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“HER SPEECH IS NOTHING”: THE COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION OF SONGS IN OPHELIA’S MAD SCENE*

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Abstract

Music and drama are known to have a close relationship since the birth of Greek tragedy. This study suggests that Ophelia uses songs and singing as an alternative language in communicating her emotions. In IV.v, which is also referred to as Ophelia’s mad scene, she comments upon her personal experiences concerning her relationship with Hamlet and the death of her father Polonius through singing. This paper aims at displaying the reason why Ophelia requires a different mode of communication other than verbal language. After discussing the submissive and silent role that is attributed to Ophelia in Hamlet, the fragments of songs she sings in IV.v are analysed through a close reading of the text. While investigating what these songs indicate in this particular context, musical conventions of Shakespeare’s time are also discussed.

Keywords: *Shakespeare, Hamlet, Ophelia, Singing characters, Literature-music.*

“SÖZLERİNDE BİR ANLAM YOK”: OPHELIA’NIN DELİLİK SAHNESİNDEKİ ŞARKILARIN İLETİŞİMSEL İŞLEVİ

Özet

Müzik ve tiyatronun antik Yunan tragedyasının doğuşundan bu yana yakın ilişki içinde oldukları bilinmektedir. Bu çalışma Ophelia’nın duygularını karşı tarafa iletmek için şarkıları ve şarkı söylemeyi alternatif bir dil olarak kullandığını iddia etmekte. Ophelia’nın delilik sahnesi olarak da tanımlanan IV. Perde V. Sahne boyunca Ophelia, Hamlet ile olan ilişkisine ve babası Polonius’un ölümüne ilişkin deneyimlerini şarkılar aracılığıyla yorumlar. Bu makale Ophelia’nın neden sözlü dile alternatif bir dil kullanmaya ihtiyacı olduğunu gözler önüne sermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Hamlet oyununda Ophelia’ya yüklediği itaatkar ve sessiz rolün tartışılmasının ardından Ophelia’nın IV. Perde V. Sahnede söylediği şarkılar yakın okuma tekniğiyle incelenir. Bu şarkıların söz konusu bağlamda ne anlama geldiklerinin incelenmesi sürecinde Shakespeare’in dönemindeki müzikal uzlaşımlar da tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Shakespeare, Hamlet, Ophelia, Şarkı söyleyen karakterler, Edebiyat-müzik.*

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Music has always had a significant role in drama since the ancient times. As Nietzsche demonstrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “the tragic art of the Greeks was really born of the spirit of music” (Nietzsche, 1995: 60). The intermingled nature of music and drama is embodied by the Greek chorus, who use music and singing, while commenting on dramatic action. The relationship between music and drama is not limited with the Greek chorus anymore and instrumental music, as well as singing, introduces a separate sign-system to the dramatic world, which is fundamentally defined with its emphasis on verbal language. Songs, which can be defined as “the integration of both melody and speech – music and language,” (Mithen, 2005: 53) are significant in displaying a separate form of communication between the singer and the listener. This study primarily focuses on the fragments of songs Ophelia sings in her mad scene since they function as an attempt to communicate her emotions concerning love and death. Through a close reading of the ballads she sings in IV.v, this paper suggests that Ophelia uses songs and singing as an alternative medium for communication since she is not heard or understood within the limits of verbal language.

Before analysing Ophelia’s mad scene in detail, one should note that she is not the only character who is related to music in the play. As Claudius enters and leaves the stage, he is accompanied with flourish sounds, which are traditionally associated with kingship and authority. When Hamlet and his company are awaiting the Ghost, Claudius’ presence in Elsinore is reminded as soon as the stage directions point out “a flourish of trumpets, and two pieces [of ordnance] go off” (I.iv). Nevertheless, the trumpet call is not only associated with political authority. In II.ii, it is used to announce the entrance of the players. Considering the close relationship between Claudius and the sound of trumpets, it can be suggested that there is a correlation between the presentation of Claudius and the players: “it seems that this flourish is closely linked both with the hypocrisy of the king – hence the royal flourish – and with the professional hypocrites, the players – hence the advertisement” (Long, 1971: 107-8).

