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Viola: The Shakespearean ‘Spice Girl’

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Abstract: Shakespeare, the leading light of the Elizabethan theatre, was a popular entertainer combining artistic perfection with a commitment to the reflective and whose plays contributed vitally to the social energy of his day. Popular culture encompasses commercial products and commodities that are consumed for enjoyment and assigned value and significance by members of various social strata. Pop culture is progressive and permeates everyday lives of people, influencing peoples' perceptions and shaping attitudes. The Bard had an extraordinary ability to catch the sensitivities of emotions and consciousness of another and to fashion a range of narrative selves. There was an intense debate about the anatomy of gender in the pseudomedical treatises of the Renaissance period. Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* questions the exclusionary nature of socially constructed categories of gender by Viola's calling out of her feminine identity. My contention is that Viola, the female protagonist of the play, is an uncanny prefiguration of the 'Spice Girls' Rock band of the 1990's in her calling out of her feminine identity and confident assertion of such: "As I am woman..."; to set up a feminist genealogy of speaking women with resistance to male hegemony and articulation and celebration of being woman. The Spice Girls with their 'Girl Power' mantra evoked 'Spiceman'ia' outdoing 'Beatlemania'. This young all-girl band provided girls and young women with self-narratives in a polysemia of affirmative images of the feminine through their songs and musical performances. Their music provided an important cultural venue for the articulation and fashioning of female subjectivity. The 'wonder' of this 'Resonance' of feminist concerns brings about a 'marvelous' circulation of social energy and addresses the vital need for equitable gender relations.

Keywords - Greenblatt, political Shakespeare, feminism, feminine genealogy, social energy, pop culture, being oneself, self-reliant, resonance, wonder.

INTRODUCTION

"I can sing, /And speak to him in many sorts of music"
(I, ii, 57-58)

Twelfth Night or *What You Will* is a comedy of identity set in motion with the dramatic event of a shipwreck which propels and projects the twins, Viola and her brother Sebastian with ambiguous identities onto the shores of Illyria. Contingency drives Viola to disguise herself as 'Cesario', a "eunuch" (I,ii, 56) to serve Orsino, the Duke of Illyria. He/she is commissioned by the Duke to woo the exquisite Lady Olivia who has vowed to live like a "cloistress" for seven years mourning the death of her brother (II,ii,28). Viola herself, though grieving for her lost brother is yet self-reliant as she trusts "my wit" (I, ii, 61) to see her through this misfortune. The moody and emotionally self-indulgent Duke Orsino takes an immediate liking for Cesario's youthful appearance with a feminine semblance having "Diana's lip" and melodic voice and sends him off with a prescribed love-text to Olivia(I,iv,31-36). Olivia rejects his suit outright as "the old tune.... as fat as fulsome... as howling after music" (V, i, 111-13) as representing male chauvinism, gross and distasteful. The Duke desires music as a feed to his emotions: "If music be the food of love, play on;/Give me excess of it, that surfeiting, / The appetite may sicken, and so die" (I, i, 1-3). Though a dreamy languorous evocation of love it is but in conception and expression, an "appetite", cloying and self-centred. Orsino is self-duped and is more in love with the idea of love rather than the object of love, Olivia, who is soon enough replaced by his "fancy's queen", 'Cesario' turned 'Viola' by "a sportful malice" of Time's play (V, i, 397, 373). Olivia too is more in love with grief than the memory of her dead brother.

DISCUSSION

Romantic 'Ill'-yria wears veils of self-deception. This unrealistic, self-delusory land is invaded by the youthful realism and optimism of Viola who is in love with life. The illusion of 'Cesario', a girl disguised as a boy sets Orsino and Olivia on a path of self-discovery and into a new understanding of reality. Viola's music retunes the blaise music of love scripted by the artificial courtly Petrarchan tradition of sonneteering. The Duke's is a self-congratulatory discourse of his love being "more noble than the world" based upon "soul" power which he projects as irresistible (II, iv, 85, 89). He refuses to admit any challenge to his hegemonic appropriation of love, any possibility of rejection by Olivia is unthinkable: "I cannot be so answer'd" (II, iv, 91). To Viola's fiction

