IAN MCEWAN'S *NUTSHELL* AS A CONTEMPORARY *HAMLET*: GENDER AND THE HERO

Alicia MURO

University of La Rioja, Department of Modern Philologies
E-mail: alicia.muro@unirioja.es

IAN MCEWAN'S *NUTSHELL* AS A CONTEMPORARY *HAMLET*: GENDER AND THE HERO

Abstract: Timeless heroes such as William Shakespeare's Hamlet embody the characteristics attributed to the tragic hero by Aristotle in his Poetics. These heroes, however, cannot find a place in our contemporary society and are in consequent need of a reevaluation. This rewriting turns the tragic hero, therefore, into an anti-hero—a figure much identified in twenty-first-century culture. Ian McEwan succeeds at this reevaluation in his novel Nutshell (2016), where he adapts Shakespeare's Hamlet into a contemporary setting. Prince Hamlet, in this case, is turned into an unborn anti-hero, acting from inside his mother's womb. The female characters are also updated, since figures like Gertrude or Ophelia are no longer relatable for audiences of the twenty-first century.

Keywords: tragic hero, anti-hero, Hamlet, Ian McEwan, rewriting, gender, contemporary

Citation suggestion: Muro, Alicia. "Ian McEwan's *Nutshell* as a Contemporary *Hamlet*: Gender and the Hero." *Transilvania*, no. 6-7 (2022): 99-109.
https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2022.06-07.12.

Introduction

Throughout the history of literature, cinema, and many other arts, we have encountered countless male and female heroes to whom nearly the same set of features could be assigned. As the protagonist of his own epic poem, Odysseus, for example, shares his bravery, nobility, unselfishness, and the recognition of the greatness of his adventures and achievements for his people with Beowulf, Sir Gawain, or el Cid. The ultimate aim of these epic heroes is the appreciation and acknowledgement of their quests, their fame and glory on Earth and in the hereafter.

The Greeks and their culture introduced the concept of tragedy and, with it, our perception of the hero was bound to change. A tragic hero such as Oedipus, for instance, seemed to have very similar qualities to those of the traditional hero, but he did not share the latter's perfection. The tragic hero (typically male) is flawed and, as a consequence, he generally fails in his endeavor by committing a mistake that also leads to his own downfall.

Literary heroes, no matter whether epic or tragic, have evolved side by side with mankind during the centuries, so much so that they have progressively lost their defining qualities. Literature, most of the time, reflects reality. Hence, it was difficult for writers to keep portraying male and female role models that could no longer be found in real life. This was especially true of modernity, first, and postmodernity, later, when all that could be seen in the outer world was death and destruction. As a result, the role of the anti-hero was then introduced. Far from being perfect, the anti-hero stands for the ordinary man who no longer cares for the welfare of his people but merely his own. The role of the anti-hero kept gaining importance during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with such significant examples as Tom Ripley in Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) or Ignatius J. Reilly in John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980).

The aim of this article is that of exploring the differences between these two types of heroes as exemplified, on the one hand, by Hamlet, the male protagonist of Shakespeare's homonymous tragic play *Hamlet* (1609) and one of the most complex literary heroes of all times, and, on the other, by one of his modern counterparts, the male protagonist of a contemporary adaptation of the play into the novel form in Ian McEwan's *Nutshell* (2016). Thus, the emphasis is on the changes that the latter incorporates in order to attract a twenty-first-century audience.

Hamlet conforms to the heroic qualities that Aristotle established in his *Poetics* and therefore falls into the category of tragic hero.[2] The aforementioned variation of the play, however,

adapts its story to our contemporary times, in which almost no audience would recognize itself in the tragic hero anymore, and hence transforms the figure of Hamlet from that of a tragic hero into an anti-hero. Likewise, characters like Gertrude or Ophelia seem to have no place in the twenty-first century. Consequently, McEwan does not only adapt the male protagonist to a contemporary audience, but he also revises female characters and deals with the issue of gender in his novel.

