METAPHORS OF SPATIALITY AND DISCOURSE OF FEMININITY IN SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRY V*

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Abstract: *Drawing on cognitive metaphor theory and on an approach to spatiality in terms of experiential engagement with the environment, this paper aims to show that* Henry V *presents a pragmatic, matter-of-fact and efficacious view of power based on the voice. The king’s metaphorical discourse constructs a gendered, male-oriented conception of territory as female body to be conquered and of woman as space to be regulated. Control and submission are ensured by the strategies of containment the king needs to deploy in order to avoid subversion, be it among his own troops or with Katherine, the deceptively compliant French princess.* Henry V *teaches about early modern English history and invites the audience to engage with their own, contemporary reality. Above all, it shows that all forms of conceptualizations take place in terms of metaphorical language.*

Keywords: *Shakespeare, cognitive metaphor theory, power, femininity, body*

It is not very common to think of *Henry V*, the conclusion to Shakespeare’s second tetralogy, as a very poetic text, especially in comparison with *Richard II*, which opens the series. Yet the play is replete with metaphorical language, often in connection with references to space, as instanced by the Prologue describing the stage as “an unworthy scaffold” and “a wooden O” little fit to show the war between “two mighty monarchies” (Prologue, 10, 12, 20). The stage is a tiny space that needs to be enlarged into the streets of London, the walls of Harfleur or the battlefield of Agincourt, all types of locations coming to life in the spectator’s mental space. And the way for the spectator to widen the stage is to digest the Chorus’s metaphorical discourse.

There are many different discourses in *Henry V*: the Chorus’s eloquent presentation of Henry, the polished English used by the King, the linguistic idiosyncrasies of Welsh, Irish and Scots speakers, the broken English spoken by Katherine, the French princess, and the unstable syntax and grossly sexual discourse of the Eastcheap figures, all contribute to the creation of a heteroglossia that mirrors the fundamental disunity of the kingdom.

Henry V is clearly a topic fit for a conference on “Metaphor, Spatiality, Discourse”. But prior to any analysis of the way the three concepts interact in *Henry V* and what metaphors of spatiality and the discourse of

femininity reveal, it is important to clarify the sense of the three notions under consideration, and I wish to open this paper with some guiding presuppositions.

My understanding of metaphor draws upon Aristotle's views in the *Rhetoric*. Rejecting the common notion that metaphor is essentially ornamental, Aristotle conceives of metaphor as a cognitive instrument: "metaphor in its highest degree is instructive" (Aristotle 1401b14), and to make metaphor "is to perceive resemblances even in things that are far apart" (Aristotle 1412a11). Aristotle considers metaphor as a figure "showing things in a state of activity" (Aristotle 1411a), and in Umberto Eco's words, he postulates that what shows through metaphor is "the dynamics of the real" (Eco 102). Metaphor is anything but a decorative element peppering discourse to generate pleasure, it is a means of perceiving and describing the real. Cognitive metaphor theory owes a lot to Aristotle, although this has seldom been recognized, and I understand metaphor in the wake of Lakoff and Johnson,[1] among others, and of Monika Fludernik. In her recent book on *Metaphors of Confinement,* Fludernik posits that there should be no distinction between metaphor proper and simile, metonymy, or synecdoche, all figures of speech that are variants of metaphor and are used by speakers as ways of understanding large parts of their environment (Fludernik 43). Metaphor is a way of thinking and a means of transcribing space.

Spatiality should be defined not in terms of an isolated or bounded entity but as a construct. Drawing upon Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory and Monica Matei-Chesnoiu's approach to space and geography,[2] I consider spatiality as experiential, which means that participants engage with their environments and attach particular symbolic meanings to them. *Henry V* presents cultural and gendered geographies and shows that it is virtually impossible to reconcile or harmonize diverging perceptions of spaces.

Finally, discourse can be construed as a representation expressing a particular conceptualization of reality. In Foucaldian parlance, discourse is a way of organizing knowledge that structures the constitution of social relations.[3]

So metaphor, spatiality and discourse are connected tools reflecting experiences, conceptualizations, and categorizations of the environment. This paper aims to show that the interconnectedness of the three concepts in *Henry V* delineates conflicting experiences of, and engagements with, reality.

