



UNIVERSITE ABDOU MOUMOUNI

Laboratoire d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Territoires
Sahélo-Sahariens : Aménagement et Développement

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WOMEN AND POLITICAL POWER: AN ANALYSIS OF ELIZABETH'S KINGSHIP IN MARY STUART BY FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

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Abstract

This paper investigates women's relationship to political power. It aims at bringing into light the relationship of women to power. Elizabeth Tudor's kingship figures among the most known and the most referred to as example of female leadership mostly in a patriarchal society. For this matter, the study uses Schiller's play Mary Stuart to appreciate and examine Elizabeth's awareness of her political power and how she exercised this power. Because the play portrays a real historical figure, there is a balance between the real figure and the fictional character that Schiller portrays in his play. Since the study is carried on the field of female leadership and in a patriarchal society, deconstructive feminist ideology is going to be used. The relevance of using this two-fold theory in the analysis of this paper is two-pronged. Firstly, it helps cross-examine women's social condition in the midst of a patriarchal and pathological masculinity, and secondly it unmasks how the given patriarchal assumptions are oftentimes challenged by some female characters. At the end the analysis shows that Elizabeth's kingship challenges the patriarchal notion of women.

Key words: Elizabeth I; Kingship, Patriarchy, Political Power.

LA FEMME ET LE POUVOIR POLITIQUE : UNE APPRÉCIATION DU RÈGNE D'ELIZABETH I DANS MARY STUART PAR FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

RESUME

Le présent article examine le rapport de la femme et le pouvoir politique. Il vise à élucider la relation entre la femme et la politique. A cet effet, le règne d'Elizabeth I étant une référence célèbre du leadership féminin surtout dans les sociétés patriarcales, sera visité. Pour se faire, l'étude utilise comme source, la pièce théâtrale Mary Stuart écrite par Schiller afin d'examiner la connaissance et les capacités politique d'Elizabeth. Tout au long de cette analyse, référence sera donc faite de la réelle figure d'Elizabeth en raison du fait que la pièce décrit une réelle figure historique. De plus, vu que le travail est axé sur le leadership féminin surtout dans un milieu patriarcal, la théorie du féminisme déconstructeur sera utilisée. L'importance d'utiliser cette théorie bipartite est de deux aspects. Premièrement, il nous aide à examiner de plus près les conditions

sociales de la femme dans un milieu patriarcal et de pathologie masculine. Et secundo, il démontre que les stéréotypes sociaux liés à la femme en milieu patriarcal sont souvent défiés par certaines femmes. En définitive, il ressort que le règne d'Elizabeth défie les normes sociales féminines en milieu patriarcal.

MOTS CLES : Elizabeth I, Règne, Patriarche, Pouvoir Politique.

Introduction

The history of the sixteenth century England was marked by the rule of two women. The world was then dominated in its majority by societies that put accent on gender role. Gender role is the concept that attributes to each sex of the society a place in which it should stand. While men are giving the role of providers, masters and leaders, women are relegated to the role of mere fellowship, care takers and house wives. In this situation men are supposed to lead the world while women should be under the rule and care of the men. However, as Henry VIII was incapable to provide England with a healthy male heir, no choice was left to him to appoint his older daughters in the list of his successors though they followed their youngest brother Edward. Edward was a sick child and he was able to rule only for six years. After his reign, Jane, a cousin of the sister Tudors took the kingship before being overthrown after only nine days of reign. Mary took the reign and reigned for 5 years. At her death she appointed her sister Elizabeth Tudor as her successor. Elizabeth then ascended the throne in 1558 at the age of 25. In contrast to her preceding sister, she succeeded in making her reign famous.

Elizabeth in fact ascended the power at a time when the male patriarchs were skeptical about a woman's leadership as they did not have a good experience of female kingship with Mary. She however reassured her country people that she was Queen only to serve them and succeeded in gaining their confidence. In a society that was dominated by patriarchy and where women were believed to be weak and less intelligent than men, Elizabeth brought back religious peace, and social stability. It is for that matter that herself and her reign inspired many pens of her time and continue to serve as source for scholars and feminist alike. Among these writers was Friedrich Schiller who, in his *Mary Stuart*, portrays Elizabeth's kingship though it is only a part of it. Using a feminist-deconstructive ideology, this study analyses *Mary Stuart* and brings out how through her leadership, Elizabeth deconstructed gender stereotypes. Nonetheless, as the play depicts a historical figure, thus a real person, some of her historical facts and attitudes that are omitted in the text are used to decipher the character of the play.