Nutshell tackles many of the central themes in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* in a direct and explicit way. The most delightful aspect of this novel is the narratological challenge that resides in its narrator, a fully conscious thirty-eight-week-old fetus who learns about the outside world thanks to the radio podcasts his mother listens to and to the conversations he overhears between his mother, Trudy, and her lover, Claude (who is also her brother-in-law). In this way, the narrator finds out that his mother and his uncle are planning to murder his father, driven by their greed to be in possession of the family mansion. Aware of the wretched world he is getting himself into, the narrator's dilemma is, like Hamlet's, whether to live or die, which given his very particular circumstances is synonymous with getting born or dying in his mother's womb.

Therefore, taking Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as urtext, the main purpose of this article is to show the changes that McEwan, as author of a modern-day adaptation, has made to Shakespeare's play in order to render it more palatable and relatable for a contemporary audience. These changes begin with the alterations in the male character, whose identity is called into question, and continue with those in the female characters, who are no longer passive figures but women taking the reins of their lives.

Theoretical Framework

Aristotle's *Poetics* could also be considered the roots of narratology as the study of narrative structures, although this field flourished once again in the twentieth century with critics such as Wayne C. Booth, Mieke Bal or Gerard Genette. Bal (1985) and Booth (1961) explored the concept of the narrator and the different types of narrator than we can encounter in literature. Taking into consideration the narrator that we are going to find in *Nutshell,* it is worth analyzing now the concepts of the unreliable, the autodiegetic and the homodiegetic narrator. Booth's well-known definition of the unreliable narrator reads as follows: "For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator *reliable* when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), *unreliable* when he does not."[3] However, there are several different types of this kind of narrator, since we can encounter consciously unreliable storytellers or unconsciously unreliable ones, among others. In the case of *Nutshell*, the narrator would be unconsciously untrustworthy, as I argue afterwards.

Besides, we are dealing with a character-bound narrator, also called homodiegetic narrator, since he is a character in his own narrative. According to Bal, this narrator appears "if the 'I' is to be identified with a character, hence, also an actor in the fabula."[4] Apart from being homodiegetic, the narrator in *Nutshell* is also autodiegetic, since he could be identified with the protagonist and hero of the story.

The concepts of intertextuality and hypertextuality, quite related to that of metafiction, will also be recurrent throughout the analysis of the novel. 'Intertextuality' as understood by Julia Kristeva (1980) refers to the common set of references to other texts that we can find within the actual text, and it is something that surrounds us constantly in literature, television, and film, even if we are not always aware of its presence. Nonetheless, taking into consideration the close relationship that the novel has with *Hamlet*, it seems more accurate to talk about hypertextuality. Genette broadened Kristeva's term to refer to "any relationship uniting a text B ([...] *hypertext*) to an earlier text A ([...] *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary"[5]; otherwise, it would be mere intertextuality. Michael Riffaterre juxtaposes the concepts of intertextuality and hypertextuality as follows:

> "Hypertextuality is derived from the text in a concerted effort to approximate the sum total of the ideas, of the descriptive and narrative sign-systems, of the thematic material the text has appropriated to its own purposes, and, finally, of the text's social, cultural and historical backgrounds. Intertextuality is generated by textuality; that is, it continues, beyond the text's limits, the production of those formal features that make for the text's unity and that substitute an overall significance for the successive meanings of the text's discrete components (words, phrases, and sentences)."[6]

In McEwan's novel, the intertextual references are present in the Hamletian winks to the reader such as those I examine later on, whilst hypertextuality comprises the whole novel as a rewriting of the Shakespearean original play.

Along the same lines, Voicu Mihnea Simandan argues that, in this relationship between intertextuality and hypertextuality, the text originated "transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends" the text in which it is based.[7] Hence, *Nutshell* not only alludes to *Hamlet* in terms of characters, events, or mere quotations, but it also recreates that Hamletian world by extending it and presenting an alternative perspective.