[1] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980).
[2] See for instance Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1991) and Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, *Re-imagining Western European Geography in English Renaissance Drama: Early Modern Literature in History* (2012).
[3] See Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, in particular Part III, "The Statement and the Archive").

Power and the voice

The play as a whole shows that the king’s power lies in the voice, or more precisely in voicing, that is the capacity to use the voice. In the opening scene, the Archbishop of Canterbury’s description of Henry’s quasi-miraculous metamorphosis form a wild, unruly, boisterous youth into a mighty, competent leader, insists on the king’s gifted command of discourse:

> Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
> You would say it hath been all in all his study.
> List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
> A fearful battle rendered you in music.
> […] when he speaks
> The air, a chartered libertine, is still,
> And the mute wonder lurketh in men’s ears.[4] (1.1.41-8)

That king only vocalizes pre-established discourses, either political or religious, is of little matter as his speech sounds so convincing that it makes all listeners speechless.[5] Significantly, the king’s discourse contains many references to utterance. He compares his historic victory over the French to a huge mouth proclaiming his triumph, and adds that should the war be lost, his tomb would be deprived of the power of locution:

> Either our history shall with full mouth
> Speak freely of our acts, or else our grave
> Like Turkish mute shall have a tongueless mouth,
> Not worshipped with a waxen epitaph. (1.2.230)

The motif of the mouth resurfaces with other significations in 2.4.105 when Exeter, uncle to Henry, reports the king’s words about the possible destruction of Harfleur:

> [He] bids you, in the bowels of the Lord,
> Deliver up the crown, and to take mercy
> On the poor souls for whom this hungry war
> Opens his vasty jaws. (2.4.103-6)

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[4] All quotations are from William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. Andrew Gurr.

[5] I am indebted to Jonathan Goldberg’s analysis of the Archbishop’s presentation in his paper on “Shakespearean Inscriptions: The Voicing of Power” (119-120).

The symbolic value of the mouth is reversed here to imply ingestion and destruction. However if we agree with cognitive linguists that metaphor is the expression of the human conceptualization system, it is possible to argue that Henry's metaphorical framework reveals a factual, down-to-earth view of things, and demonstrates pragmatic political and military expediency. Incidentally, the biblical reference to "the bowels of the Lord", an echo of Paul's injunction in the Letter to the Philippians ("For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ" 1.8), shows the king's practical-mindedness and reveals a form of somatic phantasy which colours his relationship to his environment.

When Henry anatomizes the nature of power, in the famous passage of Act 4 where self-pity combines with acute lucidity, and realizes that kingship is nothing but an illusion, he presents himself as a sick person vainly attempting to find cure in ceremony:

> Oh, be sick, great greatness
> And bid thy ceremony give thee cure.
> Thinkst thou the fiery fever will go out
> With titles blown from adulation? (4.1.224-7)

Earlier, he tries to boost the morale of his troops in his Harfleur speech and strangely associates courage with the control of facial expression:

> Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage.
> Then lend the eye a terrible aspect,
> Let it pry through the portage of the head,
> the brass canon. Let the brow o'erwhelm it
> As fearfully as doth a galled rock
> O'erhang and jutty his confounded base
> […]
> Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide
> […] (3.1.8-15)

These are not metaphors *stricto sensu*, but they establish the source domain of the body at the core of the king's metaphorical system, that he projects on to the reality around him, whichever form it may take.

Henry's metaphorical language differs extensively from Richard's system of imagery in *Richard II*, the first play of the tetralogy. Before his deposition by Bolingbroke and the conspirators, Richard's discourse is suffused with cosmological references and images of nature (the sun, the earth), all eliciting the gist of the doctrine of absolute kingship as a God-given instrument. Only after the deposition (4.1) does Richard's speech

become more focused on the body, when he realizes that a king is not more than flesh and blood, a far cry from the more canonical idea of the king's two bodies. The narrative of the tetralogy testifies to a progressively subversive discourse of hegemony where the ideological Elizabethan language of power is made to co-exist, and collide, with a more profane approach to kingship.

