularly well-trained in rewriting, and he eagerly took advantage of the earlier texts that were available to him. In spite of the fact that London was an especially interesting and inspiring place to create, Shakespeare did not base his plots on any occurrences that took place at the time. This fact is observed by Limon who underlines how vibrant London was at the time Shakespeare lived there (Limon). For example, the city was full of criminal incidents that might have undoubtedly served as an inspiration for a story. The Globe was situated in a sinister district. The theatres which were located there were regarded as a centre of moral decay, and – as if that were was not enough – they were surrounded by numerous brothels, suspicious taverns, and five prisons (due to a high demand for prison cells at the time). Criminal events took place there. In his lecture, Limon recounts a case when a playwright was murdered by a professional rival. Yet, Shakespeare did not take interest in these stimuli – older and already-known texts remained the sources of his inspiration. That choice might be justified by the fact that these scripts had already been tried out in the theatre; they had been liked and applauded by audiences. Shakespeare's duty as a person making money from writing was to creatively copy the patterns that had already been tested and that had proved successful. Experiments were not necessarily needed, and they might be risky. To get the audience to come to theatre, and to make them listen to a play with astonishment – that was the goal of the prosperous entertainment industry.

The revenge tragedy genre, to which *Hamlet* belongs, assumes that the main protagonist must take action to seek justice, but Hamlet as a person is busy with another serious problem.

The protagonist continuously struggles with himself; he balances his thoughts, thinks of whether to take action or not, and is occupied with self-analysis . All these characteristics add a greater degree of psychological depth and complexity to the play. Nevertheless, traditional revenge tragedies were especially popular with Elizabethan audiences and they were familiar with the genre. Revenge tragedy performances were particularly spectacular and violent (McConnel 184), and included multiple killings, ghostly appearances, and madness. The audience was impressed by the massive amounts of blood on the stage that came from sheep's intestines (241).

Although not particularly bloodthirsty, *Hamlet* derives from these conventions. Particularly characteristic is the ghostly element which is a pivotal component of the play. Not only does it mobilize Hamlet to take action, but it also confirms his premonitions concerning the death of his father. The ghost may be also regarded as functioning in a different dimension. Hamlet confesses to Horatio that he saw it in his "mind's eye" (1.2.185), which may be a metaphor for intuition. The inner conviction that Hamlet's worst suspicions are true is symbolized by the ghostly figure who, which is significant, talks only to Hamlet. Others can see him, but there is only one recipient of the message. Once the ghost delivers it, Hamlet has no choice – he must face the responsibility to assassinate his uncle and punish his mother. The ghost, however, is preventive, as he can tell how angry Hamlet is at Gertrude, so he warns Hamlet not to be cruel towards her: "Leave her to heaven, / And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge" (1.5.86-87), the Ghost instructs and leaves Hamlet with the burden that later makes him indecisive and depressed .

Not understanding how to fulfil the Ghost's wish, and unhappy about it, Hamlet falls into a depressed mood, which he hides from others. All the knowledge he acquires is hidden under a mask of insanity. Yet he himself is uncertain about his true identity; he is unsure whether he is a madman or a cold, introspective individual. Neither is he sure of his feelings: does he love his mother and Ophelia, or does he hate women in general? The relations with the two of them are by no means easy and they deepen Hamlet's internal crisis.

5.5.2. The relationship with his mother

Hamlet's relationship with mother is a complex one. He cannot forgive her much-too-rapid remarriage with Claudius, a person he detests. Hamlet is still grieving for his father's

death, and the memory of his father is still very vivid, so that he finds it extremely hard to understand Gertrude's motivation for a swift marriage. There is not a moment in the play when Gertrude tries to explain her motifs to Hamlet, nor does she exhibit any tendency to think critically about her own actions. She mistakes Hamlet's anger for his madness and cannot tell that this is only pretending. Gertrude's decisions seem therefore calculated and cold. Just as Lady Macbeth was obsessed with power and felt no scruples about murder, so Gertrude has no inner constraints in quitting her mourning and re-establishing her position as the Queen of Denmark. Nevertheless, the drama provides no knowledge whether she did take part in the old Hamlet's killing or not. Hamlet cannot tell this either, but what he hates most about Gertrude's action is that she chose Claudius, his major antagonist. In fact, Gertrude may also be interpreted as a kind of antagonist to Hamlet, as she deliberately chooses to walk hand in hand with the man who killed her husband. Yet, there is no certainty as to her supposed cooperation in the murder. The strongest motifs for Gertrude's quick remarriage seem to lie in her instincts – she uses a man to support her self-preservation, which also shows her as entirely dependent on him and on men in general. Gertrude seems to be deprived of any power of self-protection – all she has at her disposal is a dependence on men. This characteristic system in which a weak woman must become subjected to a man in order to survive suggests the strong masculinism that is omnipresent in all Shakespeare's plays, and which has already been discussed in more detail in earlier chapters.

Hamlet is entirely taken over by his strong feelings of detestation towards Gertrude, which he expresses just at the beginning of the play. In truth, his first appearance on the stage is marked by that rage. The reader finds him saying:

> Frailty, thy name is woman!—
> A little month, or ere those shoes were old
> With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
> Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she—
> O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
> Would have mourn'd longer--married with my uncle,
> My father's brother, but no more like my father
> Than I to Hercules (...) (*Hamlet* 1. 2. 146-153)

In Hamlet's eyes Claudius is shrewd, lustful, and definitely lacks the superb intellect that characterized his beloved father. The protagonist seems even more frustrated the less Gertrude is able to understand his frustration. But Hamlet's tragedy lies partially in the fact that he cannot fully express his emotions. Despite a deep scorn towards Gertrude, he remains faithful to his word given to the Ghost – punish her, but safely. This ambiguity of feelings, in truth, torments him deeply, and not being able to set his mind, nor to take any action for a long time, drives him into melancholy. Gertrude does not understand his sadness. She mistakes it for a broken heart and reckons it is Ophelia who has brought her son to this depression. Yet the true reasons lie in her own choices and actions. This is the truth Gertrude can never discover, nor can she really learn how serious is her son's inner conflict.

Whenever Hamlet is able to speak his mind, he emphasizes how upset he is. He declares: *How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, / Seem to me all the uses of this world!* in his first soliloquy (1.2.133-134). What superficially sounds like self-pity is in fact Hamlet's tragic conflict. This conflict is complex and destructive; it leads him to erratic, fatal decisions, complete isolation from the others, and to unbearable inertia. Hamlet can therefore be characterized as demonstrating complete indecisiveness and an inability to take any action. To take a decision is something he most carefully avoids, which is another important truth about this character. His passivity has, of course, various causes. The first one is a limited trust in what the Ghost has told him. Hamlet is uncertain whether Gertrude participated in the murder or not. Although he tries to stay loyal towards the Ghost, he is not entirely satisfied with the facts he revealed; Hamlet has hunger for truth. Yet in this constant postponing of any agency , one may see procrastination. It provokes a chain of misunderstandings and tragic decisions. Instead of making any effort, Hamlet falls into ineffective self-analysis, which, although fascinating and absorbing for the audience and an actor, does not move the action forward. In this case, not taking action is also an action in itself, but not necessarily beneficial for the protagonist. For example, while Hamlet debates suicide with himself in the famous soliloquy (To be, or not to be?) he is overheard by Polonius who begins to consider him mad and who supports Claudius in sending Hamlet to England where he can regain his mental stability, which, in the opinion of Claudius, is a necessity.

The continuing self-debate in which Hamlet is absorbed also misleads Ophelia, who reads Hamlet's melancholy as a rejection of her, and as evidence of a radical loss of interest in her. A discussion about Ophelia in the play should perhaps start with the notion that she is only

Hamlet's supposed girlfriend, a person who serves as a practical figure that helps to explain Hamlet's melancholy. This figure is especially important for Gertrude, who finds in Ophelia a convenient explanation for Hamlet's sorrow. Blaming the girl for her son's supposedly broken heart is a tool which successfully turns Gertrude's attention away from the problem and which lets her feel at peace with her own conscience. There is not a direct clue suggesting that the queen has any regrets, but she certainly needs to find a good explanation for her son's sadness, at least to satisfy others, who also feel uneasy with the suspicious mood of the prince.

There is, in fact, little said in the play about Ophelia and about her relationship with Hamlet. Apart from being romantically involved with Hamlet, she is also entangled in a relation with other men: Polonius and Laertes, who tell her what to do from the beginning of the play. Polonius also uses Ophelia very skilfully for his own gain. In act III he orders her to sit still and read the Bible in order to mask his secret presence. Polonius hides and overhears Hamlet's words. It is also noticeable how he treats the girl (who is his daughter). She is only an easily manipulated instrument and a piece of camouflage who will do whatever he asks, probably due to her deep love for her father. In fact, Ophelia chooses to kill herself in direct response to the message about his death). Polonius definitely involves Ophelia in an intrigue and an overall atmosphere of doubt. He encourages her to lie, to be insincere, to wear "devotion's visage / And pious action" so that Hamlet cannot guess he is there. Shown in this way, Ophelia's role as a Hamlet's supporter, a friend, is hard to believe. In fact, she brings him no consolation, but quite the opposite. She gives him back the souvenirs and, thus, breaks up with him. Hamlet reacts with an immediate outburst of misogyny concentrated in the invectives he throws at her.

To sum up, in this whole complex relationship with Hamlet and Polonius, it seems quite horrifying how obedient Ophelia is, how much deprived of her own reason, her own position. Once more, a female figure is presented as wholly dependent on men. Yet she must have been suited to the specific conventions that were relevant to the worldview of the Elizabethan era. However, it is especially worth considering that the submissiveness and powerlessness of these two female protagonists, Gertrude and Ophelia, contribute to the destruction of Hamlet. The only two women he could have had at his side turn into his indirect antagonists, leaving him alone on the battlefield. It can be said that each of them escapes responsibility in her own fashion: Ophelia chooses to die, and Gertrude chooses to remarry, caring, in fact, about her own self and comfort.