Hamlet, too, is related to music on a different level. Although he does not sing throughout the play¹ he refers to various songs: For instance, he quotes the first lines of old ballads such as “O Jephthah, judge of Israel” (II.ii.400) and “For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot” (III.ii.133). Furthermore, the allusion to playing musical instruments in his argument with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is indicative of his musical knowledge, which can be linked to the Elizabethan sense of harmony emphasizing notions such as *musica mundana*, *musica humana* and *musica instrumentalis*²:

Ham. You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet you cannot make it speak. ‘Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play’d on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me. (III.ii.355-363)

While Hamlet makes a correlation between playing musical instruments and tricking or manipulating a human being, Ophelia becomes the embodiment of music in the following act. IV.v is almost totally dedicated to Ophelia and music. However, the reason why she uses songs as a medium for communication can be found in her portrayal in the previous acts. Throughout the play, Ophelia is defined through her relation to certain male characters: she is a sister who needs to be warned against young men, particularly Hamlet; she is a daughter who should obey her father; she is a once-loved woman who should go to a nunnery; she is a bait who will help the King to understand the real reason of Hamlet’s discomfort; she is a fair young woman whom the Queen assumes that her son is in love with. In other words, Ophelia is in most cases defined through her relation to the male characters, who (try to) dominate over her. It is also significant that her portrayal is utterly in accordance with her name: As Jenkins discusses in his explanation of “Dramatis Personae”, “Filia” in Ophelia’s name means “daughter” in Latin, which clearly underscores her role within society. Furthermore, the name “Ophelia” derives

1 The social conventions of the era would not allow him to sing because “the frequent and unsolicited performance of music by members of the aristocracy is vigorously condemned, with a reminder that, were such activity to be pursued, class distinctions between a nobleman and his music-performing servants would be broken down” (Sternfeld, 1963: 54).

2 In *De institutione musica* Boethius introduces three categories of music: *Musica instrumentalis* (instrumental music); *Musica humana* (music and harmony of the body and spirit); *Musica mundana* (music of the spheres). *Musica mundana* is the most supreme of these categories for it requires the perfect unity of the four elements: fire, water, earth and air. The Elizabethan period in search for the perfect unity of the four elements emphasizes *musica mundana*, while aiming at establishing a perfect monarchy.

from Greek and means “succour”, and there is possibly a link between Ophelia and Aphelia meaning “innocence”, which is a proper adjective for Ophelia’s portrayal within the play (Shakespeare, 1997: 163).

When Ophelia is first introduced in I.iii, two concepts are accentuated: Her vulnerability before Hamlet’s passion, and fear. In this context, Laertes uses the word “fear” and its synonyms repeatedly, while addressing Ophelia:

Fear it, Ophelia, *fear* [emphasis added] it, my dear sister,

And keep you in the rear of your affection

Out of the shot and danger of desire.

...

Be wary [emphasis added] then: best safety lies in *fear* [emphasis added]. (I.iii.33-43)

Laertes’ emphasis on fear reflects the insecurity spreading over the whole country and the totality of the play³. Moreover, Laertes tries to dominate his sister and put an end to the possibility of a relationship between her and Hamlet by using fear as a weapon. This attitude is an attempt to suppress Ophelia. However, Ophelia’s response to her brother’s relatively long advice is significant for she is not totally silent and obedient, while she is alone with her brother:

I shall th’effect of this good lesson keep

As watchman to my heart. *But* [emphasis added] good my brother,

Do not [emphasis added] as some ungracious pastors do,

Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,

Whiles like a puff’d and reckless libertine

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,

And recks not his own rede. (I.iii.45-51)

Although, on the surface, Ophelia is presented as a fully obedient and silent sister/daughter, she warns her brother after listening to his warning because Laertes has not yet proved himself as a patriarch. Hence, although he is above Ophelia within the male-dominated social hierarchy by simply being her brother, she can take the liberty of responding to him to a certain extent. The way she is addressing her brother also reveals that she is aware of the corruption in this social structure.

Yet, Ophelia’s attitude towards her father is utterly different. The switch in her tone is evidently the result of the fact that Polonius, being the head of the family, has an undeniable authority over his children. Although there are many instances throughout the play suggesting that Polonius is not an adequate patriarch, this does not damage his power over his own family. Moreover, Polonius’ attitude towards his daughter Ophelia is largely severe; he, unlike Laertes, seems to be questioning Ophelia rather than giving her advice. The dialogue between the father and the daughter reflects a relationship that is based on strict rules and obedience, which can be observed through the last words they utter:

Pol. Look to’t, I charge you. Come your ways.