The body in Henry's discourse betrays a secular conception of kingship, somewhat at variance with the view of the king as God's deputy on earth. It also underscores a view of historical agency and of spatiality as the properties of man, and of rulers more generally.

The body as metaphor for space in *Henry V*

The play is structured around the notions of conquest and marriage implying the possession of a foreign country and of a wife, and the body constructs Henry's conceptualization of space and woman. When he demands that Harfleur surrender to his will, he connects the besieged city to the body of a woman:

> I will not leave the half-achieved Harfleur
> Till in her ashes she lie buried.
> […]
> Therefore you men of Harfleur,
> Take pity of your town and of your people,
> […]
> If not, why, in a moment look to see
> The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
> Defile the locks of your shrill shrieking daughters. (3.4.8-35)

The use of "her" and "she" together with the image of burial line 9 conveys the idea that conquered Harfleur will be reduced to a female corpse, and the sexual image of the locks (line 35) speaks volume as to the double process of humanization of city into female and objectification, or reification, of female into a fortified town. Metaphor defines a conception of space as woman to be conquered and of woman as space to be possessed.

Sexualized geographies are shared by other figures in the play. Exeter retorts to the Dauphin that his scornful present to Henry (the tennis balls delivered by the French ambassador in 1.2) will be matched by contempt, and defiance will resonate through the "womby vaultages of France" (2.4.125). According to Gary Taylor's 1982 Oxford edition of the play, "womby" is one of Shakespeare's coinages that metaphorically suggests that France is a hollow, barren space that will generate or produce nothing but reverberating echoes (Taylor 153).

Interestingly, the same metaphorical system assimilating woman and space is used by Charles, the French King, when offering his daughter Katherine for marriage: "My lord, you see them perspectively [cities], the cities turned into a maid, for they are all girdled with maiden walls that war hath never entered" (5.2.286-8). War is a man's business and cities are ransacked by war just as virgins are raped by men. The reference to a perspective, that is an optical instrument to view things with, ironically suggests that the two kings' patriarchal view of things and beings distorts reality, in the same way as an anamorphosis presents an oblique projection of the object to be viewed. The figuration of country as a woman's body was common in the Renaissance (see for instance the famous 1537 Putsch-map depicting Europe as *Europa regina*), and conceptualizing territory as a female body gives flesh to a gendered view of geography.

In *Shakespearean Territories*, Stuart Elden suggests that territory or space is generally associated with geopolitics (Elden 5), and gendered spatiality implies among other things the control of relations between individuals. In this respect, the long wooing scene between Henry and Katherine (5.2) reveals how Henry imposes regulation on the French princess's body. The scene extends over 150 lines and echoes the legal arguments of the beginning of the play on a number of articles, one of which is the possession of Katherine as Henry's Queen. Katherine is the King's "capital demand, comprised / Within the forerank of our articles" (5.2.96-7).

In both Charles' and Henry's views, the princess is little more than a bargain, as revealed by the third Chorus: "The King [Charles] doth offer him [Henry] / Katherine, his daughter, and with her to dowry / Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms". Commodified Katherine, like unprofitable dukedoms, is the booty paid by the defeated French, and the King's wooing is phrased in a vocabulary of economy: both land and woman are goods from which / whom profit should be drawn. Territory and body are part and parcel of a capitalistic economy, and profit lies in the production of a child:

> Thou must therefore needs prove a good soldier-breeder. Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half French half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard? Shall we not? What sayest thou, my dear flower de luce? (5.2.186-92)

Beyond the discourse of flattery and the pseudo love rhetoric lies the more sombre design to keep female sexuality under control. Katherine is a disciplined body confined to a social function in a structure dominated by the king, and I would argue with Catherine Belsey that lineage and the birth of children "ensure male supremacy over nature and time" (Belsey 165). In

other words, the production of an heir serves to legitimize the dynasty which originated in the murder of Richard II, the lawful king, in the first play of the tetralogy.