5.5.3. The re-reading

The fascination with *Hamlet* is not unprecedented phenomenon among rewriters and other artists that use the text as a source of inspiration for their work. The drama has continuous influence on the generations over the years. In his book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, in the chapter that is solely dedicated to *Hamlet*, Jan Kott ponders over the remarkability of the text – both of the play itself, as well as of the key protagonist. Kott perceives Hamlet as nearly iconic, points out that the protagonist has become such a well recognizable figure that one does not have to know Shakespeare at all to be able to say few words just about Hamlet. Kott argues: "The bibliography of dissertations and studies devoted to *Hamlet* is twice the size of Warsaw's telephone directory" (57). Although the reference offered by Kott is a sign of a passed epoch, the amount of sources that tackle the issues of the drama is massive. Next line from Kott's observation present some more interesting conclusions:

> No Dane of flesh and blood has been written about so extensively as Hamlet. Shakespeare's prince is certainly the best known representative of his nation. Innumerable glossaries and commentaries have grown round Hamlet, and he is one of the few literary heroes who live apart from the text, apart from the theatre. His name means something even to those who have never seen or read Shakespeare's play. In this respect he is rather like Leonardo's Mona Lisa. We know she is smiling even before we have seen the picture. (58)

Hamlet, the timeless hero, can be recognized in the McEwan's retelling rather easily. Speculations about the self, the essential characteristic of Hamlet, is the key feature of the newly created, re-written protagonist of his latest novel, *Nutshell*, a modern response to the play. *Nutshell* was published in September 2016 on the occasion of the fourth centenary of Shakespeare's death, but as an outcome of an individual idea of its author, not as a part of a larger project. The rewriting is a peculiar twist on *Hamlet*, as the narrator is a foetus who is about two weeks away from being born. It is interesting, however, to notice that, as Yili Tang observes, "McEwan is not the first novelist to use an unborn child as the narrator. Novels by Muriel Spark, Thomas Keneally, and Carlos Fuentes are narrated by foetuses in the womb. However, McEwan's monologuing foetus echoes Hamlet through his soliloquizing verbosity, erudition, and classical ethical drama" (3). The uncommon point of view of the narrator makes this piece of literature a piece of non-realist fiction, yet the problems it tackles, as well as the narrator's language and style, remain fully credible and mature. "Here I am", begins the

embryonic narrator, "upside down in a woman" (McEwan 1). Being not particularly certain as to the gender of this forthcoming human being, let us assume him to be "him" – as was his Shakespearian counterpart, Hamlet. With just two weeks away from being born, the hero spends his time speculating about the world outside, tossing and turning in his mother's womb, and overhearing anything she says to her secret lover, Claude. In spite of developing quite an optimistic vision of his future existence, the hero becomes anxious about his mother's infidelity as well as about her vicious intensions. It turns out that the lovers intend to eliminate John, the protagonist's father, in order to get possession of his highly valuable house property in London. While still being unborn and inaudible to the others, the narrator can do nothing to prevent the murder. Contrary to his Shakespearian predecessor he decides to take actions, but the only agency he has is to kick his mother during the night to wake her up, but this only gives Trudy insomnia, in consequence of which she turns on the radio and listens to podcasts, which is her favourite pastime. After all, Trudy does not read the alarming sign properly, and the unborn Hamlet is left helpless and dissatisfied. He needs a more elaborate, affective plan.

The novel's epigraph – "Oh God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space – were it not that I have bad dreams" (McEwan) – from which the title comes, speaks explicitly that the novel is a retelling of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, apart from creating a new piece of literary fiction on the basis of *Hamlet* as an anterior text, *Nutshell* is not just a new interpretation of it, the more, that the name Hamlet is not even mentioned in the novel. Although the play as a subtext is constantly present, it can be noticed that McEwan's particular focus in the story is on an imperfect, gravely disturbed relationship between a mother and her child. McEwan as a writer is often focused in his novels on the family, especially on the imperfections of this little social structure, which is observed by Colleen M. Hennessey who examines that particular problem in her dissertation *A sacred site: Family in the novels of Ian McEwan*. Hennessey argues that for McEwan, "the family is the primary factor in our ability to define ourselves, and within our closest relationships we will discover who we are and what we can be" (1). Once the formative forces of a family deteriorate, the development of a self might be destabilized as well, since "the individual's value and identity comes to be defined primarily in relation to others" (1). Further, Hennessey argues that "a successful family system is one that encourages and allows its members to develop into independent, well-differentiated individuals" (1). In contrast, once that unit becomes inefficient, an individual may develop poorly, unable to copy any healthy patterns. Hence, the reason why McEwan particularly chose to rewrite *Hamlet* seems to be related to the issues it tackles, especially to the bond of the mother

and her son. Apart of this, *Nutshell* may be also read as a response to the contemporary model of the family, which most often does not resemble the traditional nuclear family, but has become disturbed by a chaos which stems from a variety of reasons.

McEwan's Trudy, the embodiment of Shakespeare's Gertrude, is presented as an indifferent mother, lacking parental affection. Living in a love triangle with Claude (Claudius) and her husband John Cairncross (King Hamlet) she fits a model of a destructive parent interested only in possible material gains. She is a highly egoistic, careless person engaged in a secret double life, which is often commented on by her unborn baby. The foetus relates to his mother infidelity in a humorous way, yet his sarcasm contains disgust at her adulterous sexual activity in high pregnancy. Trudy's sense of cleanness leaves much space for criticism too. The place where she lives and meets her lover is filthy and neglected, which McEwan observes from a close perspective as if pointing the reader's attention to the chaos of her emotional condition. Besides being filthy and emotionally unstable, Trudy is a frequent drinker – being in the third trimester she is a great consumer of regular doses of alcohol, either on her own, or at candlelit dinners with her partner. She likes listening to podcasts – biographies, famous world classics, or a series *Know Your Wine* dedicated to wine connoisseurs. The alcohol circulating in her blood does not escape the child's notice. "I like to share a glass with my mother" reflects the narrator, enjoying the alcohol passing through his "healthy placenta" (6). The ironic and sour sense of humour embodied in this comment is an obvious criticism of drinking in pregnancy, an unquestionable controversy. One of the foetus's conclusion is: "I know that alcohol will lower my intelligence. It lowers everybody's intelligence" (7).

5.5.4. The soliloquy of an unborn Hamlet

The content of *Nutshell* is entirely based on what the narrator can hear or feel, but his apparent limitation does not mean that his observations are short-sighted or unconvincing. In fact, this "nutshell-like" optic lets the narrator speak freely about almost everything. It is interesting to follow the unborn Hamlet. The reader may spot Shakespeare in his multi-digressive self-debate which resembles the soliloquy of an adult person rather than that of an infant. The unborn narrator speaks in a voice of a careful observer who is deeply upset by the world that is soon going to welcome him. Under the cover of a brilliant sense of humour and irony, the hero relates the romance of his mother which he finds rather upsetting. The protagonist's ability to auto analyse his inner thoughts is metaphorical and, in fact, resembles a similar inability in Shakespeare's Hamlet very much. Although interested in the outside, he is

immensely focused on his inner struggle, focused on what he is feeling and thinking. This is Hamlet's overall attitude in the play: his greatest problem, although caused by external factors, lies within him. On the other hand, McEwan's narrator/protagonist is literally isolated, stuck in his mother's womb, which is an appropriate metaphor for solitariness and a perfect place for thinking. The womb gives a limited perspective, yet at the same time lets him infer all of his judgements from outer circumstances. The sources of information are various. Most of the constructed ideas that appear in the foetus's mind are modelled upon the content of the podcasts and radio news to which his mother listens almost all the time.

McEwan's protagonist, like Hamlet, is burdened with responsibility, yet, of course in the case of the foetus, being in charge of his parent's decisions is a pure literary abstraction, as he seems to be deprived of any agency. Nevertheless, his inability to act is a metaphor for the inertia which characterizes Hamlet, but not only that, for it can strike a chord with any reader who is able to imagine how oppressive and how sorrowful the feeling of helplessness may be, especially when agency is desperately desired. After all, behind the uncommon perspective, there is an insightful discussion and observation of the world and of people who are not aware of the fact that their sinful undertakings are being observed. Although the narrator is physically limited in his mother's womb – he is, in fact, physically imprisoned – he has a full access to the knowledge that is aimed to be kept secret. It is also interesting that all that knowledge is accessed only via hearing. "Images of people and the world are not realized through appearances, but through voices and other sounds. Unable to control his movements, the foetus lives as a uterine prisoner, forced to participate in a scandalous affair and murderous strategy" (Tang 3). However, as Tang points out, McEwan uses the limitations of the foetus to his advantage – the position in which the narrator is, is beneficiary. "Both, the foetus-narrator and the foetus-character can directly access information on the premeditated murder through the privilege of pillow talk" (Tang 3). Somehow, the Shakespearean Hamlet was also privileged in terms of accessing the secret knowledge through the senses. It was only him who could see and listen to the Ghost, none of his closest friends was able to do it.

Although the foetus detests the fact that Trudy betrays his father, that she chose Claude, a man of a dubious intellect, he – at the same time – adores her and gives much space in the narration to the description of her. As a character, Trudy's voice is not foregrounded, she does not take part in the leading narrative line, and the reader is not a direct listener of her, hence cannot directly get into the way she thinks. Everything what is known about Trudy, what is transferred to the reader, is reported by the foetus who overhears what she says, sometimes

renders the exact dialogues that she shares with Claude. Everything Trudy says and does is meticulously witnessed and assessed by the foetus, who, undoubtedly, places her in the centre of his interests. Regardless of the fact that Trudy consumes alcohol, the narrator is moved by the moment in which she refuses a glass for the sake of her child's health. The foetus comments: "she restrains herself for the love of me. And I love her – how could I not?" (7). Her love towards him, the tenderness and caring is everything he longs for, and yet, that tenderness does not seem to be particularly offered, except for some rare moments in which Trudy shares some delicacy towards her child. Nevertheless, the narrator's frequently declares his love towards her. He speaks of her tenderly, picturesquely, depicts in details, as if painting her portrait. "I love her, she's my divinity, and I need her" (15) the foetus says, awaiting their first meeting: "the mother I have yet to meet, whom I know only from the inside. Not enough! I long for her eternal self. Surfaces are everything!" (7).

Tormented by the mixed feelings towards her, the narrator experiences a deep emotional confusion which is present in the whole novel. The confusion which is a clear echo from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Interchangeably, Trudy enrages him, but a moment later she is the addressee of his unconditional love, as she is the closest person with whom he likes "to share a glass" (McEwan 6). The reminiscences of *Hamlet* are also well sensed in the moment in which the foetus's rage is very well articulated, where he admits to perceiving himself and his father as victims, and the duo Trudy and Claude as their oppressors:

> My mother has preferred my father's brother, cheated her husband, ruined her son. My uncle has stolen his brother's wife, deceived his nephew's father, grossly insulted his sister-in-law's son. My father by nature is defenceless, as I am by circumstance. […] My affair with Trudy isn't going well. I thought I could take her love for granted" (McEwan 33).