1. Biography of Elizabeth I:

Elizabeth Tudor was the second child of Henry VIII by a second marriage. She was daughter of Anne Boleyn, a woman that her father married after his divorce with

Catherine of Aragon. When Anne was pregnant of Elizabeth, Henry hoped and was reassured by his physicians that he will have a baby boy as wished for so long. Unfortunately, at the birth of the child, he disappointedly discovered that it was but a girl. Before that, King Henry Tudor was married to Catherine of Aragon. Being in the incapacity to give him a baby boy, Henry decided to divorce with his first wife and marry Anne Elizabeth's mother. This decision engaged him in a religious battle which brought him to a social crisis. Knowing the effort that Henry engaged to marry Anne hoping to have this time a boy that could inherit the throne, it was certainly deceitful for him to discover that his efforts did not pay as much because he has had again a girl.

Elizabeth happened to be the disappointed dream of her father. After her birth, Henry was even insulted by the Catholics taking Elizabeth as a curse that God has sent to him as a result of his rebellion against the catholic faith. Elizabeth profited from a short time affection from her father before being declared a bastard and rejected by her father. As Bassnett notes it "Elizabeth, who had enjoyed barely two-and-a-half years of preferential treatment, was declared a bastard and relegated to the same status as Mary" (1988 p.19). This thereby resulted from the fact that Henry and Anne Boleyn's relationship grow insane and beyond any tolerance. Anne was accused of adultery and beheaded. Consequently, with the variance of her status, her financial situation also degraded, so she was not taken care carefully by the king, her father.

However, even though in her infancy Elizabeth suffered a critical financial situation, she did not meet the same situation in company. Indeed, she benefited from the company of highly intellectual men and women and very quickly her intellectual capacity developed vividly. Right from her early ages, she excelled in the art of speaking and writing. She spoke many European languages and was able to translate as can testify this statement from Bassnett (1988):

When she was eleven years old, she sent as a gift to Catherine Parr her own translation of a work by Maguerrite of Navarre, *the Glasse of the Synnefull Soule*, in a cover she had embroidered with blue and silver threads with clusters of purple flowers. The gift displayed three skills in one object-Elizabeth's ability to translate into elaborate literary English, her handwriting, and her needlework (p. 21).

All these skills are the result of a fully developed and well-trained mind as described by her tutor Roger Ascham reported by Bassnett:

The lady Elizabeth has accomplished her sixteenth year; and so much solidity of understanding, such courtesy united dignity, has never been observed at so early an age. She has the most ardent love of true and the best kind of literature. The constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness, and she is endued within a masculine power of application. No apprehension can

be quicker than hers, no memory more retentive. French and Italian she speaks like English; Latin with fluency, propriety and judgment, she also spoke Greek with me, frequently willingly, and moderately well. Nothing can be more elegant than her handwriting, whether in Greek or Roman character. (Mumby, as cited in Bassnett, 1988, p.23).

This description given by her tutor demonstrates many aspects of the young princess and even her time. It highlights that the argument that she was a very intelligent and skillful girl is beyond any dispute. She was a very well trained mind and like he mentioned it was out of the female expected qualities of her time. Her abilities challenged the normal qualities that were expected from women thus she singled out herself even among men. This proves that although “Elizabeth was certainly not educated in the manner of a romantic heroine” (Bassnett, 1988, p.21) and not in laws or political affairs like her well-equipped brother, her knowledge of all this human sciences and “the unfoldment of her mind”, as Wollstonecraft (1792) would say it, are the strongest asset that allowed her to have control over the mind and heart of her realm and her people at large. She used her skill of public speaking combined to her poetry all of them gathered in a manipulative tactic as a groundbreaking to the success of her rule. She nevertheless used these weapons throughout her life, first to make herself accepted by her people and second to restore and maintain peace and stability in her country.