Before she is courted by Henry, Katherine is taught some English words by Alice, her lady in waiting (3.5). The lesson is all about Katherine's body, parts of which she learns to pronounce in a foreign language. First comes the hand, then the arm, the nails, the elbow, the chin, the neck that she mispronounces as "nick", to end with the foot and the gown. The gown is a piece of garment to cover the body with, but both "foot" and "gown" sound awkwardly obscene to French ears because of the sexual connotations conveyed by those words. The language-lesson scene is a comic passage but beyond comedy what is at stake, as suggested by Elden, is Katherine agreeing to her body being anglicized and sexualized even before she meets Henry (Elden 124). Katherine unwittingly consents to her body becoming the property of the conqueror. The lesson is an instance of what Louis Althusser defines in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1971) as a process of "interpellation" displaying the subject's complicitness with an oppressive discourse and a societal dictate that she has unconsciously internalized.

On top of that, the lesson is rooted in the tradition of the blazon, offering an inventory of fragmented parts of the woman's body. In her study of the blazon in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Nancy Vickers claims that the blazon is "female matter for male oratory" (Parker, Hartman 96), and fragmentation appears as nothing but a component of domination. If we agree with Vickers' analysis, it is possible to construe Katherine's English lesson as the sign that the female has integrated male discourse and assents to the control of masculinity. In Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film production of *Henry V*, the scene is performed in a room heavily draped with white curtains and shut off from the outside by trellised French windows, a setting that is significant of the way space in the early modern period was perceived as gendered: females are confined to private locations, while men are free to move around in far more open spaces.

Significantly, the same gendered approach to space is shared by the Eastcheap pack, the low-typed figures some of whom Henry used to spend time with in the *Henry IV* plays and who feature still prominently in *Henry V*. As he leaves for France, Pistol, the tavern owner and husband to Nell Quickly, orders his wife to stay indoors because that is where she belongs: "Keep close, I thee command" (2.3.49). In *Henry V*, as in other of Shakespeare's plays like *Coriolanus, The Merchant of Venice*, or *Julius Caesar*, where women are confined to domestic locations, spatiality is a gender marker, irrespective of class distinctions. Henry, Charles and Pistol share a patriarchal conception of the community, yet it would be difficult to

contend that Shakespeare endorses such a male-constructed view. As phrased by Jonathan Goldberg, “Shakespeare’s inhabitation of the cultural apparatus of his time is […] problematic” (Parker, Hartman 117), and the play features strategies of resistance to, and containment of, constructions of gendered spaces.

Resistance and containment

In the course of the wooing scene, Henry ventures a few compliments in broken French as he presses Katherine to accept him: “How answer you, la plus belle Katherine du monde, mon très cher et divin déesse?” (5.2.197-8). His confusion of pronouns and of masculine and feminine adjectives bears witness to the creation of a faulty, hybrid syntax tantamount to denying Katherine her full femininity. This is typically male hegemonic discourse and I would argue with Claire McEachern that Henry’s words forge “an accommodation between political, sexual and linguistic possession” (McEachern 124) that finally culminates in the kiss he forces her to give him. At first she refuses the kiss because she thinks it unbecoming for a French lady to be kissed before she gets married, but she eventually yields to his demand:

> O Kate, nice customs curtsy to great kings. Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country’s fashion. We are the makers of manners, Kate, and the liberty that follows our places stops the mouth of all find-faults, as I will do yours, for upholding the nice fashion of our country in denying me a kiss. Therefore patiently and yielding. [*Kisses her.*] You have witchcraft in your lips. (5.2.243-49)

The kiss is no sign of endearment, it is only a means for him to stop her mouth, as he claims, and prevent her from speaking. Yet Katherine has a voice in this passage, and her discourse operates as a potential threat to his intentions: “Your Majesty ’ave *fausse* French enough to deceive de most *sage demoiselle* dat is en France” (199-200) (“fausse” is polysemic, meaning “wrong” and “deceptive”). Katherine voices one of the accusations some early modern proto-feminist women writers levelled at male speech. In a pamphlet dated 1589 and entitled *Surfeiting Lover*, Jane Anger warns women against the deceptiveness of men’s discourse and claims that men befoul women by their “disdainful floutes”:

