

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN *MANDRAGOLA BY MOLIERE* AND *TARTUFFE BY MOLIERE*

NAME: DIARA, FRANCISCA UGOCHI

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DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

Gender is the sociocultural phenomenon of the division of people into various categories according to their biological sex, with each having associated roles, clothing, stereotypes, etc.; those with male sex characteristics are perceived as "boys" and "men," while those with female sex characteristics are perceived as "girls" and "women." Sexuality on the other hand is the People's sexual interest in and attraction to others; their capacity to have erotic experiences and responses.

During the Renaissance, men had a near monopoly on the development of ideas pertaining to love and manners. These ideas were designed to serve the interest of husbands and male dominated groups, resulting in the removal of women from any "unladylike" meaning outside of the home position of power or erotic independence. When looking at how Western Europeans regarded a woman ruler during this time period, it is clear that women had little opportunity to gain power. While male rule was viewed as orderly, legitimate, and correct, female rule was perceived as disorderly, illegitimate, and dangerous. Women rulers, whose accession to power always took place due to the lack of a legitimate male heir, were seen as a threat to the natural and social order. While men within the public sphere were typically honored and respected, to be designated a "public woman" was essentially to be called a whore.

In *Mandragola*, the term fortune, meaning chance or luck as an external or arbitrary force affecting human affairs, is severally in this work yet Lucrezia the principal female character is unable to control her own destiny. What controls each

woman's life, and its set course are feelings of weakness, fear and intimidation that stem from being seen, not as a woman, but as an object to be possessed. For Lucrezia, it is the result of sexual objectification that terrorizes and objectifies her. Hence the saying "As man conquers the world, so too he conquers the female." They leave this woman continually waiting to find out what her fate will be because she has no meaningful say in the matter. Her option is only to submit or resist, never instigating.

Lucrezia's unparalleled beauty makes her as something that Callimaco simply must have. Her coldness and continued resistance to the advances only results in increasing her desirability. Lucrezia has nothing to do with the success or failure of Callimaco's plan. She has no say in the matter and in order to achieve success, Callimaco only has to convince Lucrezia's husband, Messer Nicia, that the plan he has put forth is a good one. Once in Lucrezia's bedroom, Callimaco is able to force himself upon her. Despite the fact that this is the first time that Callimaco and Lucrezia are actually speaking to each other, he claims to be madly in love with her and unable to live without the caresses that she gives to him, or better put, that he just takes.

If it is not for all of the pressure from outside forces, Lucrezia will never sin. At this point in the story all of the forces are working against her. In order to do what she thinks is right, Lucrezia will have to go against the wishes of her husband, her mother, the doctor and her priest. If she continues with the plan they have for her, she will be making a cuckold of her husband. Yet as authority figures emanate an aura of rightness and their actions cannot easily be challenged, she yields to their ideas. As socialization teaches that men know best, Lucrezia eventually gives in to their decisions.

In *Tartuffe*, it is what Tartuffe says that Orgon says is final. He does not care about what Dorine, the maid, his daughter Mariane and his wife Elmire say. In fact, Orgon does not want to hear their ideas or views in any issue. Whatever is happening to his wife does not concern him. we see this when Dorine tells him thus: "Madam had

fever, and a splitting headache Day before yesterday, all day and evening and At evening she had nausea And could't touch a single thing for supper, Her headache still was so severe.” Instead of inquiring about his wife’s state of health, He keeps on asking of Tartuffe’s welfare.

Orgon’s mother Madame Pernelle describes Mariane thus: “butter wouldn't melt in your mouth” and as such she maintains docility. Her father knows who she is and that is why he comes to her first with a patronizing voice. “Mariane, in you I've always found a daughter dutiful And gentle. So I've always love you dearly.” This makes her to accept that she say anything that pleases him about Tartuffe. This gives him a chance to force his choice on her. “Well spoken. A good girl. Say then, my daughter, That all his person shines with noble merit, That he has won your heart, and you would like To have him, by my choice, become your husband.” When she tries to say that it is not true, Orgon tells her that he intends to make it the truth and that he has settle it.

Because of gender, Mariane says: “What can I do? My father is the master. A father's rights are such, it seems to me, That I could never dare to say a word.” This contradicts Damis, her brother’s charisma when he says that he must end the paltry of Tartuffe's plots, and speaks a truth or two to him. Her personal situation is defined by the result of a man’s fortune for good or bad and by the determination of his will. This statement underscores the lack of power that Mariane has over her own situation. Because personal freedom is not a choice that Mariane can make, Tartuffe becomes the only option.

Likewise in *Mandragola*, Lucrezia resigns herself to accept her husband's and mother's obsession for an heir and eagerly embraces the pleasant agreement she makes with her suitor Callimaco. Her mother Sostrata convinces her thus: “Don't you see that a woman who has no children has no home? Her husband dies, she's left like a beast, abandoned by everyone. ” which means that child bearing is a gender role for females. Friar Timoteo stresses her duty thus: “The end has to be looked to in all things; your

end is to fill a seat in paradise, to make your husband happy.” He has to bring Bible into it just to make her believe that what they are telling her to do is not a sin as he talks of the case of Lot’s two daughters.

In the case of Mariane, it is Tartuffe, the Hypocrite over her love Valere while for Lucrezia, it is Callimaco in disguise of a madman over her husband Nicia. These two men are obsessed with sex that they try all means in getting their desires. But instead of Mariane in *Tartuffe* that Orgon has in mind for him, he has sex urge for Elmire, his wife and tries to convince her that he is also a man with sexual feeling despite his religious dogmatism.