of a sister who died yearning for love, his response is a denial that women can love so intensely or absolutely because women “lack retention” and “their love may be call'd appetite/No motion of the liver, but the palate/ That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt”(II, iv, 99-102). Viola counters his misogyny by standing up and articulating in quiet affirmative tones defending women as inhabiting a no-gap situation between conception and execution of love, unlike men who are: “much in our vows, but little in our love” (II,iv, 121). Viola’s “pipe/Is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound” (I,iv,33) teaches the Duke the meaning of true love, a devoted service to the beloved, a Platonic conception of love in its noblest and highest form, a patient love of the understanding, a self-negating emotion as she loves him “more than I love these eyes, more than my life”(V, i, 138). Enraged that Cesario has appropriated Olivia, the Duke is struck by violent jealousy and seeks to kill his rival. Viola’s calm and collected response is that she will “most jocund, apt and willingly/ To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die” (V, i, 135-136). The Duke awakens to the dignity and beauty of her love and announces his decision to marry her: “Your master quits you; and for your service done him... Here is my hand: you shall from this time be/Your master’s mistress” (V, i, 329-334). Viola awaits “my maiden weeds” (V, i, 262), kept in the sea captain’s safe custody, to do the nuptials.

Viola's music counters the elaborate artifice and capriciousness of Orsino and Olivia where their fancy like the sea is fluid, unconfined and a metaphor of destruction. Viola in performing the proxy wooing goes beyond the text scripted by the Duke and sings a spontaneous improvised passionate note, voicing and eliciting feminine desire. Orsino's Petrarchan text which though addressed to Olivia treats her as a pretext to read out a blazon of female beauty in the prevalent all male aristocratic coterie. Olivia parodies and rejects while Viola subverts the clichéd poetic conventions by turning it into a passionate sincere appeal for love. The laurel earning social economy of the Petrarchan manuscript is replaced by Viola's enchanting song of love, "the babbling gossip of the air"(I,v,292), seeking reciprocal desire, flexible and resilient as the willow. The Duke's narcissistic monologue is replaced by a realistic dialogue and negotiative space. The revitalizing language of the heart is a liberating experience.

Viola's music retunes the enervated notes of love and restores a positive life-giving contact with reality by her instinct for honesty and balance. Orsino and Olivia both accept and adopt a more natural and fulfilling way of life.

Cross-dressed as a male Viola never rebukes her womanhood. Shakespeare's other cross-dressed heroines, Portia, Nerissa, Rosalind, Julia never regret their disguise as males; it is expedient, and disguised as males they are able to solve the difficult situation in which they have become enmeshed. Though expedient for Viola too, yet disguise raises moral distaste for her as being a "monster" indulging in the "wickedness" of deceit (II,ii,35,28). She never forgets her true identity: "As I am woman" (II,ii,39) is a constant refrain and she would "rather go with sir priest than sir knight" (III, iv, 299). She is the 'ciswoman', a woman in her psychological orientation and with a heterosexual ideal in love and marriage.

Viola's music frees herself as the eunuch of time by an overturning of her subservient position as servant to the Duke to become the cherished mistress of his heart. As the shipwrecked woman, she was organized and calm in ordering the sea captain to furnish her a male guise. Yet her industry and initiative gets compromised as it makes her dependent on patriarchal hegemony of Duke, Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Auguecheek and the scorn of Malvolio the steward of Olivia. Antonio's capture and accusation of ingratitude by 'Cesario' /Sebastian bewilders her yet fills her with hope that her beloved brother is alive and she anticipates a time when she can openly resume her identity as woman. She is happy to be a girl and looks forward to a time when she can discard "my masculine usurp'd attire" for "my maiden weeds" (V,I,257,262). This assertion of Difference, this calling out of her feminine identity frees her from the psychological and moral burden of an ambiguous state. Viola/ 'Cesario', her feminine dress awaited, yet walks off the stage, arm in arm escorted by the Duke and calls attention to Shakespeare's deliberate play on gender roles. "As I am woman" is a submerged willow song of desire for identity in Difference that does not yet have a fully developed text of its own. Yet it poses a satirical and questioning perspective on Orsino's version of hegemonic desire, by according privilege to feminine desire since it escapes the text prescribed by the masochistic Duke. These onstage energies released and circulated to the theatre audience suggest new possibilities and challenges to the dominant ideology. The anti-theatricalist texts of the Elizabethan times testify to the fear of a contagion of ideas spreading through the body politic of the state.