2. A brief Synopsis of The Play Mary Stuart

Mary Stuart is a historical play that was written in 1800, some 300 years after Elizabeth's death. It portrays Elizabeth's dilemma on her Scottish sister's beheading. The play opens with *Mary Stuart* who is accused of plotting against the royal kingship, imprisoned for already many years. Mary worries about her fate and wonders of what is the sentence of the court about her case. Shortly after, she is told that she is judged guilty and should be beheaded. In complicity with Robert Dudley, Elizabeth's lord of Leicester, she plans to see Elizabeth. Elizabeth on her side though convinced of Mary's guilt hesitate on validating the court's decision by putting her signature on the death warrant. Meanwhile despite Elizabeth's lords' counselor's advices not to meet Mary, their shared suitor, Dudley, convinces her to pay a visit to Mary in her prison. Mary's purpose first has been to ask for England's queen's mercy for her life. However, when Elizabeth finally meets her, though their conversation starts with calm, Mary later on loses control of herself and tells her sister that she is a bastard and a usurper of the English throne. Both ladies get agitated and Elizabeth was forced to withdraw. Leicester accuses Mary of going mad and thinks of how to bury all the traces that link him to Mary.

Meanwhile, on the way getting back to the palace Elizabeth is attacked but escapes death. Informed of the news, the Stuart and her group gets and agitated and is hopeless for their lives. In the meantime, evidences are found of Dudley and Mary's relationship and Elizabeth decides to ban him from the court. But he succeeds in manipulating Elizabeth and her attendance with corrupted proofs of his innocence. Still in Elizabeth's palace, pressure is put on her to sign the death warrant of Mary but she resists despite the tentative of murder that she faced earlier. Feeling herself and her authority overwhelmed, she asks her advisers to leave her alone to herself and to the decision of God. While alone Elizabeth thinks of Mary's words and ends up signing the death warrant. She afterwards gives the paper to a guard but with ambiguous orders that end up confusing the guard. The counselor surprises the guard with the paper in the hand and takes it and rushes to Mary's execution. Elizabeth comes and asks the guard about the paper that she has given to him earlier. Confused, the guard tells the queen that the paper is with the chief counselor. Elizabeth grumbles at the guard when the counselor comes back and tells her that Mary is dead. She is devastated by the news and blames both of the men of not following her instructions. Caught by the rigidity and the blames of the queen instead of her gratefulness, he resigns his job at the palace and takes his leaves, the queen by the way asks to let in Leicester only to learn that he returns to his country.

3. Feminist Deconstructive Analysis of Schiller's Mary Stuart

Mary Stuart as the title indicates revolves around the trial that brought Elizabeth and Mary queen of Scotland face to face. The play therefore depicts only a portion of Elizabeth's kingship namely her relationship with Mary and the decision to make an end to her life. However, the play also portrays Elizabeth's relationship to power and how she managed it. Through her behavior, speeches and interaction with her realm, Schiller brings out a deconstructive character of Elizabeth.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Since the present study is centered on female leadership and intends to bring out the contradiction of male assumptions about women in analyzing Elizabeth's character, it borrows a feminist lens. Feminism is a social criticism that in its origins pleads for equal chances in the society for men and women. Early feminists deplored the fact that women are given less profits in the society as their male counterparts-right to education and power for example. Ann D. (2009) explains that feminists:

Analyze the male/female power structure that makes women the other (the inferior), and they reject it. They work to abolish limiting stereotypes of women. They seek to expose patriarchal premises and the prejudices they

create. Often, they challenge traditional, static ways of seeing gender and identity. (114)

So, feminists consider that “women have suffered in virtually all areas of life” (Minas, 1993, p.5) and work to correct this social injustice and better the situation of women. Their work is de facto carried out in many aspects of women’s life as their liberty, rights and will have been yoked not in only one area. There are some who tackle the notion of natural physical and intellectual incapacity of women. Other would discuss their power relationship while some would be interested in the moral aspects of women. All the same, they are concerned about women’s situation and advocate for a change in the latter.