Oph. I shall obey, my lord. (I.iv.135-6)

³ One should note that even the opening scene of the play focuses on guarding and watchwords as indicators of the need for security. The feeling of insecurity is present on both personal and public levels throughout the play.

This conversation reflects how patriarchal social structure proclaims the relationship between the male and the female: Within this relationship the female is expected to obey the male as he is the establisher of the system. Not only within this particular dialogue but in general, the role that is attributed to Ophelia is that of the addressee rather than the addresser. Hence, the basic function of language, producing a thought and presenting it through social communication, is obstructed for Ophelia. From this point of view, she has to use a medium for communication other than verbal language in order to express her emotions and opinions more openly: “*The speaking subject uses la langue to construct there the syntax or logic of his discourse: a (subjective, personal) language in la langue (a neutral social structure)*” (Kristeva, 1989: 268).

Songs function as a subjective and personal language, and enable the singing character to -at least, try to- construct his/her own subjectivity by becoming the addresser. In this context, Ophelia’s songs can be classified as discourse, when Kristeva’s definition is taken into consideration:

Discourse implies first the participation of the subject in his language through his *speech, as an individual.*

...

The term “discourse” ... designates any enunciation that integrates in its structure the locator and the listener, with the desire of the former to influence the latter. (Ibid.:11)

Although, while singing fragments of songs Ophelia does not solely desire to influence her audience, she arouses feelings such as pity, fear, curiosity and even anger in her listeners. However, she cannot manage to make her fictitious listeners comprehend what she genuinely means by singing these particular songs. The anonymous gentleman introduces Ophelia before her entrance in such a way that there is almost no chance for her audience to fully understand her for he creates prejudice against Ophelia: “*Her speech is nothing, / Yet the unshaped use of it doth move / The hearers to collection*” (IV.v.7-9). In this quotation the Gentleman becomes the mouth of patriarchal structure and defines Ophelia’s speech as “nothing”⁴.

The Gentleman portrays her as a person speaking nonsense, which resembles the depiction of madness. While discussing the relationship between language and madness, Foucault focuses on two aspects of this relationship. Considering the expulsion of the madman (since those, who consider themselves to be “normal”, have the urge to keep madmen away), the only person he can at least try to communicate with is the psychiatrist, and the madman finds himself functioning as silence within the “*language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason about madness*” (Foucault, 2005: xii). Furthermore, the Gentleman’s portrayal of Ophelia is reminiscent of what Foucault calls the “wind of madness”:

In madness equilibrium is established, but it masks that equilibrium beneath the cloud of illusion, beneath feigned disorder; the rigor of the architecture is concealed beneath the cunning arrangement of these disordered violences. The sudden bursts of life, the random gestures and words, the *wind of madness* that suddenly breaks lines, shatters attitudes, rumples draperies – while the strings are merely being pulled tighter – this is the very type of baroque *trompe-l’oeil*. (Ibid.:30)

According to Foucault, madness is similar to *trompe-l’oeil*, which is an art technique that tricks the eye by creating an optical illusion. Throughout the play, it is relatively easy for most of the characters to associate Hamlet with madness because his dialogues with the guardians of the social order can be regarded as an example of the “wind of madness”. It can be argued that Hamlet, with his irrelevant replies to Polonius and Claudius emphasizes the arbitrariness of verbal language. Hence, both Hamlet’s random words and Ophelia’s random and impromptu songs intent to express their opinions and emotions. Although madness functions as a mask for Hamlet⁵, Ophelia’s freedom from social constraints turns her to a mad woman.

Ophelia, unlike Hamlet, constructs a subjective medium of communication, while singing various old ballads. The musical aspect of her personal language has the potential to create a distance between her words and her

4 It is also worth mentioning that “nothing” used to refer to the female genitalia in the Elizabethan period. The emphasis on the lack in the depiction of the female is a reflection of the phallus-oriented patriarchal structure.

5 One inevitably recalls Polonius’s description of Hamlet: “*though this be madness, yet there is method in’t*” (II.ii.205)

audience. Due to the difference between how a word is spoken and sung, the listener may pay more attention to the melody than the lyrics, especially when a song is heard for the first time.