Although clearly heartbroken and disappointed by the scarce maternal affection, the foetus is immediately taking back his accusation, finding a comfortable explanation for Trudy's undertakings. He can even support his claims with research-based arguments overheard in the podcasts: "But I've heard biologists debating at dawn. Pregnant mothers must fight the tenants of their wombs. […] My health derives from Trudy, but she must preserve herself against me. […] It's not her love that's failing. It's mine" (McEwan 34). As the foetus's love is remarkably strong, the love on the Trudy's site is not equivalent, it is almost non-existent as she hardly ever thinks of the baby, let alone of the birth that is about to come. McEwan in a humoristic way

makes the foetus "knock the door" to Trudy's heart, though unsuccessfully, which he does by kicking her belly – a physiological activity which the babies simply do. Yet, the author "attributes motivation to his protagonist's kicking"(Müller 389) augmenting it by a funny allusion to the Bible: "Three times, like Peter's denial of Jesus" (McEwan 167). Similarly as Peter, Trudy denies. She denies answering her child in the manner he wishes it to be, thus she, in truth, is a mother who is not there, who is missing, although her physicality cannot be denied.

It is therefore worth noticing, that although Trudy does function in the novel quite prominently, her physical surface is well-depicted and observed, she, at the same time, remains somehow a missing mother, missing in a way of which Hatice Karaman writes in her essay tackling the issue of an absent maternal genealogy in Shakespeare. Trudy can be regarded as missing as she is a dysfunctional mother, at least from the point of view of the reader, and also as depicted by the narrator. Although the foetus remains subjective and tries to justify everything Trudy does and perceives her beauty egocentrically, she is, in fact, a woman whose code of ethics remains debatable. As Müller rightly observes, Trudy, together with Claude, "are governed by their sex drive, greed for money and their addiction to wine and food" (387). Trudy, although not as ethically damaged as Claude, who initiates the crime, is in fact a heavily pregnant young woman who "plans and perpetrates […] the murder of her husband in order to inherit the latter's 7£m London property" (387). Overtaken by the plans of murder, continually drunk and physically tired Trudy is unable to think clearly, to be a careful mother. Her potential of a mother-to-be is reduced and overshadowed by the issues concerned with the greed. Except for her biological role which is carrying the baby in her bowels where the foetus "can barely crook a finger" (15), her maternal role is gone, is in fact missing. The "almost total absence of motherly feelings" in her (Muller 387), the frivolity in drinking, carelessness, the prominent selfishness "give evidence of a completely non-emphatic attitude" (387).

It is also interesting to notice that throughout the novel Trudy does also undergo a radical transformation as a woman in relation to Claude. From a woman on whom the latter skilfully takes advantage, regarding her wealth and herself as a sexual object, Trudy changes into a person who awakens and develops into the one who is able to think independently and soberly, as if emerging from the alcoholic delusion. That change is observed by Alicia Muro who discusses the role of Trudy, as well as gender and ethics, in her essay "Ian McEwan's *Nutshell* As a Contemporary *Hamlet*: Gender and the Hero". She argues the following:

Although Trudy is the Gertrude-like character in *Nutshell*, she plays a different role from that of the Shakespearean Queen. At the beginning of the novel, her resemblance to Gertrude is made evident in the submissive part the latter seems to play in the story […]. In fact, it is Claude that seems to be in charge of the bloody operation, with Trudy merely playing a supportive role. Trudy is described as Claude's "own darling mouse" (McEwan 121), suggesting that her position with regard to Claude is that of a pet, with the sense of ownership that that implies. Nonetheless, Trudy refuses to be merely following her lover's orders and decides to turn the tables: "His mouse! What humiliation. In the palm of his hand. Pet. Powerless. Fearful. Contemptible. Disposable. Oh to be his mouse! […] Is she a woman or a mouse? (McEwan 122) This observation marks the ending of the chapter and the beginning of a new Trudy, who realizes the fault she has committed and the villain she has taken between the sheets. (Muro 105)

That important moment of transformation may be read as a symbol of ceasing with a subordinate, submissive female who was manoeuvred into the intrigue of irreversible consequences. That change does also signify that the female protagonist who is known from Shakespeare is being pushed into becoming someone new, a person who is stronger, who is no longer a passive figure deprived of her will, but who at least attempts to be the one who is able to take action individually, without being constraint by the relationship with men. That seems to be the direction into which McEwan is trying to direct his protagonist –Trudy, as Muro argues, "is willing now to take action, to take the reins of her own life and turn against Claude, even if absolving herself implies condemning him" (Muro 105). The unborn narrator comments: "What a distance she's travelled, treating him like a child, when just now she was his pet" (McEwan 133). That particular moment of awakening does clearly signals departing from the interpretation of Shakespearean protagonists as merely passive assistants to men. As Muro rightly points out: "To adapt the original play to contemporary audience, the female characters are also in need of a reevaluation. Even if the female characters in the Shakespearean play do not perform an insignificant role, their subordination steals much of their presence. The figure of woman in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, has evolved significantly […]" (Muro 100). Decisively, McEwan offers such a re-evaluated female character in the person of Trudy, who, although her code of ethics is broken, is capable of taking the decision to change, to alter the situation in which she finds herself by "turning the tables" radically. And

even if Trudy's awakening may not be read as spectacular, it leaves the reader with hope that her behaviour is going to change fundamentally. How is she going to act after the child is born, is left open by the author. The novel ends at the moment of birth, and the scenario is left undefined. Also, it is worth noticing that – in Muro's view – Trudy is a powerful female figure whom the author places in "the centre of the stage", even if she is only overheard by the foetus. That visible alteration – presenting modern embodiment of Gertrude as a strong one – is a necessary operation as both female figures that occur in the play – Gertrude and Ophelia – "are no longer relatable for audiences of the twenty-first century" (Muro 99)

Although the narrator is aware of Trudy' mischievous plotting, they two coexist in an inescapable intimacy, they share "their interconnectedness" (Müller 379), their inseparability. The foetus co-experiences all the actions Trudy undertakes giving a proof for "the interdependence between body and emotions (Müller 379). An example of the intense sensory-motor processes that link mother and child is the description of Trudy's anger which has an immediate physiological effect on the baby: "I know it [her anger] in her altered blood as it washes through me, in the granular discomfort where cells are bothered and compressed, the platelets cracked and chipped. My heart is struggling with my mother's angry blood" (McEwan 77). Another example of that interconnectedness is Trudy's consumption of alcohol which never occurs without the involvement of the baby. It is interesting to notice that, as Müller points out, "to characterize the community of mother and child in this respect, McEwan frequently uses the plural pronoun *we*" (381). The baby says: "We're getting drunk" (McEwan 35). The little narrator seems to be aware of the negative effects of drinking in pregnancy by saying: "wine will lower my intelligence" (McEwan 7), but just a moment later is also able to ironize on the fact, perceiving the alcoholic inflows as stimulating the creative process of writing poetry: "My thought unspool in well-sprung pentameters, end-stopped and run-on lines in pleasing variations" (McEwan 7). Apart from drinking and eating which are examples of a natural physiological connection of the mother and the child, McEwan also links them tightly on the emotional level, which results in the baby's physical actions. "In one of the many sex-and-crime scenes, when having sex and planning murder coincide, the baby is not only affected by the lust of the lovers, but also has to bear the shock that after the murder the criminals will give the baby – him – away […]" (379). Overhearing such a horrifying declaration, threatening to his survival the baby is certain to experience stress, of which he is aware: "I am an organ in her body, not separate from her thoughts. I'm party to what she's about to do" (McEwan 42). As the unity between the mother and the baby is a biologically-determined, natural

phenomenon, it is of an exceptional quality when used as a literary device. In Müller's cognition, this particular observation used as a literary device is entirely innovatory: " such a fictional description of body processes, initiated by emotions, is absolutely new in literature" (Müller 379)

5.5.5. Intertextuality

The innovative, surprising narration of McEwan's novel is analysed in detail by Wolfgang G. Müller in "The body within the body: Ian McEwan's creation of a new world in *Nutshell*" published in *The Frontiers of Narrative Studies* in 2018. Müller argues that McEwan's "choice of an unborn child as narrator and the consistent perspective from within the body of a heavily pregnant woman result in the disclosure and exploration of an entirely new world" (Müller 374). Apart from addressing the specific narrational location Müller is also aware of the intertextual dimension of the novel. He admits that although Shakespeare is present in the story form the beginning, *Nutshell*, in his opinion, should not be perceived as an interpretation of *Hamlet*, because of some considerable changes that make it different from the anterior text.

The first aspect that distinguishes *Nutshell* from *Hamlet* is the time pattern. As Müller observes, the sequence of events is shifted back to the time when the protagonist is still a foetus. Secondly, the two lovers plotting the crime are, in fact, "flat characters" (Müller 376). For example, Claude's highly colloquial, silly speech "lacks the rhetorical expertise of his predecessor" (376). Adam Mars-Jones, rather critical about McEwan's novel, observes that Claude "spouts clichés every time he opens his mouth" (Mars-Jones par. 12). Claude's partner Trudy, a version of Gertrude, is slightly flattened too, as in *Nutshell* she appears as a rather one-dimensional, sex-obsessed woman, lacking "the ambiguity of Shakespeare's Gertrude, who is never clearly accused of having had an affair with her brother-in-law before the death of her first husband let alone suspected of having been an accomplice in murder" (376). Apart from the lack of ambiguity, Trudy – as Müller observes – is also a much weaker mother than Gertrude. According to Müller, Shakespeare leaves no doubt as to the fact that the queen loves her son, but in the retelling the mother "hardly ever applies terms of endearment to her baby, let alone makes provisions for the birth" (376). If one takes all these observations into account, the rewritten parents come off rather "poorly", Mars-Jones claims. Yet, the many quotations

and allusions to *Hamlet*, such as for example the quoted epigraph "bounded in a nutshell", deserve more extensive commentary.

The metaphor of a nutshell – as Müller argues – is particularly well adaptable to the point of view of an embryo. As was noted in the above paragraphs, the closed worldview of the foetus does not have to be interpreted as limiting but may add a comic effect to the narration. For example, Müller observes that Trudy, when kicked by the foetus in her belly, unconsciously pronounces the words from *Hamlet*: "'Oh, oh, little mole', my mother calls out in a sweet, maternal voice. 'He's waking up'" (McEwan 99). The comic effect of that particular situation arises from the fact that "Trudy does obviously not know *Hamlet*, but the allusion to Hamlet's calling his father's ghost moving under the stage 'old mole' decidedly creates comic incongruity" (Müller 377). A nutshell may also seem suitable as a metaphor for the hero's intellectual condition. His greatest concern is his troubled mind and anything that relates to his microcosmic world, his "nutshell-like" territory. As this sphere becomes endangered and the hero becomes upset by outer circumstances, his melancholic mood begins to resemble the philosophical scepticism of Shakespeare's Hamlet, whose intellectual puzzlement is also an analogy to a nutshell, a symbol of solitude and isolation. Hence, due to the metaphoric allusions and hints, *Nutshell*, in Müller's opinion, is "an intertextual game with a high entertainment value" (378). Not clearly a rewrite of *Hamlet*, the novel is rather a story based on "a subtext which is constantly present" (378).