My proposal in this article is to trace the feminine genealogy of an articulation of woman space, marking an emerging, aspirational dawn of light and liberation, a qualified Renaissance for women glimpsed in the 'petite histories' of the times. I suggest that Viola is Shakespeare's 'Spice Girl' with resistance to male hegemony and the articulation and assertion of Difference, a cultural entitlement to womanly subjectivity.

Culture is a whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual as defined by Raymond Williams (*Keywords*,87-93). It is “a particular way of life” and is concerned with customs and conventions, mentalities and values of people of different strata of society in a particular period of history. Culture is also understood as a refinement and nurturance of the mind, an evaluative stance. Culture encompasses the dominant ideology as well as the subversive and emergent forces in society. Literature and history are imbricated in a dynamically creative situation. Raymond Williams sees the Elizabethan play reflecting society, culture and the material condition of life and sees these texts themselves as history. Literature and the Arts cannot be separated from other kinds of social practice. Literature is a practice which intervened in contemporary history as in the famous anecdote of Queen Elizabeth's objection to the staging of *Richard II* as in her perception it had subversive potential to inspire rebellion against her.

A brief look at the norms and outlooks that constructed the 'social energy' of early modern English society is essential to the research agenda of this article. Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* set in 1507 champions the cause of women's education similar to that of men and presents the novelty of court ladies speaking in dialogue format, avidly about politics among other matters; the *Colloquies* of Erasmus 1518, presents women's voices being critical of their society; Pietro Bembo's widely influential *Asolani* takes up the cause of women's participation in ongoing discussions; women did make social uses of lyric poetry. Though a dominantly patriarchal society 16th and 17th century Europe did have gender anxieties and the intense debate about the malleability

of gender is reflected in the pseudomedical treatises of the period. The Renaissance scientist Johann Weyer stated that "although women are feminine in actuality, I would call them masculine in potentiality" and how women were thought of as incomplete males capable of transmuting into males under conditions of physical duress (Lacquer, pp8-10). Such Renaissance discourse testifies to the blurring of rigid divides between the two genders. Queen Elizabeth would usually refer to herself both as a male "Prince" and a "woman". The fashioning of the Queen's image accorded her a mythological status of being akin to the Goddess Astrae, Biblical heroines like Esther, Judith, Deborah, Virgin Mary, to King David whose delivery of the Holy Ark to his people was paralleled by Queen Elizabeth's delivery of the Religion of Christ to her realms. She was the 'Faerie Queen' and 'Gloriana', a brilliantly capable monarch, an unmarried woman who ruled successfully for about half a century. *Twelfth Night* was staged in 1601 before the Court of the Queen and a "political Shakespeare" might have used the cross-dressing phenomenon of the Elizabethan stage and of contemporary social life to valorize the feminine in Viola's calling out "As I am woman". Shakespeare could be putting a conventional plot for unconventional feminist purposes and paying tribute to her woman power. In this Shakespeare was contributing to the "social energy" in circulation "without a center, dispersed, heterogeneous, and above all, disoriginated" (Prendergast, 99) and the 'social discourse' and the 'aesthetic discourse' become mutually constitutive. Duke Orsino at the end of the play praises Viola's capacities: "so much against the mettle of your sex" (V, I, 330); Sebastian's words: "she bore a mind that envy could not but call fair" (II, i, 30-31) is a fitting tribute to Viola's beauty of mind and multi-talented personality. She speaks "masterly" (II, iv, 23). *What You Will* as an alternative title of the play signifies desire for what is out of reach, for an alterity in the making.

Shakespeare's plays are a part of the contemporary canon and his comedies are being read, discussed and critically examined by students and academia as well as playgoing audiences. They are part of the social energy in circulation as testified by the various screen adaptations of *Twelfth Night* in particular. Contemporary gender issues and gender trouble find a "resonance" in Shakespeare's representation and insight into problems and dilemmas posed by the issue. *Twelfth Night* questions the exclusionary nature of socially constructed categories of gender by Viola's calling out and her claim to social equality.

The human self is a product of its particular historical moment and human experience is constituted by prevalent social concerns and ideologies. Dollimore in *Political Shakespeare* writes that dominant ideology is the enemy and marginalized opinion is to be upheld and valorized. "Self-fashioning takes place in a double relationship to authority on the one hand and to alterity on the other and is governed by the.... oscillation between totalization and differentiation" analyses Greenblatt (Veenstra, pp181-82). The human self is a construct, a "cultural artifact" (RSF, pp 256) and the articulation of being by the discourse of Feminism addresses the need for, and offers, an alterity proposition for the world.