While examining the fragments of songs Ophelia sings, one should not overlook the image of the singing individuals, especially women in Shakespeare's day. Referring to Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, Sternfeld argues that Ophelia's behaviour is "strange, indeed, and contrary to all sense of propriety" (Sternfeld, 1963: 54) for a member of the Elizabethan gentility.

The alignment of music and the female voice is in fact a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the perception of music's inarticulateness and sensual immediacy gives a singing Ophelia (and occasionally Hamlet) the effect of speaking outside of logocentric, male discourse [...] Music's discursive promiscuity—its susceptibility to endless interpretation—makes it vulnerable to colonization by the image, making the loud, singing woman almost indistinguishable from the silent, "stony" figure whose meaning is controlled by others. (Ortiz, 2011: 47)

Ophelia's desire to communicate through songs is mostly effected by how she is perceived as a singing individual. Music's power to express is dependant of the listener, suggesting that it is the audience who determines whether a message is successfully transmitted through a dialogue or not. Ophelia's audience consists of both the public and the personal and thereby, she is different from another female member of the gentry, Desdemona, who sings the Willow Song in *Othello* "in the privacy of her bed-chamber with only her maid as an involuntary audience" (Sternfeld, 1963: 54). Ophelia, however, sings one song after another before the Danish court, and this behaviour is considered to be inappropriate according to the etiquette rules. The nature of her audience is also important in analysing the songs because quite a number of these songs seem to be directed to particular member(s) of her audience. This is simply because these fragments of songs are "integral parts of the plot in a dramatic sense and of the surrounding dialogue in a verbal sense" (Ibid.:53).

Although most of the editions lack any reference to the lute, the stage direction in IV.v in the First Quarto is as follows: "Enter Ofelia playing on her lute and her haire downe singing" (Seng, 1967: 131-2). Her appearance is considered to be a sign of her psychological state because "hair let down was a conventional sign of a woman in a high emotional state, if not necessarily one of madness" (Lindley, 2006: 154). Moreover, Lindley suggests that "her disordered hair might link her to the prophetess Cassandra, who appears in *Troilus and Cressida* 'with her hair about her ears' (2.2.97), and thereby underscore the anxiety with which Gertrude and Claudius greet her" (Ibid.). Neither Ophelia nor Cassandra is truly heard within the realm of verbal language. Ophelia is treated like Cassandra, who is unheard as a harbinger of disaster and misfortune. From this point of view, these two women are totally misunderstood and mistreated by the patriarchal structure, which has the tendency to label the female as mad and dangerous.

The first song Ophelia sings opens up with the line "How should I your true love know", and not only focuses on love but also death, and the loss of the loved one exemplifying the argument that "Shakespeare's invocations of ballads call forth two qualities in particular: pastness and passion" (Smith, 2006: 196). What makes this song significant is that Ophelia starts singing it right after the Queen's question, "How now, Ophelia?", which turns the song into a direct answer to the Queen. Hence, it is possible to argue that this song, on a certain level, is directed to the Queen:

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon. (IV.v.23-26)

From this point of view, the love that is questioned in the first two lines is that of the Queen, who marries her brother-in-law right after her husband's sudden death. It is especially significant that Ophelia's first song begins with an emphasis on hypocrisy – a concept which is utterly vital in terms of the reason that lies behind her

discord. Many critics argue that this song is “a ‘badly damaged version’ of the ancient tune called ‘Walsingham,’ an extremely popular tune in Shakespeare’s day” (Seng, 1967: 136). The fact that there are multiple “Walsingham” tunes that have survived makes it difficult to know for certain the original tune that was used by Shakespeare during the first performances. However, it is possible to draw a parallelism between the story that is told in this song and Ophelia’s version. In the original ballad, a deserted lover meets a pilgrim coming from Walsingham. Since his lover also went to Walsingham, he tries to describe her to find out if the pilgrim has seen her on his way. While describing the lover, Ophelia employs gender exchange for her “voice substitutes for the distraught (male) lover of the ballad” (Wilson, 2011: 95). Hence, the first song Ophelia sings turns out to be a combination of male expression and her personal medium for communication. As soon as she attracts the audience’s attention (both on and off the stage), she starts mourning for an unknown “he”. As Leslie Dunn suggests, Ophelia’s private language becomes largely performative: “When Ophelia sings, she takes on a mask of performance: her personal voice is estranged, filtered through the anonymous voices of the ballads, multiplying, and thereby rendering indeterminate the relationships between singer, personae, and audience” (Dunn, 1994: 58).