To adapt the original play to a contemporary audience, the female characters are also in need of a reevaluation. Even if the female characters in the Shakespearean play do not perform an insignificant role, their subordination steals much of their presence. The figure of the woman in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, has evolved significantly, after such theoretical studies as those carried out by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), or Elaine Showalter (1986), among others. Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* was especially revolutionary in this area. Deirdre Bair claims that

> "it was a work ahead of its time, prescient in its identification of the concerns of contemporary women. Simone de Beauvoir wrote [...] of all the issues that separate working class women and oppressed minorities from women of

which separate all women from parity with men."[8]

> the middle and upper classes even today, and of the issues which separate all women from parity with men."[8]

In basic terms, gender studies look at the world from the perspective of gender (especially the female voice). In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir writes: "The representation of the world as the world itself is the work of men; they describe it from a point of view that is their own and that they confound with the absolute truth."[9] History has always been recounted from the perspective of men—and, generally, it has been so in literature as well. In the works chosen, we come across the same idea: Hamlet and the unborn child (two male protagonists) are the leaders of the narrative, who aim at fixing their 'male gaze', as referred to by Laura Mulvey (1975), upon the female characters. Following Beauvoir's statement, these heroes recount the events from their own points of view, without leaving much room for the female voice. Nevertheless, the women in the novel do not consent to this view and fight to offer their own perspectives as well, proving that they may be worth as much consideration as the hero of the narrative himself.

The Tragic Hero from Aristotle to Shakespeare

It is in Greek literature, and especially with Aristotle (384—322 BC), that the figure of the tragic hero is shaped. In very basic terms, the tragic hero is the protagonist of a tragedy. Both the hero himself and the audience understand the story as based on the hero's fatal fate and are aware of his inevitable downfall, which is ultimately due to his error of judgement. Aristotle established the proper features of the tragic hero in his *Poetics* and, since then, they have been applied to the most celebrated tragic heroes, Oedipus and Hamlet included. It should be pointed out at this stage that Aristotle, and many authors before and after him, considered the hero to be male and could not contemplate the idea of the heroine, since a woman was believed to be "an inferior being," whose status was juxtaposed to that of a slave.[10]

Aristotle claims that there are four (or even five) main characteristics with which the hero of the tragedies has to comply. Firstly, the hero must be good and noble, which means that his actions must serve a moral purpose. Secondly, he must "aim at his propriety," his decency, being therefore "free from inappropriate or incongruous characteristics."[11] Thirdly, the hero must be true to life. This feature does not relate to the idea of realism as we currently understand it, but rather to the fact that the hero "must be equal to or better than the members of the audience."[12] In other words, "the characters should be like ordinary human beings [...], they should not be so remote that they fail to arouse sympathy."[13] Besides, one of the characteristics of Aristotelian tragedy, as opposed to comedy, is that characters belong to the high social classes, and in consequence they are kings, princes or even gods and demi-gods. They can never be inferior to the audience, as it happens in comedies. Apart from that, this also implies that the audience has to consider the hero "to be like themselves to the extent that they can recognize similar possibilities and consequences for themselves",[14] which is what allows for the cathartic purpose of the Greek tragedy. Aristotle's fourth feature with regard to the tragic hero points to the consistency of character and action. Finally, the fifth feature relates to the hero's fate, since "he must bring misfortune upon himself by some error in judgement, not by vice or depravity."[15] This error of judgement, or *hamartia*, is usually identified as the hero's tragic flaw, which is what leads him to his downfall. The fact that the character is flawed and imperfect, allows for the audience to identify with him, to pity him and to fear that they might share his same fate. All in all, Aristotle argues that the tragic hero "is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty."[16]

Although some of the heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies follow the features Aristotle associates with the tragic hero, in this part of the article we are going to explore the case of the hero in one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies: *Hamlet*. Its homonymous hero, Prince Hamlet, has always been a very controversial character and one of the most complex characters to be found throughout the history of literature, given the worldwide debate and the variety of opinions among critics and audiences in the course of the centuries. Nonetheless, Hamlet seems to have been classified as a tragic hero if we bear in mind that he complies with the above-mentioned Aristotelian characteristics that such a character ought to have.