While First-wave Feminism concentrated on suffrage and legal rights towards acquiring gender equality, Second-wave feminism of the 1960's aimed at consciousness raising and self-realizational goals. The feminine activists set up independent feminist businesses and also "women's music" industry in the iconic all women 'Olivia Records'. Popular culture was viewed as sexist and they created pop culture of their own as counter-culture to challenge the dominant belittling images of women and created 'positive' images of women. The Australian musician Helen Reddy's song "I Am Woman" (1971) were self-penned empowering lyrics: "I am strong/I am invincible/I am woman" (<https://www.google.com>); it became the anthem of Feminism as well as protest song at feminist rallies. The women's movement envisaged that through liberation of women a total transformation of entire societies could be achieved and new power equations could be negotiated. The cultural disruption of second wave feminism led to a heightened awareness and realization that notions of 'femininity' were a social construct imposed by the dominant patriarchal discourse. Women took to singing in the drag like the young songwriter and singer Robyn Archer; women writers and painters broke all rules about distinctive gender roles and spheres. Women's liberation with its belief in change was a cultural renaissance. Third wave feminism, (1990's-2010's), is associated with punk-rock, hip-hop, zines, consumerism and products and the platform of the Internet. In the United States the 'Riot-Grrrl' movement of early 1990's focussed on girlhood 'with an angry grrrowl' as reported by leading newspapers of the day. Groups like 'Bikini Kill', 'Bratmobile', 'No Doubt' sang radical feminist lyrics with a fiery abrasive style (jacobinmag.com). Such performances attempted to break the hegemony of an all-male music industry and find space for feminine utterance. Youth music provides important cultural venue for the articulation of youthful subjectivities and express the feelings of frustration or hope, rage or pleasure.

It is the phenomenal success of the British all-girl pop group, "Spice Girls" which is of particular significance to this article. The point that I would like to discuss and establish here is that Viola's music in *Twelfth Night* is an 'uncanny' prefiguration of the polysemous musical messaging of this 5-member girl band and the 'wonder' of this 'Resonance'.

Spice Girls, the British girl group formed in 1994, achieved superstardom with their 'girl power' mantra inspiring 'Spicemanía' in a young female fanbase and became iconic figures of pop culture for a decade. Their debut single "Wannabe" (1996) echoed what youth "really really want" and marked a significant moment in the history of the UK. *Time* magazine, 31 October 2016, called the Spice Girls "the most recognizable face" of 'Cool Britannia': a mid 90's celebration of youth culture. An attendant shift in the political scene saw Prime Minister Tony Blair, Britain's most popular leader since World War II, seeking to associate himself with trendsetting icons like the Spice Girls as part of his agenda to rebrand Britain as modern, cool and happening.

It was at a crucial and dark time of hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women and dominance of lads' magazines when the Spice Girls burst on the scene rejecting patriarchal hegemony. Their song "Wannabe" (1996) was the biggest selling debut single ever and was number 1 in the charts of 37 countries. Their debut album "Spice" (1996) sold more than 23 million copies worldwide becoming the best-selling album by a female group in history. Their next album "Spiceworld", 1997 sold more than 14 million copies worldwide. Inspiring 'Spicemanía' like 'Beatlemania' they in fact outdid the Beatles in their popularity and success and earned a Lifetime Achievement award at the Brits in 2000. Their financial worth was estimated at about \$800 million by 1998. In March 1997, the band published *Girl Power!*, a collection of photographs, lyrics and biographical snippets and was their ideological

manifesto, celebrating feminine power. The music critic Paul Gorman (BBC Archives 7 July 2016) writes how their entry on the pop scene broke the hegemonic control of boy bands and the time was ripe for an opinionated girl group.