Ophelia has to put on a symbolic mask of performance in order to be heard in the male constructed Symbolic. As soon as she manages to be heard (not necessarily understood completely) she leaves all those masks behind and hence presents an identity beyond both her social roles and the personae in the songs she is singing. She frees herself and the personae from the boundaries that exist in the Symbolic by establishing a new self, while combining her own identity with the persona in the songs. In other words, the contents of the songs are mingled with Ophelia’s own story.

The common point in the different versions of the Walsingham song is the search for the missing lover, which immediately reminds us of Hamlet, who leaves Elsinore after murdering Polonius. However, as soon as Ophelia sings the line “He is dead and gone, Lady,” the audience is reminded of the other half of the reason for her misery: the death of her father.

Larded with sweet flowers
Which bewept to the grave did not go
With true love showers. (IV.v.38-40)

Although the statement about the burial of a man without the presence of loved ones accompanying him with “true love showers” may also be an allusion to Hamlet, who is sent to England for his execution, it undoubtedly refers to Polonius’s burial, which takes place “in hugger-mugger” (IV.v.84). Moreover, the song’s theme of burial may also be considered to be a foreshadowing of Ophelia’s own barren burial.

Nevertheless, there is an evident change in Ophelia’s tone when Claudius addresses her directly. Ophelia and Claudius’ dialogue is in accordance with Foucault’s argument that the mad man/woman becomes silence – and hence, invisible – in a conversation:

King. How do you, pretty lady?
Oph. Well, good dild you. They say the owl was a baker’s daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table.
King. Conceit upon *her* [emphasis added] father.
Oph. Pray let’s have no words of this, but when they ask you what it means, say you this. (IV.v.41-47)

Ophelia, thereupon, starts singing the Valentine song. Although in the beginning of this conversation Claudius directly addresses Ophelia by using the personal pronoun “you”, her response involving the owl and the baker’s daughter provokes a change in Claudius’ direction. The reference to this folktale is apparently indicative of Ophelia’s symbolic language. It depicts the owl as a mournful bird singing for the death of love; yet, Jenkins in his notes to the text also suggests that “the owl’s cry, traditional signal of disaster, may betoken the loss of a maidenhead” (Shakespeare, 1997: 533). Once again, Ophelia combines death and love through her powerful

mode of expression. Claudius either fails in comprehending what Ophelia means by her response or refuses to acknowledge her message. Either way, after Ophelia's response Claudius no longer considers her as an interlocutor. Although the text illustrates a dialogue between Ophelia and Claudius only, Claudius expels her the moment he uses "her" as the possessive determiner. Thereby, from Claudius' point of view, Ophelia can only function as the object of this conversation. Despite his effort to exclude Ophelia, she continues to address him directly indicating her desire and persistence to remain a part of the dialogue.

The distracted Ophelia, who has been singing about death and love, starts singing a Valentine song which evidently has sexual connotations. The context of the song is a reflection of Claudius's portrayal in the play. Claudius is associated with lust and passion throughout the play precisely because of his relation to his "*sometimes sister, now...queen*" (I.ii.8). The sexual references in this song are also an allusion to the "disaster" both Laertes and Polonius warn Ophelia against in I.iii. Hence, although it is possible to draw a link between the way Claudius is portrayed within the play and this song, it is also impossible not to denote that it is a reference to Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship:

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clo'es,
And dupp'd that chamber door,
Let in the maid that out a maid
Never departed more. (IV.v.48-55)

Since the written text presents no evidence that Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship has a sexual aspect, this song reflects "*the distorted vision of the world that Polonius and Laertes impress on Ophelia*" (Seng, 1967: 148), and thereby it does not stand in harmony with Ophelia's innocence that is stressed throughout the play.

Not only the themes of Ophelia's songs, but also her fictitious audience changes during this scene. After singing the Valentine Song, Ophelia leaves the stage and re-enters following Laertes' entrance with his followers. Thereat her next song focuses on the theme of death because her brother reminds her of their father's murder. Hence, the themes of her songs are strongly related to her fictitious audience, which means that although she is portrayed as if she were not aware of the people listening to her, she seems to be addressing them directly.