On the other hand, deconstruction that is best “known as poststructuralism” (Ann, 2009, p.150), is a method that bases itself mostly in finding out the unseen or the unsaid about a given text or cultural aspect. It shows that beyond the generally or taken-to-granted aspect of a text or a culture, there are things to be discovered and discussed that have certainly eloped from the writer’s vigilance and the decider’s consciousness. Ann (2009) explains the theory in the following terms:

Deconstruction requires that we suspend notice of contradictions in our effort to maintain the conventionally accepted arrangement of absolutes. It resists such simplifications by reversing the opposition, thereby displacing meaning, overturning hierarchies, and offering another set of possibilities of meaning that arise from the new relations of difference (p.158).

It therefore means that deconstruction transcends the limits of the accepted principles and rules, challenges the traditionally beliefs and assumptions. This is certainly why Ann (2009) further notes that “whenever a group seeks to reverse traditional hierarchies or destabilize privileged binaries, deconstruction becomes a valuable tool” (p. 158). Obviously then, “in literary criticism, deconstructive strategies are often imported into other critical approaches such as feminism” (158). In this context, feminism and deconstruction overlap in their way of analyzing and interpreting texts and culture. Consequently, joined together and forming one literary method of analysis, though ideologically their relationship is expected to be [and even is] complex, “the alliance between [the two] in literature has precisely to do with this need to speak the unspeakable, to give voice to the imaginary” (Cornell, 1999, p.110).

The present analysis is therefore a feminist-deconstructionist based study that aims at deconstructing the stereotype around women’s physical, psychological and moral incapability to lead basing itself on Elizabeth’s character in *Mary Stuart* by Schiller. It

has tentatively sought to explore and expose women's abilities to stand by themselves and even lead men.

3.2. Analysis of Elizabeth, Queen of England as Portrayed by Schiller

In the analysis that follows, Mary Stuart is analyzed in light and perspective to bring out the historical and real figure of Elizabeth. Consequently then, history is consulted to bring in the analysis some missing aspect of *Mary Stuart*. In *Mary Stuart*, though Elizabeth is not the title name, Schiller portrays her as the hero of the play. She is portrayed as a powerful lady, strong willed and tactful. Though her near environment does not show much love for her, they respect her for her strength and concern about her country. She first appears in act two where previously her marriage has been arranged with the earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley. We learn in a discussion between Kent and Davison that all the arrangement of her alliance are done. But if for her realm this marriage is a means to assure an heir to the throne, for Elizabeth it is but a mere contract to get England's long-timed enemy France as an ally now.

3.2.1: Elizabeth as a political leader: her relationship with her men subjects

As seen early, the historical figure of Elizabeth got to the throne in a time when England was facing multiple crisis: religious, financial and diplomatic, and she first and foremost had to settle these problems and for the purpose she used her state as an unmarried lady. In *Mary Stuart*, at the opening of scene two, this aspect is brought out and it is heard in a discussion between two lords of the English kingdom. Elizabeth uses her position as queen and unmarried lady to settle diplomatic problems and wars that her country faces. In act two, the news of her wedding engagement are brought by two of her lords as a joyful occasion. But later, Elizabeth is caught complaining about her situation of a queen, that she is forced to give the country what it expects of her. It is in at time that a messenger from Leicester comes and asks Elizabeth an oath of their engagement, soon then Elizabeth intentions are brought out. This conversation shows the audience that Elizabeth is not ready "to renounce [her] freedom for him" (II.1191) as thought by Bellievre. She rather sees the occasion a political one to be seized in order to quench the political tensions between France and England. In this sense, before giving the ring that represents her engagement to the lord of Leicester, Elizabeth makes it clear to Bellievre that her motivations are others; she says : Between/Two nations let suspicion disappear,/ And let a bond of confidence henceforward/ Entwine the crowns of England and of France (II.1221-1224). Through this condition, the English queen shows that her interest behind the marriage proposal is more in having peace in her country than getting gone her "freedom,[her] most treasured jewel" (II.1203) that her liberty as an unmarried woman and free from the bondage of male government.