Though the group was set up through an advertisement process by the father-son duo, Bob and Chris Herbert, dissatisfied with their management the girls fired them and took charge of their band themselves. Going against the advice of record companies they chose the first single debut number--- 'Wannabe' which really struck home with its message of what girls really want--- empowerment and control of their destiny. The five members of the band--- Melanie Chisholm, Geri Halliwell, Victoria Adams (Beckham), Melanie Brown and Emma Bunton were young girls in the age group 17-21 and yet became leaders of a 'girl power' revolution for Gen Y. The five girls co-authored their songs, didn't play any musical instrument but rather sang and danced their message of 'wannabe' counted by claiming cultural entitlement to womanly subjectivity. They were expressive and spontaneous yet exhibited emotional control and exuded confidence. They symbolized resistance to patriarchal dominance and epitomized 'girl power', self-belief and self-reliance, group solidarity and loyalty to their own sex, over relationships with men: their pop number 'Stop' calls for a slowing down on the courtship process; 'Wannabe' appeals to female bonding where the male suitor is advised to accept the girl friends and he will be given a try if he is 'for real' otherwise if he bugs her, she will 'say goodbye'. The band targeted young teenage girls and their polysemous femininity caught the imagination of all young women. It showed them they could be anything that they wanted, a range of female identities and fashion styles to choose and identify with: Mel C or 'Sporty Spice' a stylish athlete; Emma Bunton or 'Baby Spice' a cute pig-tailed angel; Mel B or 'Scary Spice' with ferocious confidence; Victoria or 'Posh Spice' a cool collected fashionable and polished persona; Geri Halliwell or 'Ginger Spice' who was loud-mouthed and spunky. Each had a distinct personality and individual style of dress and dance moves on stage, appealing to diverse biographies and yet harmonizing as a group. They believed in being themselves with moral credibility and authenticity. Their songs exemplified their personal experience as explained in their manifesto *Girl Power!*. The video of 'Mama' presents their mothers together with stills and home movie footage of each of them as children. Their videos show them working hard at their songs, planning and documenting their rise to fame and celebrating with joy and incredulity the adulation they receive. Their songs and videos present an image of the ordinary girl next door yet who 'wannabe' empowered self-reliant entities, who reject the given text of patriarchal shackles. Hence, they evoke an empathy in the young female audiences who feel they are truly understood and represented by such cult figures: "the Spice Girls speak as their audience and with their audience". (Leach, pp 150). Nelson Mandela called them his "heroes" (BBC News Archives 1.11.1997); they earned applause from Prince Charles and his two sons; the Oxford English Dictionary added 'girl power' to its list of new words as denoting "ambition, assertiveness and individualism" (BBC News Archives 17.1 2002 – '*Girl Power goes Mainstream*'); in 2018 'Rolling Stone' magazine named the Spice Girls' "girl power" ethos on 'The Millennial 100' list "of 100 people, music, cultural touchstones and movements that have shaped the Millennial generation"(en.m.wikipedia.org). Leonara Epstein, Executive Director at hellogiggles.com, an influential entertainment and lifestyle website, wrote how their "girl power -- sticking with your girlfriend and standing up to boys -- was something we needed; for many of us this would be our first introduction to feminism... female empowerment and positivity" (<https://hellogiggles.com>).

In tracing the genealogy of speaking women, I would like to highlight how akin the Spice Girls are to Shakespeare's Viola in their articulation and celebration of being women – the 'wonder' evoked in this 'resonance' of "...collective dreams,...desire, anxiety,...free-floating intensities of experience"(SN,pp19), the flow of the current of social energy across centuries encoded in Shakespeare's text and exhibited in the performance on stage and media by the Spice Girls. Viola is an 'uncanny' prefiguration of the Spice Girls. The polysemia of Spice Girls is that of Viola's ability to sing varied notes. Just as they would improvise and create a song with narrative simplicity combining spontaneity and yet a deliberately planned venture, Viola the cool collected girl with a quiet resolve, disguises and designs the persona of a eunuch to tide over the existential crisis caused by shipwreck and to be vigilant of opportunities for self-expression in Illyria: both combine the artful and artlessness of the girl next door. Viola teaches the true meaning of love and life to both Orsino and Olivia. She rebukes Olivia for rejecting the joys of life "Lady, you are the cruellest she alive, / If you will lead these graces to the grave/ And leave the world no copy" (I, v, 259-61). The spontaneity and poetry of courtship going beyond the Duke's stilted text has a liberating influence on Olivia's self-deceiving mask. In this Viola develops a sympathetic bonding with Olivia, further sealed by the marriage to her brother Sebastian. The Duke too is released from the moribund Petrarchan 'blazon of love' to understand the true meaning of love. The hit number of the Spice Girls, "Spice Up Your Life" (1997), has a carnival tune with a fast lively tempo fusing salsa, samba and Latin rhythms. The lyrics are an international rally cry targeting a global audience: "People of the world," "colours of the world", whether the "chicas" or "Dancing Queen" or "Tribal Spaceman" or "Kung Fu" fighters, "Every boy and every girl" that "When you're feelin' sad and low.... All you need is positivity" and to smile and dance to "Spice up your life". Both messages of the 'power girls' of the Renaissance and the modern world are advising to "hold tight" and "go round", go on with a variety of dance moves and musical elements or flexibility of attitudes and approaches in order to tackle the pressures of life and feel better and emerge triumphant.