> Our good toward them is the destruction of our selves, we being wel formed, are by them fouly deformed: of our true meaning they make

> mockes, rewarding our loving follies with disdainful floutes: we are the griefe of man, in that wee take all the griefe from man. (Anger B3)

The befouling of Katherine is more explicit when Henry maintains that there is witchcraft in her lips. The early modern discourse on witchcraft considered witches as hybrid creatures, like the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, neither men nor women, menacing the system of gender boundaries patriarchy is based upon. In this scene, Katherine embodies the other, the heterotopic space identified by Michel Foucault as profoundly disturbing because it is the place affirming difference (Foucault xvii). This is why Katherine needs to be contained, in the same way as Falstaff was banished by Henry at the end of *2 Henry IV* for fear his potentially subversive voice might endanger the king's newly acquired power.

The heterotopic in the play is a multifaceted paradigm. Even within the King's troops lie forces of dissension that operate as threats to the success of the military venture. The army comprises four captains representing the four nations of the kingdom, England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and harmony hardly prevails among them. Macmorris, the Irishman picks a quarrel with Llewellyn, the Welsh captain, about his nation (3.3.61) and at the end of the play, Pistol, one of the English soldiers, literally fights with Llewellyn who tries to make him eat his leek (5.1). These scenes are designed as comedy but they emphasize national differences and social dichotomies. The slapstick serves as a front for a darker reality: the impossible unity, within the body politic, of various geographies and antagonistic social classes. The king's strategic containment of heterotopic spaces temporarily succeeds: France is defeated, Katherine silently accepts her fate and the dissenting voices in the English camp all die. The only one to save his skin is Pistol, who claims that upon his return to England he will turn "bawd, and something lean to cutpurse of quick hand" (5.1.24-5), an ominous proof that ferments of disruption are still possibly at work in the English community. So containment of the heterotopic proves fragile and the Chorus's final words at the end of the play remind the spectators that in the reign of King Henry VI, France was lost and England bled.

To wrap up, I wish to revert to Aristotle and his view of successful metaphors. Successful metaphors are those that throw light in the mind when knowledge was not there before:

> What we like are those [metaphors] that convey information as fast as they are stated – so long as we did not have the knowledge in advance – or that our minds lag only a little behind. With [that kind of metaphor] there is some process of learning. (Aristotle I401b14 – 25)

Much of the metaphorical texture of the King's discourse shows little light thrown in the mind, and I would argue that Henry's discourse is part of a cultural construction. Similarly, the sense of spatiality emerging from the play mixes the political, the strategic, the economic and the sexual, in line with the colonial enterprise the play is about and the rise of imperialism and economic expansion in the Tudor age. To view space as a woman and woman as territory is part of a dominant, male-oriented ideological stance, and I take ideology here in the sense that Terry Eagleton gives to that concept, that is "a body of ideas characteristic of a social group or class [...] which help to legitimate a dominant political power" (Eagleton 1). Conversely, inventiveness in metaphor creation is to be found in the five Choruses.

The fourth Chorus describes the foolish confidence of the French during the night before the battle using the full poetic force of the hypotyposis:

> The confident and over-lusty French
> Do the low rated English play at dice,
> And chide the tardy gaited-night
> Who like a foul and ugly witch doth limp
> So tediously away. (18-22)

If we can picture night as an old woman, be it a witch, hobbling along in an unsteady pace, then perhaps we are invited to see any human being as a tiny part in a larger cosmic framework, and if we can see the stage as a "wooden O", then we can see any structure, possibly the world itself, as a theatre. The Chorus's epic celebration of triumphant England sits rather awkwardly with the king's efficacious, although solitary and at times cruel, leadership, but the function of the Chorus is primarily to urge the audience to imagine. The play teaches about English history and early modern views of power and politics, but it also invites the spectator to engage with his/her own, present-day reality by the medium of metaphorical discourse. All constructs, Shakespeare seems to suggest, all conceptualizations about objects, beings and spaces, take place in terms of metaphorical language.

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