First of all, according to Aristotle, the tragic hero must be good and noble and his actions must serve a moral purpose. Hamlet's goodness and nobility are commonly accepted. As Josef Froula points out, the three characters that seem to know Hamlet best—the ghost of Hamlet's father, Horatio, and Ophelia—use the adjective 'noble' to describe him.[17] Indeed, already in Act 1 the ghost of Hamlet's father addresses him as "thou noble youth."[18] Besides, his best friend Horatio says of him at the end of the play: "Now cracks a noble heart."[19] As for Ophelia, she uses the adjective 'noble' to refer to Hamlet twice in Act 3, "what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!"[20] and "that noble and most sovereign reason,"[21] and she considers Hamlet to conform to the ideal prince when she describes him as follows:

> "The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
> Th'expectation and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mold of form,
> Th'observed of all observers – quite, quite down!"[22]

Moreover, the Prince of Denmark is loved and respected not only by his relatives and friends, but also by his subjects, the population of Denmark. As Claudius himself states: "He's loved of the distracted multitude."[23]
Likewise, Fortinbras claims at the end of the play:

> "Let four captains
> Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
> For he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have proved most royal; and for his passage,
> The soldiers' music and the rite of war
> Speak loudly for him."[24]

This quotation relates Hamlet to the second Aristotelian feature of the tragic hero, his undeniable manly valor. Hamlet is conscious of the fact that revenge against his uncle will lead him to his own doom, but that does not stop him from acting (even though too late). It is true that Hamlet's main concern throughout the play is this struggle between his moral, filial duty and the acknowledgement of his own downfall—whether he should carry on with his deadly purpose and get himself killed in the meantime, or whether he should let things go and live. Nonetheless, I personally believe that he is doomed from the beginning; as a proper tragic hero, he knows that his death is unavoidable. In this sense, the famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy seems to refer to his struggle between taking action or committing suicide and putting an end to all his problems. Obviously, the tragedy develops itself to an inescapable ending: Hamlet succeeds in his enterprise but gets killed as a consequence.

Aristotle's third feature was that the tragic hero had to be true to life, equal to or better than the members of the audience. In this case, Hamlet meets this criterion since he is the Prince of Denmark, a fact that situates him in the appropriate social class for a tragedy. Besides, Hamlet is true to life in the sense that the audience is able to identify with him—to pity and fear him. The audience would not probably have seen themselves in the position of having to avenge the murder of a father, but Hamlet's struggle between living or dying, between acting or forgiving, could be shared and comprehended by many members of the audience.

The fourth and fifth Aristotelian criteria had to do with consistency of character and action and the hero's error of judgement. Indeed, Hamlet's main flaw or mistake is his delay in taking action, his fatal hesitation. Had he killed Claudius when he first had the chance (in the praying scene), he could have avoided the deaths of almost every character in the play, his own included. With regard to the praying scene, Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued that "the determination to allow the guilty King to escape at such a moment is only part of the indecision and irresoluteness of the hero."[25] In fact, Coleridge even claims that this is just Hamlet's excuse for not being able to carry out his revenge.[26] This is Hamlet's 'error of judgement' or *hamartia*: to mistakenly take Claudius to be praying and repenting of his sins, and therefore thinking that he would send the King to heaven if he acts upon him at that moment: "A villain kills my father and for that, / I, his only son, do this same villain send / To heaven."[27]

In conclusion, even though not everyone agrees (Allred 2012), I believe Hamlet is a classical example of the tragic hero since he meets all the criteria established by Aristotle for his being understood as such.

Women in *Hamlet*

Only two of the female characters in the play have some importance for the plot: Queen Gertrude and Ophelia. As it could not be otherwise, these characters are quite controversial. We do not really get to know them or understand their motivations, actions, or inner selves. One of the reasons why this is so is that the reader only learns about them through third parties, invariably men. To that extent, it could be argued that these women are male-dominated characters. Nevertheless, this elementary approach has not prevented critics (Rogers 2009; Graf 2013; Gerstell 2014) from providing more complex interpretations that show the two-fold nature of these characters and their true roles in Shakespeare's tragedy.