Another important metatextual dimension of the novel is the consciousness of the author that is hidden behind the words of the protagonist. That consciousness is, according to Müller, "indicated in many allusions to and quotations from writers and works which the embryo simply cannot know" (383). Some examples may include explicit referring to James Joyce's *Ulysses* in chapter one (4), or to *The Waste Land* in chapter two (13). There are also plenty of the references to typically adult issues, such as for instance drinking in pregnancy, adultery, murder, or the prices of real-estate investments. The narrator can tell that the place they inhabit (the embryo together with the mother) is "situated on boastful Hamilton Terrace" (12) and is a place of an exceptional quality (also due to the fact that it was his father's childhood home). He also does know that this valuable house is exceptionally "filthy" (12), and that "only clichés serve it well: peeling, crumbling, dilapidated" (12). He reveals some knowledge of Latin, recalling the term psoriasis – a skin disease that troubles Claude (11). He manifests some expertise in French too, employing French phrases here and there: *coup de vérité* (13), *tableau vivant* (64). There are also those sentences and passages which are dense in metaphoric

expressions that are clearly "derived from McEwan's artistry", as Müller observes in "The Body Within the Body" (383). For example, the embryo says that he (or she) "hunches" over his (or her) "collection of facts and postulates [...] like a patient philatelist" (11), or that he (or she) "senses" in his (or her) mother's "slowing heart a retinal crust of boredom that blinds her to the pathos of the scene (12-13)" when she listens to John's recitation of the poems. The protagonist also demonstrates considerable knowledge of bodily processes, knows the anatomy of the uterus and can tell the position he (or she) is in, "upside down in a woman" with "arms patiently crossed" (1) – crumbled like a nut in its shell. Müller conclude that "it is one of the remarkable qualities of McEwan's work that he enriches a text with an apparently bizarre narrator and an extremely uncommon narrative situation with ethical and philosophical substance" (Müller 390). On the other hand, however, the author argues that the wide erudition of the narrator does not have to be understood as a voice of the author. The perspicacity of the embryo might be read in another way. To Yili Tang, for example, "The well-spoken and highbrow foetus has also gained the verbal acuity and cleverness thanks to his father's habit of reciting poems" (4). In fact, his deep tolerance for Trudy's behaviour "mirrors John's kindness and generosity" towards her (4).

According to Müller, the sole fact that the narrating voice is handed to the unusual protagonist, incapable of speaking, does not have to signify that the narration is told by the author. In truth, "it is a well-known fact that an author has the power and legitimacy to create a novel as a fiction and that the narrator chosen by him is part of the fiction and therefore cannot be equated with the author"(381-382). Moreover, Müller observes that McEwan tries to justify the erudition of his "embryonic protagonist" (382). He argues that "sensory system like touch, movement, smell, taste and hearing [...] develop during the baby's stay in the uterus and have an effect on the brain's development" (382). Therefore, as he believes, McEwan "explicitly refers to all these senses in representing the world of the foetus" (382) putting the biggest emphasis on hearing. In fact, the embryo admits himself (or herself) that his (or her) placenta is "like branching radio antennae, finely attuned" (63). Hearing is therefore the leading sense, the detector of the world beyond, a dominant channel of communication, active throughout the whole novel. "The narrator's knowledge", Müller claims, "and his cognition derive mainly through his sense of hearing" (383), which perhaps let us suppose that the narrator is a self-sufficient learner, does not have to be supported by a default presence of an adult author who could be there to justify his knowledge. Conclusively, it may seem that the reader can individually decide whom he or she will see behind the words of the unrealistic narrator, yet

even Müller himself admits that there are many allusions which let us feel McEwan's presence in the book quite decisively. Nevertheless, his presence is "felt unseen" which, according to Müller is a sign of "superior craftsmanship for McEwan to merge all he says in the novel with the corporeality and the condition of existence of the unborn baby" (384). Another author, Yili Tang, points out that "creating disturbing yet intriguing character narrators" (2) is one of the distinguishing features of McEwan's writing. Undoubtedly, the author communicates with the audience very effectively, as Tang puts it, although being a character with a considerably "limited perspective" (2)

Whether the author speaks behind the back of his hero, or is distanced, the consciousness possessed by the foetus, the way he formulates his thoughts, is certainly "persuasive and much wiser than the audience expect" (Tang 4). In one of the longer soliloquies in which the foetus shares his thoughts provoked by a radio program, there may be sensed a truly "extensive insight" (Tang 4) into the world's problems and anxieties:

> I stay awake, I listen, I learn. Early this morning, less than an hour before dawn, there was heavier matter than usual. Through my mother's bones I encountered a bad dream in the guise of a formal lecture. The state of the world. An expert in international relations, a reasonable woman with a rich deep voice, advised me that the world was not well… In conclusion, she said, these disasters are the work of our twin natures. Clever and infantile. […] We'll always be troubled by how things are – that's how it stands with the difficult gift of consciousness. (McEwan 25, 27, 29)

In this soliloquy, the narrator thinks of the issues which trouble humanity, such as obesity, altered climate, "vanishing forests, creatures and polar ice" (McEwan 26). Arguably, as Tang points out, the passage "has an ironic air, given the bold statements of the unborn child, who has neither seen nor entered the world" (3). What is more, presenting such a pondering unborn hero, who worries about the problems, anxiously fingering his cord as it "serves for worry beads" (McEwan 27), "the implied author McEwan not only shows us how this erudite unborn child receives information and what his reaction is to the outside world, but also invites us to understand the foetus's complex existential anxiety" (Tang 5).In a sense, the narrator experiences here the Hamletian dilemma whether to be born into the word which is so fractured or to not be born at all.

5.5.6. Ever After – the gloomy reminiscences of Shakespearean Hamlet

At this point, there can be brought into discussion another novel which not only takes advantage on Hamlet as its detectable hypotext, but which is also, in a way, complementary to *Nutshell* taking into account the first person narrator who tells his story in the present time. That particular novel is *Ever After* by a British writer, Graham Swift. The story is told from a point of view of Bill Unwin who, similarly as the storyteller in *Nutshell*, can be characterized as being highly contemplative and observant, but in contrast to McEwan's hero, who is just about to be born, Bill is getting older and his awareness of death is becoming fuller and especially noticeable, it can be sensed throughout the whole novel. Bill experiences a considerable slowdown of his life development and is plunged into the self-analysis. When the reader meets him for the first time, Bill presents himself as a "traumatized and emotionally unstable character" (Ndiaye 38). From the beginning of the story he mourns over the recent deaths of his close ones and travels back to the past which he revisits with nostalgia. From the first chapter it is known to the reader that Bill had experienced a massive trauma. In the times before the narration, within one year and a half, he has lost his wife, Ruth, his mother, Sylvia, and his step-father Sam, after whom he inherited, unexpectedly, a large fortune. What is more, before his death, Sam revealed a devastating truth to Bill that the person whom he believed to be his biological father was not the one. Similarly as in *Hamlet*, the father is gone from the very beginning of the narration, but contrary to the source text, in *Ever After* he is not even identifiable, least to mention the fact he was no one but a nobleman. According to the relation of Sam, Bill's biological father was "an engine-driver that was killed during the Second World War" (Ndiaye 38).

Bill opens his story ruminating about the passing time and the passing of his own existence, lived in the world which he believes to be "falling apart "(Swift 4). His narration starts with an affirmation that the words he utters are in fact "the words of a dead man" (Swift 3), as he finds himself in a standstill place where all the privileges of youth, of being a rapidly successful man are – in his opinion – gone. The sour awareness of his ongoing transition to the next stage of life is augmented by the fact that he has lately attempted suicide. He – as he puts it --"attempted self-slaughter", not simply "looked the beast itself hard in the face " (5), but truly "wanted it to devour" him (5). The fresh reminiscences of escaping death reminds him of the fact that it resulted in a lucky survival, but certainly against his wish. Even the suicide was unsuccessful – "named Un-win and being a member of a family where failure is a characteristic

feature, he fails to put an end to his life and join his relatives in the beyond" (Ndiaye 38). However, being close to death, almost experiencing it, leaves permanent changes in his mindset, results in an irreversible evolution of the way he perceives himself and the world around. "I am not me", Bill says, "I simply feel as though I have become someone else". He expresses his feelings clearly: "I feel as though I have moved on, in some critical but indefinable way, from what I was before. I have left my former self, whatever that was, behind" (6).

As the narration develops, Bill acknowledges to experiencing a fierce identification with Hamlet, uncovering at the same time the first explicit reference to that key hypotext of the novel. The protagonist feels a strong attachment to the Shakespearean character and admits to having similar suicidal tendencies as he does. He is aware of living the life of a man with inclinations to self-destruction, and traces back the days when the fascination with the "pensive prince" (Swift 7) started. "[...] ever since my old English master, Tubby Baxter, made us read the play, I have imagined myself […] as Hamlet" (7). Bill recalls, admitting at the same time that his fixation with the drama led him to become a teacher of English literature in his adult life, which he considers to be a paradox. Yet, despite of having the resonance with Shakespearean play on the level of characters and the plot, *Ever After* is not a tragedy. It rather resembles a form of meditation over the past. According to Hannah Jacobmeyer who discusses the novel in her essay "Graham Swift, *Ever After*: a Study in Intertextuality", Bill's tendency to self-analysis, to that peculiar pensiveness is invited by the form in which the novel is written – the form of romance. Although there is not a word of mentioning the word "romance" in the title, Bill, as Jacobmeyer observes, creates his story in an obvious romantic style, as his narration is "marked" (par. 20) by the love for his wife, "a famous actress, [who] had been the centre of his life until her death" (par. 20). Jacobmeyer points out that the theme of love between man and woman is in fact stressed throughout the whole novel (par. 20). Furthermore, the romantic style is even signaled by the intensity of Bill's recollection of Ruth - "the novel closes with a description of Bill's and Ruth's first night together: a culmination of their love story which Bill begins to tell as far back as the seventh chapter" (par. 20). In addition, in Jacobmeyer's view, that romance is also very naturally connected to the concept of intertextuality, as it happens "*in between* (between the initial problem which motivates the quest, and the [happy] ending)"(par. 23). *Ever After* does belong to the intertextual pieces of literature as it meets *Hamlet*, and other texts as well, quite visibly, yet at the same time the novel offers a "riddle" (par.22) for the reader, as it is him or her who can finally recognize the hypotexts which are present in the text. The novel is therefore continually offering a certain

promise, an offer of a subtext which is there, but the ability to scope it lies at the site of the reader. Hence, as Jacobmeyer points out, both romance and intertextuality articulate the desire for a presence (a meaning, a treasure, a recognition, a missing person), while at the same time endlessly postponing such a presence" (par. 23). A kind of a journey, a quest for the meaning is also undertaken by Bill himself, who searches in the inside, who looks up for the new understanding of life which is in front of him and which does not match the model he had experienced in the past.