The thread that exists between France and England is mostly their religious incompatibility therefore, their seemingly support of Mary. The queen uses her asset to win France in order to act freely with the Scottish queen. For Elizabeth this alliance is no more than a condition to have the support of French people in her diplomatic affairs opposing her to her royal sister Mary. Bassnett S. (1988) pronouncing herself on the issues between the triangular affairs of the countries explains that "one of the pressing needs of the new regime was to extricate England from conflicts on the continent and to minimize the danger of a Franco-Scottish alliance that would squeeze England between its pincers" (p.38). Though this quotation comments on the real historical figure, Schiller uses the passage more or less equally in his dramatized character. It is in fact worth quoting to show the diplomatic importance this alliance with France has/had for Elizabeth. Therefore, when her court lord shows his relief and happiness in this marriage proposal by saying "no! if a glimmer of its cheerful light/ Might fall upon a Princess in misfortune/ Whose destiny concerns both France and England/ Alike"(1228-1230); Elizabeth stops him and explains to him that everything is not over and that he overestimates the marriage proposal, she says " No further, count! Let us not mingle/ Two wholly incompatible affairs. / If France sincerely wishes my alliance, / Then it must also share my cares with me/ And not be friendly to my enemy" (1231-1237). She lets out her objective behind enterprising to become queen of France but at the same time these lines show her skepticism about France's faithfulness and remains alerted.

However, Aubespine shows himself more reassured by the French alliance and says "in your own eyes France would be acting basely / Unhappy Queen, her Co-religionist, / The widow of her King.- Humanity/ And honor both require"(II.1238-41) Elizabeth then concludes in mentioning " in that sense I/ Esteem her intercession at its due./ France will fulfill her duty as a friend;/ Grant me, however, to act as a Queen (II. 1242-45). This discussion between Elizabeth and her lord brings out two important things. The first one is that she knows well how to use situations in the favour of her country and that she exercises her political power to serve the latter. The second one is that she does not let the then accepted stronger sex corrupt her thoughts and political and diplomatic assumptions. Whenever the lord tells her something she either interrupts him or answers immediately saying her views on the subject. This of course is not accepted by patriarchal norms that see women as subordinate and voiceless. In this vein Corbett Lisa (2009) complains that:

During the Elizabethan era, the male ego was firmly rooted in patriarchy. Women were expected to be meek and subordinate; they were as much the man's property as they were personal belongings, and a woman had no legal independence and no rights to freely express herself (1).

The above lines note in the Elizabethan England, women did not have voice of their own and neither were their opinions, and desires checked on. They were alienated and considered as subordinate to men. But, Elizabeth is all but meek and subordinate.

She never lets herself manipulated by men, for if it is their right to advise her, she also knows that it is only her duty to take decisions. She does not hesitate to rebuke the French messenger from Leicester when he insists to have Elizabeth's consent "count Bellièvre, do not press me further. / The present moment, I repeat, is not/ The proper time to light the torch of Hymen (II.45-47). She even complains when it happens that her decisions as the leader and the political authority are not respected by her subjects, she utters, "They show me in this way that I am only/ A woman in their eyes, while I thought I/ Had ruled them like a man and like a king." (II.1169-1171). Elizabeth does not primarily consider herself as a woman with all the stereotypes that go with being a woman, she rather sees herself as a leader, the political authority to whom everyone must obey. Her claims are justified when the way she rules her realm is looked into.

She in fact stands ready to abandon her dreams, desires and aspirations for the well-being of the country just as a man, a king would do. It is in this sense that even when alluding to herself, she calls herself not the queen but monarch because just like men, she cares about the interests and demands of her countrymen not as a woman but as the leader. In act two she explains that she is ready to answer the desire of her realm even if it contradicts her own desires "monarchs are mere slaves of their, / They may not follow their own hearts bid."(II.1155-56), so equally her ordered must be followed by her subjects.