The first fragment of song she sings in front of her brother is composed of two lines only: "*They bore him bare-fac'd on the bier, / And in his grave rain'd many a tear -*" (IV.v.164-165). Due to lack of any evidence related to its origin, it is only possible to focus on this fragment's dramatic function in terms of its subject matter within Ophelia's dialogue with her audience. These two lines are significant for they bring the tension down in two different aspects: Firstly, Ophelia seems to be calmed down after her Valentine song, which seems to be quite energetic and rhythmic in terms of its meter. Secondly, Laertes, who enters the stage with his company utterly angrily after receiving the news of his father's death, is immensely moved by the appearance of his sister singing this song. Although it would be impossible to argue that his anger is totally replaced by sadness or pity, it is obvious that Laertes is not as active and furious as he has been before Ophelia's entrance. Moreover, the image of the dishevelled young woman changes the atmosphere of the scene where a group of angry man are shouting "*Laertes shall be king, Laertes king*" (IV.v.108). When Ophelia re-enters the stage, the realm of the male and the public, which is considered to be based on physical action, is replaced by the realm of the female and the personal, which is considered to be based on emotions, as far as patriarchal structure is concerned. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Ophelia's current situation gives Laertes stronger motivation for revenge.

The next song Ophelia refers to in front of her brother, is a song about Robin, which is argued to be part of a well-known ballad in Shakespeare's time: "*For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy*" (IV.v.184). Ophelia sings only one line of this song and musicologists remark that there may be more than thirty sources for the music of this particular piece. It is suggested that all these sources, some of which are composed by John Dowland, are instrumental. No matter what the original tune was like, Seng suggests that "*Bonny Robin's songs deal with lovers, unfaithfulness and extra-marital affairs*" (Seng, 1967: 153), which is also in accordance with the way Hamlet perceives his mother's marriage to his uncle. Besides, various critics suggest different layers of meaning concerning the function of this song within this context. One of these views focuses on the assumption that "Robin" is a word that is used for the male sexual organ. The second view on this line concerns Elizabethan England rather than Denmark because Sweet Robin has a connotation for the Elizabethan audience since the Earl of Leicester, in Shakespeare's time, is referred to as Queen Elizabeth's sweet Robin as Jenkins in his comments highlights (Shakespeare, 1997: 542-3). This line, then, immediately reminds Shakespeare's contemporaries of the Earl of Leicester, who is suggested to be the Queen's lover. What is remarkable about this relationship is that, although there was much rumour about a love affair between Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester, they were not officially united. This allusion, inevitably, underscores the problem of reproduction and inheritance both in England and the fictitious Danish court in Shakespeare's play.

Howbeit, the most common view on the name "Robin" refers to Robin Hood, which suggests that there is a correlation between Ophelia and Maid Marian. Moreover, Ophelia, similar to Maid Marian who distributes flowers during the May games, gives flowers to her fictitious audience suggesting that she uses flowers as a medium for communication as well. While singing one fragment of song after another, she distributes flowers to each of her listeners. Although the stage directions do not tell which flower is presented to whom, it is possible to associate certain flowers with certain characters with respect to the symbolic meaning of the flowers. Firstly, rosemary is associated with memory and remembrance as Ophelia mentions. Traditionally there is a link between the dead and rosemary because it is thought to strengthen memory and thus helps people to remember the dead: "*In the Middle Ages, students were encouraged to twine sprigs of rosemary through their hair to stimulate their brains; consequently, the herb has come to be associated with remembrance*" (Field and Scoble, 2001: 45). This flower, in this particular scene, can either refer to Polonius' death, or can be a sign foreshadowing Ophelia's own death. Hence, it is possible to suggest that the most apt receiver of this flower is Laertes, the one who should never forget his dead father and sister. Besides, by saying "*There's rosemary, that's for remembrance- pray you, love, remember,*" (IV.v.173-174) Ophelia echoes the Ghost who repeatedly asks Hamlet to remember him. From another point of view, rosemary "*has also had a role at wedding ceremonies throughout the ages. Greek and Roman couples wore wreaths of rosemary on their wedding days,*" (Field and Scoble, 2001: 46) because it was considered to be "*a charm for a happy marriage*" (Ibid.). This connotation, obviously, seems to be ironic in this context since none of the characters are going to experience a joyous relationship. Last but not least, rosemary is closely linked with death and funerals, which is indicative of the duality in the flowers' connotations: "*Branches of rosemary were placed in the hands of the dead*" (Ibid.: 45). Once again the reader/audience is reminded that Ophelia's messages combine two major themes: love and death.