Gertrude

Gertrude has inspired much debate. She, as Queen of Denmark, was allegedly happily married to Old King Hamlet. Yet, she does not hesitate much when she gets a marriage proposal from her former brother-in-law, even though this happens almost immediately after King Hamlet's death. One interpretation is that she, like Claudius, is also driven by ambition. In the society *Hamlet* is set in, a widowed woman would be worthless, penniless and without any purpose in life—unless she married again. Thus, in order to keep on being the Queen, she must marry the new King. Claudius does not seem to mind Gertrude's actual motives, though.

However, in her revealing dissertation significantly titled "Gertrude's role in *Hamlet*" (2013), Emily Graf argues that we have misunderstood Gertrude's motives all along. She claims that Gertrude is not the sensual character believed by audiences worldwide to be, but a mother whose first desire is to protect her son. Graf states that the Queen is not able to defend herself against the accusations imposed upon her figure by her former husband and son, whom Graf considers to be unreliable narrators. She claims that Hamlet is too driven by his emotions and therefore unable to depict an accurate portrayal of his mother, and that the audience should not take his words as the indisputable truth.[28] According to Graf, Gertrude, nonetheless, is guilty of not properly mourning the death of her husband, because she does not wear the appropriate clothes and because she marries her brother-in-law in a too short period of time. Besides, Graf argues that Gertrude could also be accused of taking Hamlet's inheritance and legal right from him–the next in line for the throne of Denmark would no longer be Prince Hamlet, but the offspring resulting from Gertrude and Claudius's marriage.[29] For Graf, this would be the reason why Hamlet is so interested in his mother's sexuality—not because he is in love with her, but because he feels his access to the throne to be in jeopardy. What is more, Graf claims that "it is possible that Hamlet is not only upset about being ignored and potentially displaced on the throne, but he could also be disturbed by the idea of his mother having power over his future."[30] Hamlet's male-chauvinistic attitude, then, could be understandable considering the historical and social context of the play.

All this notwithstanding, there is another turn of the screw: Gertrude is also involved in Old King Hamlet's murder.[31] In the play, Hamlet himself accuses his mother of being involved in the plot and, despite the Ghost's advice to Hamlet not to trouble his mother ("Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught"[32]), he confronts and

torments her with his accusation:

"HAMLET.
A bloody deed – almost as bad, good Mother,
As kill a king and marry with his brother.
GERTRUDE.
As kill a king!"[33]

The Ghost's words, together with Gertrude's astonishment, which is followed by her dismissal of Hamlet's accusation, and the fact that the allegation is not made again seem to prove her innocence. However, the fact that there is no indication in the play as to how the actress (or actor, since female roles were played by male actors in Elizabethan times) should play this part, keeps the controversy going.

Another aspect of the debate regarding Gertrude's actions is whether she knew about Claudius's plot to kill Hamlet at the end of the play and whether she knew that she was being poisoned. Several performances and interpretations of the play suggest that Gertrude was indeed aware of the treachery and still drank from the cup to commit suicide after learning about her husband's wickedness while simultaneously trying to save her son.[34] Along these lines, Graf argues that this is another instance where we can appreciate Gertrude's independence and ability to make her own decisions.[35] Likewise, Wendy Rogers argues that "[t]rough her refusal to accept the gender based expectations of her time and her defiant actions, Gertrude is ultimately responsible for the downfall of the ordered power structure and brings about her own destruction."[36] Indeed, even if the King forbids her to drink from the poisoned cup ("Gertrude, do not drink"[37]) she deliberately disobeys her husband's orders and takes control of her actions: "I will, my lord. I pray you pardon me."[38]