As from the reader's point of view, reading the *Ever After* might be regarded as "uncomfortable", because the narration is being told, as Isaga Ndiaye puts it, by "an unreliable narrator who uses imagination to give a form to his historical document, all in admitting that this very form bears the scars of subjective influence" (47). Moreover, Bill is "emotionally unstable" which "makes linear reading impossible" (47). Ndiaye also notices that the reader's expectation to linearity and logic cannot be fully satisfied as Bill very often brakes the linearity of his tale by inserting comments, thus signaling "the inseparability between narrative history and subjectivity" (46-47) which may be disturbing. However, apart from causing disruption or confusion, the novel does also deliver, as Ndiaye believes, "a reading bliss" (47). This may coincide with the pleasure of which Jacobmeyer writes, the pleasure which may be taken from untangling the riddles that are embedded in the intertextual text, to which *Ever After* belongs. For certain, the novel "imposes upon the reader patience and active participation" (Ndiaye 37) in order to follow the story, in order to be able to listen to it in spite of the pervasiveness of the narrator, who is "irritatingly in the forefront", as Ndiaye argues (37) and who also switches between "first-person and third-person narrative devices" that are both present in the novel (39).

Also, the language that Bill Unwin uses, the way he formulates sentences, how he comments on the past events may cause a disturbance in the reader's attention. This is because of the fact that "the narrator constantly draws attention to himself and to the act of narration by emphasizing how much he is surmising, guessing and inventing in the text"(Malcolm 138). One can therefore be not certain whether the occurrences from Bill's past did occur or not. The imaginative work he undertakes is even declared in the verbs he uses: "I imagine, I invent"(Swift 138). Moreover, peculiar is also the language, Bill's "lexis and syntax, quite simply, flauntingly self-advertising" (Malcolm 139). He "employs a variety of English that is remarkably sophisticated and knowing. The very beginning of the novel establishes a distinctive voice" (Malcolm 139). On the other hand, however, Unwin's sense of humor, his sense of irony, cannot go unnoticed too, as he sometimes, as Malcolm observes, changes a rather sophisticated

tone into a colloquial one, which again may be regarded as a little bit confusing. The examples of this stylistic change may be noticed in the following utterances: "they [...] wired me to the latest gadgets" when talking about the rescue, or: "their no longer galloping careers" (Swift 3) when talking about the people whose moment of the fastest self-development is already over. The examples show Bill's "witty sophistication" (Malcolm 140), which perhaps may link him to the Shakespearian antecedent with whom he identifies.

As far as the author's presence is concerned, it would be worth to mention the relationship of Swift with the novel. As in the case of *Nutshell* the narrator's extraordinary understanding of life matters may suggest the author's presence behind that narrator's voice, *Ever After* does not leave that room. The first person narrator is an adult man, possesses a thorough understanding of his own life, has experience in at least several life domains and is a well-off man, of which the reader learns just at the beginning of the novel. Nothing peculiar or extraordinary in the match – the age of Bill Unwin – "a plastic heir" as he calls himself (Swift 9) may suit the supposed age of the writer, even if the reader has no knowledge of the actual year of birth of the latter. The narrator seems to be self-sufficient, he is a creation of an individual man, a protagonist who does not need to be supported by the voice of the author, who could have been there to explain or justify Unwin's undertakings. There is therefore no hint that could point at supposing that the author speaks through the narrative voice, neither the story suggests a similar coincidence. What is more, even the bibliography of the author does not enrich the reader's knowledge – the biography of Graham Swift "does not particularly illuminate his work, nor does it seem to give rise to it in any straightforward way" (Malcolm 2). Perhaps, Swift's career may appear as too ideal, too successful that it could be matched with the career of Unwin, a troubled man of a suicidal inclinations. From Malcolm's overview of Swift's life path one can learn that he is a highly successful writer, a winner of acknowledged, respected prizes, and that he enjoys an objectively happy, decent life. Clearly, no connection could be seen between the two – the author and his hero, the embodiment of an emotionally destroyed prince.

Nevertheless, the reader is informed in a straightforward way that *Ever After* is inspired by *Hamlet*, the allusions to which "hardly stop in the course of the novel" (Malcolm 145). The influence of the classical pre-text is best seen in the characters who are visibly built upon the drama. As Jacobmeyer rightly observes, Bill Unwin is the one who is the most prominently influenced by *Hamlet*: "The protagonist of the novel shares several character traits with the

protagonist of the play. Both are reluctant to act and to speak openly about matters, the common topic of the protagonist's assassinated being just one example. […]" (Jacobmeyer 13). Moreover, Unwin is also a significant protagonist in terms of Swift's storytellers who, as David Leon Higdon puts it, is "a new type of narrator, the reluctant narrator, who is reliable in strict terms, indeed often quite learned and perceptive, but who has seen, experienced or caused something so traumatic that he must approach the telling of it through indirections, masks and substitutions" (Higdon 174). That particular observation very accurately suits Bill who eagerly dresses the masks of someone else, who even talks about himself as having "the pretension of a would-be actor" (Swift 7) and who, in fact, reckons the words he utters as being "nothing more than the ramblings of a prematurely aged one" (Swift 3) which suggests that he is indeed tired in that particular moment of his existence. Hamlet – the protagonist – is therefore such a mask, a substitution through which Bill can tell his story, as the text is his constant companion since the early school days. And although, as he points out, "fifty-two [...] is a little old to be playing Hamlet" (Swift 7), Bill unifies with the famous Shakespearean model persistently and effectively, to the stage where he put his "own death in the first place" (Swift 6).

Hamlet as a source text, apart from offering the character who is a parallel to Swift's narrator, has also another function, a structural one. In Jacobmeyer's view, its most important function is being "a general key or aid towards understanding the story" (par. 10). The skeleton of a source drama stabilizes the story by moving the narration forward as there is "little or no action in the novel: in fact, the only consistent action is that of remembrance. Remembering his life and his losses is for Bill a form of case history, of anamnesis, which will gradually lead to the healing of his wounds" (Jacobmeyer par. 18). What is more, "the intertextual references to the play promise the reader that there is a similar structure of beginning, middle and ending in this seemingly immobile, paralyzed story - paralyzed as is its teller" (par. 18).Nevertheless, the story, as Ndiaye argues, is nothing but linear, the structure is chaotic, to the point it can cause the reader's frustration, "because of the unexpected shifts in the narrative voice and the confusing discontinuity in the grouping of events" (47). Furthermore, Unwin often signals that the story he tells is a product of his imagination thus questioning "the veracity of his own narrative" (Malcolm 138) which may be misleading to the reader. Hence, as Jacobmeyer points out, the source text is a helpful tool, it has "the function of shaping the novel […] by evoking common features, such as the similarities between Bill and Hamlet […]. The shaping process takes place on every level of the novel" (par. 20). Similar observation is made by David Malcolm who argues that Hamlet as an intertextual layer of Ever After has various function.

Firstly, the classical drama is helpful in understanding Unwin's character – he is "withdrawn, literary, afraid of life" (Malcolm 146). Secondly, as Malcolm puts it, "Hamlet is closely relevant to the motifs of decay, chaos and death which play such an important role in the novel" (146) These characteristic well correspond to the gloominess that prevails throughout the novel. Finally, another function of Hamlet as an intertextual layer "is to foreground fictionality" (146) which may at the same time justify Unwin's tendency to inventing what he says, what he creates.

The similarly between Hamlet and Bill is also visible in a particular relationship the latter has with his mother. Jacobmeyer argues that "if Hamlet is usually interpreted along Oedipal lines, similar ideas about an incestuous relationship between Bill and his mother occur, particularly [...] when Bill's mother is said to be jealous of her daughter-in-law" (Jacobmeyer par. 10). However, as she believes, the figure of Hamlet is an unusually rich intertextual source for the construction of Swift's narrator and cannot be reduced to a single interpretation: "Hamlet is a brooding *and* an acting figure, he is melancholic *and* witty, suicidal *and* murderous, Oedipus *and* suitor of Ophelia" (Jacobmeyer par. 10). She also observes that Bill understood as an embodiment of Hamlet can be interpreted twofold. On one hand, as she asserts, he resembles his famous Shakespearean model very closely, especially when his melancholic style is concerned, but on the other hand, he is "a rather boring and unexciting figure" (par. 15). Her opinion is motivated by the following conclusions. Firstly, he never achieved particular success in anything (unlike his wife who used to be an actress, or his stepfather, who made a fortune in plastics or his mother, who was a singer). Quite on the contrary: Bill feels as if being at the verge of his collapse. However, as she rightly points out, the author places him in the privileged place of the first person narrator and protagonist, therefore, even if boring or unexciting, his story is his kingdom, its final construction depends entirely on him. In her judgement about the character, Jacobmeyer is assertive to the point that she even belittles Bill Unwin's potential to be a great hero explaining that he may be reckoned as an outstanding only through the source text - that is *Hamlet* - and that he is in fact "the weak figure" which, after all, "can be interpreted as a void filled with hypotexts, a blank onto which pre-texts are being projected."(par. 15)

The apparent "weakness" of Bill as a figure, that particular void of which Jacobmeyer writes, seems to be the characteristic of the hero which is typical for Swift as an author. Stef Crasp who conducted an interview with Swift published in the *Contemporary Literature* notices what follows:

With fellow novelists Pat Barker, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Caryl Phillips, though, Swift shares an evident and abiding preoccupation with issues of trauma, memory, and recovery. His protagonists—mostly first-person narrators—tend to be humble, unheroic, vulnerable elderly men who are forced by a crisis situation in their personal lives to face up to an often traumatic individual and collective past. They feel the slipping away of the foundations upon which they, and the society to which they belong, have built their existence, and by means of which they have sought to keep the trauma at bay. (637-638)

Thus, one may see that Unwin is built from the blocks which are characteristic for the hero experiencing trauma and a "situation of unsettlement and perplexity" of which Unwin seems to be aware from the beginning of the story he unfolds. On the other hand, the dominant presence of such a hero, the one who undergoes emotional struggle, might be seen as determining the overall gloomy mood of the story. In the book *Understanding Graham Swift*, David Malcolm notices that "*Ever After* has attracted some negative criticism, some of which has to do with Swift's choice of Unwin as a narrator and protagonist" (135). For example, Hilary Mantel observes that from the first words he utters Unwin's narration "falls away at once into the rambling and ridiculous" (par. 4). Apart of that, Swift's work is also evaluated by means of – as Crasp puts it – "conflicting appreciations. […] When it is criticized, the reasons why often contradict each other. For example, while some find your work overly intellectual, cerebral, schematic, not from the heart, others find it overly emotional, sentimental, even melodramatic." (659). It is therefore interesting to look at how the author responds to the judgements which label his novels pessimistic and gloomy. "I think my work is far from being all darkness" (660). Swift explains that besides of the evident tones of melancholy, which seem understandable when writing about passing of the time, of getting old or experiencing any kind of mental pain, his work is not deprived of humour. Bill Unwin's way of expressing himself is often witty, he can see the irony in his own experiences. Definitely, apart from humour, Swift's work can also be regarded as optimistic. „I believe, in any case, that whatever the subject matter, fiction is an inherently positive thing" (661) Swift claims. Writing is a form of creating, and the creative process – building a whole new literary world on an empty piece of paper – is in Swift's view always a positive experience. Writing – therefore creating – is "the business of bringing things to life" (661) which is by nature a constructive activity.