The next flower she distributes is pansies; and Jenkins argues that "*because of their name (Fr. Pensées), they can strengthen in Laertes the thoughts prompted by his father's death*" (Shakespeare, 1997: 538) since "Pensées" means "thoughts" in French. If we assume that she gives pansies to Laertes, then the fennel, columbines and rue may be presented to the King and the Queen because fennel "*was used as an emblem of flatter*" (Grindon, 2005: 200) in the Elizabethan age, whereas columbine, because of its horned shape, is a "*symbol of cuckoldry*" as Jenkins states in his notes to the text (Shakespeare, 1997: 539) and can be interpreted as an insult. If Ophelia is presenting the rue to Gertrude, it suggests that she is emphasizing the flower's association with adultery, which is, again, known to Shakespeare's contemporaries. The daisy, however, is often supposed to be kept by Ophelia herself because it is a flower of innocence and "*as an emblem of love's victims the daisy has a latent ambivalence; the folly of being deceived*" (Ibid.: 540). While distributing these flowers, Ophelia refers to violets although she does not possess any: "*I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died*" (IV.v.181-183). According to Jenkins,

the memories of forsaken love, symbolized in the rue, in the daisy, and in violets that have withered, her mind drifts back to her father's death to afford yet another instance of that confusion of grief in which the loss of father and love merge. (Shakespeare, 1997: 541)

Similar to the subject matter of the songs, Ophelia's flowers "*suggest the discordant double images*" (Showalter, 2014), and this duality is reminiscent of the contradictory position of the female in social order. Her determination to communicate how she feels and what she thinks of love and death becomes an evidence of the lack of communication between individuals. She also becomes an embodiment of how the female is perceived as lack within the patriarchal structure. Rather than paying attention to what she says, her fictitious audience seems to focus on how she looks as if she is miming throughout the scene. Thereby, it is quite compelling that she uses flowers as an alternative and tangible language.

Nonetheless, she continues to sing... Her next fragment of song, starting with the words "*And will a not come again?*" (IV.v.187) proves that her mind is totally divided between the thoughts of love and death. These two concepts are definitely interrelated and interwoven as far as Ophelia is concerned. Right after her reference to Robin, she starts to sing about death:

And will a not come again?
And will a not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again. (IV.v.187-191)

The "he" in this song, may either refer to Polonius or Hamlet, when Ophelia's story is taken into consideration. Given the fact that Hamlet is sent to England to be secretly executed, the dead person may be associated with Hamlet as well. As it is observed in all of the fragments of songs Ophelia sings in this scene, she has the tendency to mingle Polonius with Hamlet with respect to the concept of loss. Although the second part of the song, which starts with, "*his beard was as white as snow,*" seems to be focusing on Polonius, the last line of the song can be regarded as a sort of requiem Ophelia dedicates to Polonius, Hamlet and herself. This song is Ophelia's farewell and hence her exit from the stage foreshadows her death as well.

The fact that Ophelia is desperately trying to express herself results in one last attempt of communication: death. Gertrude is the one, who relates how Ophelia dies, and hence she acts like a mediator or even a translator, between Ophelia's action and the Symbolic order:

There is a willow grows askant the brook
That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds,
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious silver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,

And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (IV.vii.165-182)

The first thing that attracts the reader/audience's attention is that Ophelia's death is extremely romanticized. Gertrude's tone combined with Ophelia's relation to flowers and water produces a fairy-like image for Ophelia. She is even likened to a mermaid, indicating that Ophelia is not regarded as a true human being. What is more, *"the physical sound of Ophelia's singing voice disappears under the weight of its metaphorization. The conspicuous loudness of Ophelia's earlier songs is muted by a revisionist history that refers to them as 'old tunes,' a phrase that neatly places the songs in a distant, rustic environment"* (Ortiz, 2011: 64). Ophelia, who cannot survive with the roles that are attributed to her, chooses to turn to nature. This is reminiscent of the binary oppositions that associate man with culture and woman with nature. Thereby it can be argued that Ophelia seeks for peace, where the rules and regulations of the male-dominated order cannot reach her.