The play *Twelfth Night* ends with Viola establishing her self-worth, anxiously awaiting her feminine garments to appear her true feminine self, asserting the beauty and power of her mind and personality. The Spice Girls created a social and cultural phenomenon which invigorated feminism from being an academic subject to an accessible reality. Their number "Song for Her" instills confidence in women, exhorting them to stand up for who they are: "Where is that girl? Is she long gone or missing?... Wipe off your tears of doubt you've been crying, / Lift up your dreams.../ Never forget: the girl is the woman you are/ This is a song for her". Their song "Mama" sets up a maternal genealogy, the value of motherly nurturance, feminine bonding and togetherness: "Mama, I love you, Mama I care.../ You're my friend... I'm sure I know why/ Why you were misunderstood/ So now, I see through your eyes/ All I can give you is love.../ And loving you and loving me/ And love that's true and guaranteed" (<https://www.google.com>). Just as Viola's cross-dressing as 'Cesario' brings normalcy to the fanciful and hyperbolic in Illyria, the Spice Girls are ordinary girls indulging in behavioural cross-dressing as glamorous performers offering a critique of this 'mad world' and presenting standards of truthfulness, articulating the cause of being your real self.

In *Literature Lost*, John Ellis writes that literature far from giving us eternal truths, gives us an insight into problems, challenges and dilemmas. We read the past in order to understand our own lives and Shakespeare's text is a monument more lasting than bronze and yet it is also an abstract and brief chronicle of its time. Viola dressed as Cesario has become a man, a "poor monster", a creature who is confusing to herself and to others. The play however ends with the undeniable existence of Viola's "true" or essential self. Popular culture film adaptations of *Twelfth Night* in the present era have taken up these issues of teenagers growing up in a challenging world and confronted with identity issues. Mary Pipher's book *Reviving Ophelia* speaks of a present day "girl-poisoning culture" in America which "limits girls' development, truncates their wholeness and leaves many of them traumatised" and "Wholeness is shattered by the chaos of adolescence. Girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions" (pp 12,20). In our progressive times of dazzling technological achievement is not idea of woman tragic and disturbing because it restricts her from fulfilling her nature and having a well- rounded life with a companion in marriage?

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare, as Greenblatt analyses, has "limitless talent for entering into the consciousness of another, perceiving its deepest structures as a manipulable fiction, reinscribing it into his own narrative form" (RSF, pp 252) and "remains throughout his career the supreme purveyor of 'empathy', the fashioner of narrative selves, the master improviser" (Ibid pp 252- 253). 'Resonance' is forged between the past and the present and each is understood in the light of the other and 'wonder' is evoked at the marvellous reverberation of significance.

Hélène Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa", writes that "woman must write her self....Woman must put herself into the text -- as into the world and into history -- by her own movement". Woman "must urgently learn to speak " and mark her "shattering entry into history"(LM, pp279,284).

Shakespeare, the leading light of the Elizabethan theatre, a popular entertainer combining commercial success with a sleight of artistry and intellectual commitment manipulates his audiences' consciousness towards a recognition, negotiation and articulation of feminine identity in the social dynamics of the times. Shakespeare writes 'écriture féminine' as he had an open inclusive mind (Jon Simons, pp127). Commenting about the Spice Girls the music critic David Browne of 'Entertainment Weekly' (<https://ew.com,7.11.1997>) noted how "trading verses.....they transform the numbers into audio pajama parties full of sisterly advice, support and warnings. Part heart, part mind... Spiceworld may just be the answer to one of life's most vexing quandaries".

The feminist movement could benefit by being receptive to these progressive trends in popular feminist youth rock and pop culture that remodel and fashion anew the question of feminine identity. They represent a vital communication and express a valid demand for recognition and existential space for woman as woman herself.

Viola's calling out, her naming of self as woman prefigures the 'worlding' by the Spice Girls ---- drawing attention to the world as a stage to be acted upon.

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