Above all, telling a story or creating novel is in Swift's understanding, always telling truth, and the truth of life is about a mixture of feelings, both positive or negative. He ponders: "doesn't any novel simply want to offer, whatever else it may be doing, the stuff, the flavor, the taste of life? Isn't it constantly reminding you of the feeling of being in this world, and urging you not to be complacent or indifferent about it?" Also, Swift believes that Unwin's pessimism of which critics write, is not simply sadness or lack of a vital energy. In his interpretation, the Hamletian pensive mood which characterizes his narrator is a natural consequence of the mature perspective that one acquires during lifetime, and it is a result of the ability to understand what is the real value of life. Swift says: "As you get older, the more precious things become, not less. It's as simple as that. The more of your life that you've lived, the less of your life that you have yet to live, the more you value the stuff that's there. If you're a writer, the more, perhaps, your work will want to reflect, before you go, what can be good about this often terrible world we live in" (661). Even with this sober judgement of the world, Swift – just like the literature he creates – does not stop to see the good. In spite of the fact that the world – in his understanding – is "terrible" (661), it can be at the same time "very good "(661). At the end of the conservation with Crasp, Swift shares a moment of appreciation: "It's very good that we're sitting here right now, able to talk like this." (661). The positive is therefore hidden in the text, even if the narration is only "the words of a dead man" (Swift 3).

5.5.7. A different point of view – *Ophelia* by Lisa Klein

Another rewriting of *Hamlet* which may be regarded as a complementary text in the discussion about the retellings of the famous play, especially when the female protagonists are concerned, is *Ophelia* from 2009 written by Lisa Klein. It seems to be complementary as the novel takes another point of view: it is now Ophelia who narrates the story, as if taking the reader into a journey that is navigated by her and by the circumstances in which she finds herself. In *Nutshell*, Ophelia is missing, but in Klein's story she takes the entire floor. The target group of the novel is young adults. Klein has constructed the story and the character in such a way that the reader may easily identify him/herself with her, even though the context remains Shakespearian and the action is set in Elsinore in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the many observations Ophelia has throughout the novel are definitely relevant to the present day; therefore the reader, especially a teenage one, may find the narrator truly relevant and credible. The book has also been made into a movie with Daisy Ridley as Ophelia, Naomi Watts as Gertrude, George McKay as Hamlet, and Clive Owen as Claudius.

As Adèle Geras observes in her review of the novel ("Return to Elsinore"), *Ophelia* may be called a "hypothetical" novel (Geras par.1). That is because of the questions Klein asks: What if Ophelia did not die in the stream, or what if she married Hamlet secretly and gave birth to his child? There are also other speculations: What if Ophelia could study in childhood and get an education – a privilege which girls were usually deprived of? Finally, what would she look like? Do the well-known representations of Ophelia floating in the brook surrounded by flowers reveal anything about that character? Or are they only supporting a popular stereotype showing her as a vulnerable, easily distressed girl, prone to mental breakdown?

Klein's Ophelia definitely challenges that image. Despite having a lot in common with the Shakespearian character, she is at the same time very different from her dramatic predecessor. The Shakespearean Ophelia is one of the two female protagonists in the play but, as Alice Muro rightly observes, she "seems to be a weaker character than the Queen and has even fewer lines than Hamlet's mother" (103). The heroine is also considerably deprived of agency – both on the level of acting and thinking: "Apart from being Prince Hamlet's romantic interest, Ophelia does not have any other role in the play. She is surrounded by men, namely her father Polonius and her brother Laertes, who feel the need to protect her and whom she follows blindly" (Muro 103). Moreover, the Shakespearean Ophelia is considered by Muro to be "a victim of this Renaissance society; she does not have thoughts of her own and is not free

to develop her actions or to marry whomever she likes" (Muro 103). After all, Ophelia is weak to such a point that she is even eliminated from the play's action through suicide. As opposed to her, Klein's heroine is a strong, well-educated character, brave enough to take actions and decisions. She does not die but survives through the many obstacles and gets a chance to live a better life after everything that she once had is lost. What is more, in Klein's creation, Ophelia no longer acts as a foil for Hamlet, no longer is an explanation for his melancholy and madness, but she is a manager of the narration, a person with a rich fantasy and influence on the action she undertakes.

Klein's Ophelia loses the passiveness of the Shakespearian character. She is busy with constant thinking about life, of what the future may bring, and what decisions she should take. A talent for deep psychological analysis is apparent in the narration which unfolds a lot of Ophelia's inner talk. In an interview with Barbara Bogaev published under the title "You Speak Like A Green Girl", Lisa Klein talks about writing the novel and admits that she intentionally created Ophelia equally bright and educated as Hamlet. Ophelia's education must be made plausible, so that the reader can imagine what the life of a girl could have looked like in the sixteenth century. Therefore, the narration begins with an already sixteen-years-old Ophelia who explains that in her childhood she could overhear what her older brother Laertes was studying, so that she became as quick and bright as him. Ophelia is characterized as an intelligent child, with hunger for knowledge. Very quickly, she overtakes Laertes in learning, for he is not particularly keen on studying. In this way Klein shows a girl who takes advantage of the privilege a boy has, which is to get education. The situation is a reverse of the one described by Woolf in the essay *A Room of One's Own.*

Klein's Ophelia is also portrayed as a witty, energetic child. At the age of eight she is able to do what she wants, and even knows how to swim. The author decided that her heroine will not drown. What is more, she enjoys swimming and often imagines herself being a fish. Generally, Ophelia's childhood is a time in which she has a chance to build her personality. The girl's main companion is Laertes, with whom she develops a strong bond. The close relationship of the siblings seems to form a sphere of comfort for both, as the family is incomplete. Ophelia says: "We were a family living without a heart, a mother, to unite us" (Klein 10). Throughout the novel, the heroine struggles to survive, being motherless, and in spite of having a father who has no particular skill for taking care of her. The father, in fact, has abandoned Ophelia at the Queen's court where she is made a royal attendant.

After the father's decision to make Ophelia the Queen's lady, the girl is introduced at court and immediately gains the acceptance of Gertrude. At first the girl is unwilling to stay there, and is not eager to leave Laertes and her father. In the text, which takes the form of Ophelia's diary, she confesses: "Though I felt no great love for my father, his companion was familiar to me" (Klein 25). She feels close to him even though he admits that he has "no idea how to raise a young lady" (25). Ophelia's words reveal not only her feelings, but they also tell a lot about her fate. Her childhood is suddenly disrupted, without anyone asking about her preferences. Similarly, as in Shakespeare, she finds herself in circumstances that are independent of her will. But contrary to her predecessor, who is an obedient daughter of Polonius, listening obediently to anything the men tell her to do, Klein's Ophelia is a girl of action. From the moment she stays at court, she exercises her assertiveness and begins to strive for her goals.

Living at the court gives Ophelia a lot of opportunities to grow. She can freely use the books which are available there to her. Klein deliberately uses this place in order to justify Ophelia's advanced knowledge in herbs. The girl's interest in plants is of a special importance for the story; the heroine will later use herbal mixtures to simulate her own death. Klein assumes that the royal court must have been quite a liberal place to be, so that the girl can have had access to any book she likes and in this way she acquires medical knowledge. What is more, there are also other women in the novel who pass the knowledge on to the girl. For example, the text recounts a meeting with Mechtild – a wise old woman and an experienced herbalist who lets Ophelia enter a more advanced world of herbal pharmacy. It is at Mechtild's home where the girl for the first time is exposed to some lethal mixtures. As Klein explains in an interview with Bogaev, a general understanding about herbs, flowers and their purposes was definitely widespread among women and Ophelia's "knowledge of herbs and flowers is an acceptable sort of knowledge for a young woman of her time to have" (Klein "You Speak"). Ophelia's interest in this field is therefore well-contextualized and matches the realities of the era.

When it comes to Ophelia's overall understanding of the world, Klein asserts that while serving the Queen she would have also been able to read French romances, which might have given her a taste of a different world. Being exposed to various sources of information, Klein's Ophelia becomes a character who is not so easily manipulated by external circumstances, but thanks to her critical thinking is "able to negotiate the constraints of her society" (Klein "You Speak"). In the interview with Bogaev, Klein admits that she strove to give young readers a

view of how a woman could have been able to get out of the box of expectations. Thus, Ophelia is assertive within given boundaries, but at the same time is not a figure meant to become "a proto-feminist teen icon" (Klein "You Speak").

By taking *Hamlet* and reworking it, Klein tries to re-work Ophelia's image of her as "floating in the pond with flowers all about her" (Klein "You Speak"). In truth, that image does not have to be adequate to the text of the play, and might even be misleading and, reducing the role to that of a mad and withdrawn girl. In Klein's opinion, Ophelia's drowning "has become a synecdoche for her whole existence" (Klein "You Speak"). Hence Klein's rewriting attempts to be a radical contradiction of that picture and adds to a discussion about Ophelia's representations in culture. In fact, Shakespeare leaves a wide space for reinterpreting Ophelia. Klein observes that her drowning is "imposed on our imaginations, but in the play we never see her drown. (Klein "You Speak"). Hence, the play invites one to reconstruct the character and offers Ophelia as a *carte blanche* which can be filled in with the imagination and creativity of a rewriter.

Apart from recreating the plot of Ophelia, Klein has also introduced to her story two motifs from *Romeo and Juliet* – a mock death and a secret marriage. Ophelia does not die but only simulates her death thanks to the herbal liquid she drinks. Hamlet and she marry secretly, but it is only Ophelia who survives. Perhaps all these reconstructions and enrichments to the plot result from Klein's feeling that the character of Ophelia was inadequately presented by Shakespeare who, in fact, was writing a revenge tragedy, not a romance like *Romeo and Juliet*. Nevertheless, herself, Klein admits that she introduced her augmentations to the play with no particular constraints. As she puts it, "Shakespeare took his sources and changed them and we can all do that. There's nothing sacrosanct about Shakespeare, and I think everybody should have the freedom to have a dialogue with Shakespeare in that way" (Klein "You Speak"). Hence, Klein's Ophelia brakes with the image of a girl who is naïve and emotionally and mentally frail. Instead, there is a girl who is intellectually equalled to Hamlet, and who tells the story from her own point of view. Considering Muro's claim, about reevaluating female characters form Shakespeare, Kleins heroine may be definitely regarded as a radical reconstruction of her classic model, as she is free to the point that could not have been imagined by a girl of the times of Shakespeare. In Muro's view, Shakespearean Ophelia was just a representation of "the stereotypical depiction of women in Elizabethan theatre as weak creatures" (103). Therefore, Ophelia who has "no one to tell her what to say or what to do, to

direct her movements and to control her life" was perhaps a well recognizable model of a woman unable to decide on her own, echoing the voices of the others.