Moreover, though leading in a patriarchal country, surrounded by men patriarch, Elizabeth does not see herself or even women as the weak vessel or the weak sex. She does not see them as weak as men want to believe and does not fail to reprimand any preach about their weakness. Discussing issues related to the Scottish queen, Talbot, one of her court lords, pleading in Mary's favor says that "woman is a fragile creature" (II.1373) Elizabeth immediately reacts and says that "Woman is not weak. There are strong souls/ Among the sex.-I will not tolerate/ Talk of that sex's weakness in my presence."(1374-76) Whether she refers to herself, Mary or any other woman, Elizabeth publicly rejects men's notion of female weakness. This however is only an imagination of Schiller because the historical Elizabeth acknowledged publicly woman's weakness and their lesser position in the society and saw herself as a special woman among women. Martin Amandaye (1999) explains that Elizabeth saw herself as an exceptional woman chosen by God to settle England's problems this is mainly why she did not challenge the patriarchal stereotypes about women. Schiller then adds a touch on his own to bring in word what Elizabeth was in her behavior, a challenge to the social

believes. In a word, Elizabeth, as depicted by Schiller deconstructs social gender stereotypes imposed on women through her language, actions and interactions. Nevertheless, if the way she leads the kingdom is exempt from any woman fragility, Elizabeth's strong senses are altered when Mary's case is brought to court. Rather than objective, is subjective, her strengths and strong senses of discernment are cut short. But does this subjectivity and emotionality hinder her abilities to govern the kingdom?

3.2.2. Elizabeth as a sister: Mary's trial

Basnett Susan (1988) said:

The Elizabeth Mary story is most often presented in terms of a conflict between Queens, two powerful women engaged in a struggle for supremacy that lasted for over thirty years and finally ended in the destruction of one woman by the other (p.101)

In this quotation Basnett exposes how writers and critics appreciate and depict the historical relationship between the two female leaders. They often depict it as a conflictual one and from which the one should win over the other. Schiller follows the trend of these writers and critics and depicts the hostile relationship that they shared. Nevertheless, reading in between the line Elizabeth's general behaviour with others of the realm compared to her behavior towards Mary, it comes out that more than hatred and conflicts, Elizabeth considers Mary as her sister. Her inner behavior and her ability to handle complex issues are thus brought out through this relationship. More than extinguishing a given war abroad, more than manipulating feelings to get their sympathy, more than accepting publicly a suitor to calm down the subjects' anxiety, Mary's case brings into clash Elizabeth's sensibility as a woman and her duty as a leader. In *Mary Stuart*, following to the throne issue, Schiller depicts Elizabeth's feelings of jealousy in regards to Mary. For instance, when Leicester convinces her to go to meet Mary as she requires, Elizabeth busies herself instead in flashing on what they share in common and what they do not. The first aspect is in respect of their leadership manners. The second and more important is her physical characteristics, she asks Leicester interestedly, "and is it true that she is so beautiful?" (II.95). instead of taking the case as a state affair, Elizabeth sees it as a problem between two "dear sisters" so is not willing to tackle it as objectively as the other state problems. When she is reassured that Mary is less beautiful than her, she further worries "in years, however, she is younger" (II.2012). Her worries are in fact in measuring the qualities or virtues that they share in common more than saving her throne and the English people.

This however, appears to be a manipulation from Elizabeth to delay the death sentence of her homologue. In fact though she is aware of the thread Mary represents to her, is worried more about psychological repercussions that doing away with a sister will

have on her. She in fact is reluctant because of the strong feeling for her cousin, for instance she lets Leicester know that she cannot bear seeing Mary in the pitiful situation that the conditions of her prison are, she says: “to see my relative in shame and want/ Would not be seemly for me. I have heard/ That her establishment is not quite royal; / The sight of her in want would be reproachful.”(II.2054-2057). In these lines, lay her concerns, Mary is a relative to her, she cares about her and does not want to harm her at a point where she is ready to “disregard/ [her] Queenship”(III.2280-81). In order to meet the desires and requests from her cousin Elizabeth has first to forget about her kingship a while and be a sister like she points it “I disregard/ My Queenship, my outraged Queenship, / So I may do my duty as a sister” (2280-2282) and is ready to undergo whatever the consequences. Having seen the feelings and regards that Elizabeth carries for Mary, the legitimate question to ask is how Elizabeth would deal with Mary’s case.