In this respect, water not only links Ophelia to the Dionysian cult underscoring the association between the marginalized woman and fluids but also reminds us of the portrayal of water functioning as a sort of prison in the fifteenth century Europe for those who are considered to be insane:

Of all these romantic or satiric vessels, the *Narrenschiff* is the only one that had a real existence – for they did exist, these boats that conveyed their insane cargo from town to town. Madmen then led an easy wandering existence. The towns drove them outside their limits; they were allowed to wander in the open countryside, when not entrusted to a group of merchants and pilgrims. (Foucault, 2005: 6)

This indicates that madmen become nomadic because they are regarded as a threat. Hence, civilization sends those threats away but still wants to control them in order to make sure that these nomadic insane people cannot destroy the harmony that is supposedly created by the male dominated society.⁶ In that sense, Ophelia's journey in water is implicative of these ships. Nevertheless,

navigation delivers man to the uncertainty of fate; on water, each of us in the hands of his own destiny; every embarkation is, potentially, the last. It is for the other world that the madman sets sail in his fools' boat; it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks. The madman's voyage is at once a rigorous division and an absolute Passage. (Ibid.: 8)

In light of what Foucault tells about the relationship between human beings and water, it is possible to suggest that Ophelia is only in the hands of her own destiny when she is standing near the brook. Moreover, it is understood that she is welcomed by the willow⁷, the flowers that she uses in making a garland and the brook, when she chooses to be no more a silent object in the male-oriented structure. Freeing herself from the boundaries of Elsinore and the court that is associated with corruption and death, she seeks for peace and absolute freedom through death.

⁶ This is also reminiscent of Hamlet's sea voyage. It is significant that Claudius sends Hamlet to England (which means death in this particular instance) for he is regarded as a threat (and a mad man on the surface).

⁷ In the Shakespearean canon, willow is a significant symbol in terms of the relationship between women, singing and death because Desdemona sings the "Willow Song" before she is murdered by her husband Othello in their marital bed.

It is no coincidence that the circle of songs in *Hamlet* is completed with the Gravedigger's song, beginning with "In youth when I did love, did love, / Methought it was very sweet:" (V.i.61-62). In other words, Ophelia's last song, which is about death, is followed by the Gravedigger's song, which focuses on old age and death, and what is more, the Gravedigger sings it, while he is digging Ophelia's grave. The song is based upon the "first, third, and eighth stanzas" (Duffin, 2004: 212) of a poem that was written by Thomas, Lord Vaux. Although the subject matter of the Gravedigger's fragments of songs is similar to Ophelia's, the way he sings about love and death (and burial) is utterly different from that of Ophelia. In this context, it would be appropriate to suggest that the Gravedigger is more like a Greek chorus commenting upon life and death.

Moreover, it is significant that, the Gravedigger can be likened to the Shakespearean fool. Hence it is utterly understandable that in various editions the two Gravediggers are also referred to as the Clowns. The Gravedigger, in this respect, has a tangled character, which is a combination of his occupation and the way he is perceived by others, which associates him with a clown. Moreover, his allusion to the clown is multi-layered because clowns are related to the concept of rustic, which immediately links him to soil and digging: "A 'clown' was a peasant or rustic – ignorant and uncouth. A spurious Elizabethan etymology derived the word from the Latin colonus, 'farmer'" (Davis, 2006: 69). The Gravedigger, who symbolically digs and finds out what is hidden under the surface, and who knows that the human being is mortal and alone in this world, shares his thoughts with Hamlet and us through what is left in between the lines.

The Gravedigger's impromptu singing functions as a musical bridge between IV.v and V.i as well as Ophelia and her grave. The last moment Ophelia appears on the stage is marked with her songs, and before she once again appears on the stage – as a dead body – the Gravedigger prepares not only the grave she is going to be buried in but also the reader/audience for Ophelia's burial. Although their motivation for singing is utterly different from one another, the Gravedigger and Ophelia are interrelated. Ophelia, who can be regarded as an example of the female who remains unsymbolized in the monosexual social structure, is symbolically commemorated by the Gravedigger. Hence, the cycle of songs in *Hamlet* are all related to Ophelia, whose speech is defined as "nothing." Remaining unheard and absent in the male-dominated structure, Ophelia deviates from the conventional mode of communication and uses songs as a personal language. However, despite the fact that she is heard, she is still not wholly paid attention to. Thus, she is doomed to fade out as her final fragment of song comes to end.

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