6.   Conclusions

The variety of source texts and the plots that have already been used by the earlier authors continue to reappear in the contemporary literature in the forms of rewriting. The text which return especially often are literary classics. By means of rewriting old themes, contemporary rewriters engage in a dialogue with the preceding texts, which is an inevitable aspect of every act of artistic interpretation. Responding to the earlier works of literary art is possible due to the fact that literature has a repetitive nature and texts influence each other continuously. Similarly, the writers and rewriters cannot stay free from the influence of earlier texts. In other words, no writer lives in a vacuum, but rather is certain to tap into the network of intertextual corelations, and to relate to earlier writers consciously or unconsciously. Literature circulates and it continues that ongoing movement just through subsequent works of literary art. The recurring reappearance of Shakespeare's plays, adapted either to theatre, film or rewritten as novels, is a good example of how creators of literature respond to one another by means of their literary compositions. Presumably, they always intend to create an innovative concept, but in broader terms all rewriters reformulate to some extent notions that appear in their works as explicit or implicit hypotexts. Even by rebuilding entirely a source text or by re-contextualizing it, rewriting is always a kind of an answer to what had been written before; it is always a dialogue. Even Shakespeare himself used to take from his predecessors, which already classifies him as a rewriter and a translator of material that was available to him. Although "Shakespeare's prime precursor was Marlow, a poet very much smaller than his inheritor", as Harold Bloom reckons (*The Anxiety of Influence* 11), it cannot be denied that the playwright did respond to a certain set of sources, by means of which he created a remarkable collection of his own writing.

The purpose of the dissertation was therefore to focus on the chosen novels which included Shakespeare's works as a main source text. Contemporary rewriters of Shakespeare, definitely not free from the influence of his plays, find their own answers to them. They do not try to deny their existence as models for their new narrations, but by means of deconstruction and reevaluating of the plots and protagonists they rather create their original responses just by means of rewriting practices. Despite the tight bond with their predecessor, they do not cease being innovative, but rather try to reformulate the source texts so that they suit their own artistic purposes. At this point it is also worth to think of why contemporary writers are so interested in rewriting of Shakespeare's works. According to Özlem Özmen, "one view regarding the reason for the constant interest in Shakespeare's works is that he provided later generations

with a rich source of subject matter as his plays concern a variety of issues ranging from history to politics, from tragedy to comedy" (18). This statement is often coupled with the view that upholds Shakespeare as a unique writer. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare's reputation as one of the most popular writers persists, and perhaps all the writers who work with the playwright's work must be aware of that fame. However, rewriting the poet's plays, hundreds after the poet's death, is perhaps not a aim of challenging Shakespeare's superior statue, but rather a form of a discussion with him, an intertextual activity aiming at creative expression based on the material that has been rewritten multiple times and in multiple ways. Probably the biggest difficulty is not to stay away from the influence of Shakespeare, but rather to create independently from the influence of other rewriters who had rewritten the plays before. Nevertheless, Shakespeare leaves enough space for interpretation in his works to let contemporary rewriters find their own way to respond to them. There are numerous aspects and elements of the plays that still can be reconstructed and restated. For instance, one of the niches for modern authors is an imbalanced intensity between male and female protagonists, which becomes rebuilt in my selected modern retellings.

Rewriting canonised dramatic works as prose fiction does not only support the after-life of literary classics, but it also introduces new concepts and contexts into the earlier works of literature which are now interpreted and perceived in a new way. Lefevere and Bassnett perceived rewriting as stimulating practice which By re-contextualization, reconstruction and elaboration of the characters and by choosing the priority of certain aspects over other ones, the contemporary rewriters of Shakespeare's plays can offer innovative, surprising and original literary responses to the original stories. In the process of translation of a drama into a novel, the source story loses certain features that are characteristic to a performative play, but at the same time the story material becomes redefined and readjusted in tone and context to the perception of the contemporary readers. The creative process of rewriting is mostly determined by the subjective choices of a rewriter, but the overall shape of the newly rewritten text may be also partially dictated by the particular destination or a function of a rewriting. One of such functions is the facilitation of reading Shakespeare among inexperienced readers of dramatic texts. The specific, often troublesome, language of the original dramas may interfere with taking pleasure from exploring the story. A linear narrative in a form of a novel may appear more readily approachable than the original Shakespearian drama, which often demands some experience in reading similar pieces of writing. Encapsulated in the form of a novel, the drama

becomes a text that can be experienced individually, without any external means of performative expression, as the whole "staging" takes place only in the reader's imagination.

Facilitation may also result in supporting the habit of reading Shakespeare in subsequent generations of readers. Just like the mechanisms of evolution help organisms to adapt to changes in external circumstances, rewriting stimulates the survival of literary classics that otherwise might become forgotten or even undiscovered. A group which can especially benefit from facilitated rewritings of Shakespeare's plays is a young generation of readers. Young readers may become discouraged from reading a classic text by the large gap between contexts or archaic and complex sentence structure and vocabulary. Hence, their attention often tends to be caught either by some film adaptations or by theatre. Yet these means of expression do not always guarantee satisfaction and may fail to stimulate an interest in reading. Apart from this, watching a live performance may not always be available to many young persons. Rewriting is an alternative space where young readers can discover Shakespeare and digest his work in their individual fashion. They may approach a text either through silent reading of a re-contextualized story, or by an active participation in the events that take an interest in creative rewriting of literary classics. Rewriting may give them an opportunity to discover Shakespeare not as another prescribed author from the curriculum, but as an inspiring writer whose perception of the world is worth their attention. If rewriting takes an active form it can also stimulate self-expression which may be of considerable benefit in terms of learning, much more effective than a passive absorption of a readily prepared product offered by the media.

Another group which can draw benefits from rewriting Shakespeare are rewriters themselves, who can explore a stimulating creative ground for their literary expression. No definite or particular rules have ever been ascribed to re-rewriting Shakespeare; hence the possibilities of reinterpreting his works are many, as are the numbers of his dramas that might undergo that evolution. The feature characteristic to the poetic drama, such as for instance implied stage action, no longer has to be embedded in the space between lines but is developed by a narrator who can describe the settings or the context with his or her words. While reading an original Shakespeare play, the reader has continually to remember that the text is in fact a performative script, with dialogue written to be spoken by actors, who are also supported by a whole panoply of the theatrical means of expression that "translate" the script into a performance. On the other hand, when one reads a story, the imaginative work is different, as readers stage the drama in their minds, individually, and narration is there to "sketch" that story. In order to picture the events the reader must only follow the narrator's voice, which will

uncover the plot like a guide. Also, the process of silent reading a theatre play encapsulated into narrative structure may be compared to an individual semi-theatrical experience, which, although considerably different from live performance, may be, to some extent, comparable in bringing similar stimulation for thought and imagination.

While making literary classics accessible to the modern reader, the rewriter must also achieve an adequate balance between a newly created story and its source. In other words, facility of reading must not be the substantial criterion for rewriting and must not overwhelm the fundamental aspects of the play that is undergoing transcription. All the rewritings of Shakespeare's plays that were chosen for the study succeed in maintaining the original basis of the dramas, but, at the same time, they introduce an entirely new set of constructive elements. The ability to achieve that proper balance links the translator to a cook who – as Delia Chiaro and Linda Rossato write – follows similar strategies while preparing a dish. Both the creators search for an optimum taste and a way of delivering the dish; they balance ingredients so that the final result appears a complete unit. The translators of Shakespeare reconstruct the plot so that it becomes appealing to the reception of the contemporary reader, and perhaps more accessible than the original, as the obscure language has already been deciphered.

The continuous reappearance of Shakespeare's plays in the literary sphere is also proof that the process of interpreting the plays is ongoing. As some writers used to refer to the playwright, Shakespeare is the "Immortal Bard of England" (Oh 2019). Therefore, reworkings of his plays do not seem to cease. Shakespeare can be rediscovered in endless ways and styles as there is no ultimate way of perceiving his dramas. Özlem Özmen rightly observes that "Shakespeare's superiority is founded on such assumptions as his ability to create diverse characters. Considering the number and diversity of characters observed in his works, Shakespeare is often credited with the ability to properly represent the concept known as human nature" (20). For some of rewriters who are mentioned in my dissertation, that creative potential of the plays provided a powerful impulse to rewrite their personal stories, and to infuse them into the frame of an earlier text. Both Jeanette Winterson and Tracy Chevalier found in particular plays the traces of their own experiences. Both the authors could base their new narratives on old plots which not only tell universal stories of humans, but also offer characters who have deep, often troubled yet intriguing personalities. Perhaps the particular depth of the characters invented by Shakespeare is one of the most stimulating aspects of his plays. Be it Othello, Hamlet, Desdemona, or Lady Macbeth – all of the major as well as the minor characters are figures of different nuances and extremes which inspire and provoke. All the elements of

human nature are part of Shakespearian characters who, as Harold Bloom observes, "develop rather than unfold, and they develop, because they reconceive themselves" (xvii). Shakespeare's great achievement, in Bloom's opinion, is the individuation of his protagonists who are "utterly different yet self-consistent" (xvii), and therefore so comparable to ourselves.

The protagonists created by Shakespeare in many aspects perfectly articulate human nature, and to many of the recipients they appear familiar, almost real, even though they are only fictional characters. Nevertheless, apart from similarities, these characters present people who used to live in radically different circumstances than those familiar to a contemporary person living in modern Europe and North America. For instance, the position of women in Shakespeare's times was in no ways comparable to the comfort of living of at least those modern women who may enjoy the freedom of speech or who can afford living on a satisfactory material or social level. Hence, as Alice Muro rightly points out, "To adapt the original play to a contemporary audience, the female characters are also in need of a reevaluation" (100). The contemporary rewritings chosen for my study put a particular emphasis on female characters who are often underdeveloped and marginalized in the original Shakespearian dramas. That underdevelopment is also noticed by Muro who argues that "Even if the female characters in the Shakespearean play do not perform an insignificant role, their subordination steals much of their presence" (100). The unquestioned imbalance between male and female protagonists was however largely determined by the specific context in which Shakespeare wrote his plays. The Elizabethan era was managed by a patriarchal organization of life, which had an immense impact on female life. Being a woman was reduced to housekeeping and breeding, and no one questioned that order. When reading Shakespeare today, perhaps one might wonder whether the audiences of his time would have been offended by, for example, *The Taming of the Shrew*, as a contemporary reader or audience member may be? Perhaps, the answer is not particularly, as no other idea of womanhood was at hand in the given times. Hence, a knowledge of the characteristic context in which the plays were created establishes a necessary historical perspective by which one can measure one's own reaction to a text. In the majority of cases, the plays reflect very accurately the reality from which they stem. Every attempt to understand the structure of Elizabethan England's social hierarchy might be helpful in avoiding the perhaps misjudged conviction that Shakespeare was a "male chauvinist with little regard for the status of women", which is a common impression for less aware readers of Shakespeare, as Conley Greer argues in (135). In fact, many major, as well as minor Shakespearian female characters, refuse to obey the stereotypical roles available to a woman and strive to express their powers.