In general, Mary’s problem figures among Elizabeth’s leading plagues because she mingles between sisterhoods and kingship. After her meeting with Mary, she is frustrated by Mary and unfortunately for Mary, Elizabeth is attacked by a pope and the English people put pressure on Elizabeth to sign the death warrant of Mary. Elizabeth looks for advice but rejects it and says to the advisers “let me be left now to myself. With human beings/ Is neither peace nor counsel in this matter./ I shall refer it to a higher Judge./ As He instructs me, I shall do.”(IV.3185-3188) these lines de facto bring out the queen’s cobwebbed situation being caught between her people and her will. She nevertheless refers to the higher judge as she says whether it is herself or god, and despite her love for her, she ends up signing the paper. This signature is nonetheless done in a moment of weakness and pressure and Elizabeth does not fail in criticizing her situation and she in fact sees that she is not respected as much as her position requires or as she might want to.

Therefore, she expresses her distress in the following words: o slavery of the people’s service! Bondage/ OF shame. –How tired I am of flattering/ This idol that my inmost heart despises! / O, when am I to stand free on this throne! / I must respect opinion, court the mob’s / Approval, satisfy a populace/ Who can be pleased with charlatans alone” (3189-95). In general, this reluctance, fury and distress from Elizabeth show her desire not to behead Mary and “resisted all calls to have Mary executed” (Bassnett, 1988, p. 112). She however ends up fulfilling the needs of her people as Burleigh tells her “the people’s welfare is your highest duty” (IV.2-3181) and she is aware that her duties as a Queen prevail on her duties as a sister. In a word, this trial between Mary, Elizabeth and her population brings out that, Elizabeth has not lost her sense of femininity in governing the country by possessing a heart and prioritizing feeling over duty. Moreover, it also shows that despite her feminine traits, she has been able to lead

the country not as a man but as a leader who “needed to give happiness” (IV.2.3162) because despite her female weakness she has “found greatness in [herself]” (IV.23158). She uses this greatness that being a woman gives her to successfully rule her kingdom for abandoning her female characters would be a loss of her personality and identity. Mina Loy (1914) rightly states that

The man who lives a life in which his activities conform to a social code which is a protectorate of feminine element-is no longer masculine. The women who adapt themselves to a theoretical valuation of their sex as a relative impersonality, are not yet feminine (p.34).

This notes that any sex that is trying to go beyond the natural expected dimension of its gender [if any] is losing its identity and at the same time will never be in the stance of the other. Wearing female cloths does not render a man a woman. So neither of the sexes should look to the other to define itself, rather, each should assert itself by celebrating its individuality and uniqueness. In Elizabeth’s case, detaining the political power and exercising it does not mean that she should change her female aspects and borrow some male’s, rather Elizabeth’s character suggests a reevaluation of the cultural assumptions about gender in the society. Perhaps what has been long believed on the female gender agenda is taken too seriously and perhaps they overlap without obstructing each other. In this vein, Ann (2009) in explaining Derrida’s view of deconstruction highlights that:

Poststructuralism test binary oppositions and beliefs about what should be (and is) privileged, to question where they overlap and on what occasion they share their existence. The poststructuralists, including those who read from a deconstructive perspective, point out that oppositions are sometimes not so contrasting as they are thought to be (158).

Elizabeth exemplifies this standpoint because “though she could be loyal to friends and capable of deep feelings, she could also be spiteful and vindictive” (Bassnett, 1988, p.10). She, indeed, does not lose tract of her feminine character yet is successful in leading her realm. The character of Elizabeth pushes one to ask if the basics of socially constructed gender roles are solid and reliable or if Elizabeth is not more than a special woman among women.

Conclusion

Basing itself on a feminist deconstructing analysis, the study has explored Elizabeth and her reign as depicted in Schiller’s *Mary Stuart*. It brings out that, Elizabeth singles herself out of women as seen by her contemporaries because of her intelligence and political knowledge. Also it has shown that leading the country has not changed

Elizabeth's traits as a woman i.e having strong feelings and prioritizing emotions over political affairs just as brought out by Mary's case. It is therefore worthy to ask ourselves this question: is rationality always the only adequate approach to handle political and social affairs? In other words, is it not time to find the right middling between rationality and emotionality to better carry out our daily life?

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