Through that personal battle, female characters evolve and "develop rather than unfold", as Bloom argues (xvii). In that regard, Shakespeare was an undoubtedly responsible playwright whose "understanding of women provided realistic, believable confrontations on the stage that the audience could comprehend" (Greer, 145).

Among the self-consistent, strong female characters who enjoy personal growth there is Kate from *The Taming of the Shrew*, whom Tyler reshapes into a captivating original personality. The original play, filled with old-fashioned or even controversial male dominance, may seem unbelievable to the modern reader; yet the modern retelling offers an updated picture of a woman. Tyler does not put stress on showing the imbalanced power relations between the sexes, but instead concentrates on Kate Battista, an interesting, rich character who undergoes transformation from an overworked, undervalued girl into a successful, fulfilled woman living a satisfactory life. Moreover, Tyler reworks the male-female relationship into a constructive bond. The author translates the apparently old-fashioned situation of an arranged marriage into a wholly modern context, proving that even a planned marriage may turn into a profitable union for both parties. The story of Kate and Pyotr narrated from a modern perspective can also offer a reflection of the conventions in which people interact with one another.

The juxtaposition of men and women is an intrinsic theme of many Shakespeare's plays, and can be a main axis of a contemporary narration. An example of a retelling grounded on that topic is *New Boy* by Tracy Chevalier, in which the particular tension between two pupils moves the action forward. The context in which the action is grounded, an American primary school, lets the author highlight troublesome cultural problems of the time – social inequality and prejudice against an African American student. The race-related hostile reception of a new boy is quite often demonstrated by the teachers in the text, who fear any form of otherness. Micro-aggression, one of the most fundamental issues of the story, is not only directed towards the titular new boy but also towards his friend Dee, a character equivalent to Desdemona in *Othello*, who enters into a relationship with the new boy at the school, thus risking her comfortable status as a popular school-girl who is admired by teachers and classmates.

The way in which the protagonists develop in Shakespeare is, according to Bloom, his greatest achievement and definitely one of the reasons his plays are continually rewritten in a wide variety of ways. That deep and wise picture of humanity is – in Bloom's opinion – the way to account for Shakespeare's eminence. It is not his language, which was mostly dictated by the external factors and fashions. It is the way in which he can portray an individual person. In the chapter titled "Shakespeare's Universalism" Bloom writes, that "he [Shakespeare] has

been universally judged to be a more adequate representer of the universe of fact than anyone else, before him or since. [...] We keep returning to Shakespeare because we need him; no one else gives us so much of the world most of us take to be fact" (16). In other words, Shakespeare is giving to the reader much more than just sequences of events. By means of his characters, he is giving us the catalyst of a self – a voice which we may use to express our minds, both by reading and by rewriting.

Be it in a form of a performance, an exhibition or finally a novel, any form of rewriting Shakespeare presents a response to or a discussion with the classic structure, themes, or ideology. All the texts chosen for my study demonstrate that Shakespeare can be interpreted in many ways, and that there is not a specific nor a preferable way in which his literary art should be read. As Marjorie Garber puts it, "Shakespeare is in a way always two playwrights, not one: the playwright of *his* time, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England, and the playwright of *our* time, whatever time that is. The playwright of *now*" (Garber 28). Thus, Shakespeare, as Jan Kott once said, is our contemporary (Kott xi), contemporary to all those who attempt to retell the stories he once told. He is also contemporary to the authors who put these stories into their novels. In my dissertation I tried to show that all the female characters represented in the retellings gain new dimensions in these re-workings, as in the majority of cases they have been expanded. Thanks to the practice of rewriting, or, interchangeably, the practice of adaptation, those female characters, who appear in Shakespeare in a male-dominant, patriarchal context, became more familiar to the contemporary reader, who can now find them closer to him/herself than their original equivalents. Another characteristic feature of all these retellings is that they are complete pieces of art and can be successfully read and understood without the need of referring to the source texts. This shows that Shakespeare's dramas are adaptable to such a point that they can become entirely relevant to a contemporary audience by means of restructuring or re-contextualization.

In conclusion, experimenting with Shakespeare does bring a new value attached to his works, but it does also reflect the values current for the rewriters who deal with them. Responding to the plays is not only a response to the themes or the story, but also to the characters who become "our contemporary" through adaptation and recontextualization. The texts that were brought to discussion in the following work are not the effects of simply copying the former texts, but they are rather, as Gerard Genette described it, transformations (7) of the texts which stand behind them, as sources. Thus, these transformations, therefore answers to

Shakespearean plays, became individual works of literary art, relevant to the current times. As for

> There's a lot of anxiety now about plagiarism, and who's taking from what, like there's some Platonic pure form out there where ideas come from. Whereas the whole thing is a college anyway, and a conflagration, and a reinvention, and always a cover-version. I mean, what else is life, if it's not a cover-version? I think the idea of just taking something that exists – which is itself a mishmash of things that already existed – and then putting that together in a new way. That seems to me to be much truer to the creative process, and to the human process, of what we inherit and what we invent. (Winterson "Jeanette Winterson")

Rewriting therefore is an ongoing process, where the ideas mix, circulate, repeat themselves and reappear in new context, with new meanings and in new forms. Shakespeare, which is being reworked by new generation of artists, also reappears in new dimensions, thus becoming the answer to the current problems and perspectives. Therefore, the literary abundance that he had left for the subsequent generations of artists and readers should not be considered as stable and unchanging entity, but as a resource that can be remodelled and utilized in a limitless variety of ways. Conclusively, rewritings of Shakespeare show that his works cannot be applicable at all times, and that they need to be reworked in line with changing socio-historical and cultural conditions. It is through practices of rewriting that his works could be made more resonant with the necessities of subsequent periods. Reworkings of Shakespeare which has been discussed in the dissertation illustrate that contemporising his works is necessary in order to appreciate the changing tastes, views, and peculiarities of various periods and reading communities. Thus, the practice of rewriting does not support the idea that the classic literature can be a statue, that it can sustain its original form like a fossil, but quite the reverse – it manifests that there is a need to produce alternative versions of the source texts that respond to all the issues that matter for the different historical periods.

Literary texts cannot be interpreted in the same manner in all periods due to the evident changes in the social, cultural, economic and political context. Characters, ideas and cultural background of Shakespeare's works are difficult to be understood in the present context without having knowledge about the literary and historical circumstances of the Elizabethan and the Jacobean period. The anxieties, desires and motivations of his characters are not interpreted in the same manner in the contemporary context because of the differences in the way in which

people live and act. Each epoch tries to recreate Shakespeare in line with its particular expressive needs, in line with the most perplexing problems in such a way that Shakespearean language can "speak" to the readers clearly, in a manner they may be able to detect their own experience in the classic motifs. Perhaps, the greatness of Shakespeare's literary creation lies also in its potential to "stretch" over the future generations, in the ability to cover the worries that could have not been known nor predicted by Shakespeare at all. Although it had been written just for the sake of the needs of the time, the human nature – which does, of course, change – is empowered by emotion, desires that Shakespeare explored in detail. Of course, the text must adjust to the changing times, as human experience changes, so does the language people speak and the contexts which are certainly incomparable taking into consideration the day of contemporary times and the day of the Elizabethan era. Marjorie Garber accurately points out in her book *Shakespeare After All* that "every age creates its own Shakespeare" (3) and it is certainly true. The plays which may be regarded as raw material adapt to the impulses of the rewriters, as every new rereading is another interpretation, a new reconstruction. That universality of problems, the timelessness of Shakespeare was also pinpointed by Garber who offered the following explanation:

> What is often described as timelessness of Shakespeare, the transcendent qualities for which his plays have been praised around the world and across the centuries, is perhaps better understood as an uncanny timeliness, a capacity to speak directly to circumstances the playwright could not have anticipated or foreseen. Like a portrait whose eyes seem to follow you around the room, engaging your glance from every angle, the plays and their characters seem always to be "modern", always to be "us." (Garber 3)

In other words, Shakespeare does continually engage our look, even if we try not to gaze, he is always there to catch our attention, waiting patiently to be uncovered once again, regardless whether it is a single writing initiative, or a bigger publishing project. However, no interpretation of Shakespeare's plays is regarded as a fossilized model and the contemporary rewriters, as well as the narration they construct, often challenge the source texts, as for example the imbalance between male and female protagonists, by putting the latter once in the centre of the stage.

This study has sought to show that contemporary literature can convert the classics so that – to quote Jan Kott – Shakespeare behaves "like a sponge" (64) which "immediately

absorbs all the problems of our time" (64). The plays of Shakespeare offer a vast scope of motifs – the metaphors which may carry all the ideas that the rewriters wish to transfer. The novels that have been discussed in the dissertation are examples of expressing the Shakespearean plots, characters in a new way, by looking at the same, old issues form different, new perspectives, often unprecedented, typical only for the rewriters that handle the particular dramas. Despite of criticism that is an inseparable aspect of reading and of receiving literature, all the rewritings of Shakespeare which were brought into discussion do prolong the living of Shakespearean works, regardless of how close or how far they follow the sources. As no definite way nor recipe has been ever offered or acknowledged how Shakespeare should be reread, the contemporary literature rereads the dramas in its particular style, sometimes reconstructing or renegotiate the ways in which these canonic plays, and especially the characters, have been perceived and interpreted. As Alice Muro rightly observes, "Literary heroes, no matter whether epic or tragic, have evolved side by side with mankind during the centuries, so much so that they have progressively lost their defining qualities" (99). In line with that thought, rewriting of Shakespeare's text must go together with the reevaluation of the heroines he created, as they are no longer the representatives of the contemporary audiences, as Muro concludes (99). Rewriting practices gives vast room for such reconstructions. Thanks to the new creative adaptations, the readers may realize that there is not a universal way in which Shakespeare should be read and understood, and that the way of interpretation can change, so that the dramas are still relevant to the twenty-first century audiences. Even the most famous plots might be adapted to the new narrative frames and, therefore, they gain a chance to resonate with many different worldviews.

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