Ophelia

Although to a lesser extent than Gertrude, Ophelia has also been the protagonist of some academic research. In Shakespeare's play, Ophelia seems to be a weaker character than the Queen and has even fewer lines than Hamlet's mother. Apart from being Prince Hamlet's romantic interest, Ophelia does not have any other role in the play. She is surrounded by men, namely her father Polonius and her brother Laertes, who feel the need to protect her and whom she follows blindly. When they advise her against Hamlet, she believes their truth, does not question their judgement, and starts behaving as they expect her to. According to Mesut Günenç, "Ophelia does not deal with anything except men's rules; she does not have alternative thoughts. She does not have alternative voices. She does not know how to decide on her own. She echoes what said to her."[39] Clearly, she is a victim of this Renaissance patriarchal society; she does not have thoughts of her own ("I think nothing, my lord"[40]) and is not free to develop her actions or to marry whomever she likes (Hamlet is not free either, for that matter: "his will is not his own"[41]). Following this premise, therefore, it is understandable that, after her brother's escape to Paris, the death of her father, and Hamlet's rejection, Ophelia has no one to tell her what to say or what to do, to direct her movements and to control her life, and the only way out which is left for her is madness and subsequent suicide. Günenç argues that Ophelia's isolation continues even after her death: "Her death is only announced and commented. We cannot see or experience her death and her funeral."[42] This is another example of the little interest that Ophelia, as a character, inspired the author and/or the audience at the time.

Furthermore, Ophelia is treated as bait by the King and Polonius when they are trying to discern what the matter with Hamlet is, and Hamlet himself also seems to treat her like an object to arouse his mother's jealousy:

"QUEEN .
Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.
HAMLET (*Approaching* OPHELIA) .
No, good mother, here's metal more attractive."[43]

What is more, she even blames herself for Hamlet's madness, believing that the real reason behind the prince's insanity is his love for her:

"POLONIUS
Mad for thy love?
OPHELIA.
My lord, I do not know,
But truly I do fear it."[44]

Along the lines of everything we have been discussing, Elaine Showalter argues that the play is "the story of [Ophelia's] betrayal at the hands of her father, brother, lover, court, society"[45] and she even poses the following rhetorical questions: "is she indeed representative of Woman, and does her madness stand for the oppression of women in society as well as in tragedy? [...] does she represent the textual archetype of woman *as* madness or madness *as* woman?".[46] In my opinion, Showalter's is a very plausible interpretation of Ophelia's role in Shakespeare's play, one that connects her to the stereotypical depiction of women in Elizabethan theatre as weak creatures. After all, and according to Hamlet, "Frailty, thy name is woman!"[47]

Nutshell as a rewriting of *Hamlet*

Apart from *Nutshell* being a rewriting of *Hamlet,* the novel shows McEwan's special and constant interest in peculiar narrators and/or heroes. On the one hand, we have to bear in mind that the narrator of *Nutshell* has not been born yet. Thus, we are forced to pay attention to his thoughts rather than to his actions. On the other hand, his story is strongly reminiscent of the plot of Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet.* In other words, the narrator is a fetus, a human embryo in the later stages of development, who recounts what he hears, feels, or assumes to be happening all around him and who finds himself witness to the murder of his father by the hands of his mother and uncle as he is still within his mother's womb.

One could argue that in Shakespeare's play Hamlet chooses to leave aside his role as Prince of Denmark and would-be ruler of his kingdom in order to become just a son whose purpose in life is to avenge his father. Hamlet is aware of his fate and accepts it, gaining an identity as tragic hero as a result. In McEwan's novel, the issue of identity is also of paramount importance. But can an unborn child be considered to have an identity?[48] In fact, the narrator himself recognizes his present lack of self when he fantasizes with his future identity, which he considers to be doomed. As the sum of his father and mother's genes, to which he adds those of his uncle, since he has been having unprotected sex with his pregnant mother from the very early stages of his conception, the narrator asks himself: "a quarter of my genome [...]. What despicable part of myself is Claude and how will I know?".[49] Thus, to what extent is he in control of his identity? Or to put it differently, is biology destiny or are we free to become who we want, regardless of our origins?

In this same line of thought, it could be affirmed that the narrator is in complete charge of his own identity, precisely because he has not been born yet and because he has not been given a name. To that extent, he could be said to be free from the identity constrictions that being named might imply. However, although it is true that this unborn narrator does not have a name yet, the similarities between himself and Hamlet could lead the reader to attribute him the name of his own father, John, or that of Hamlet himself.

So, to what extent is this hero like Hamlet? Can we apply the Aristotelian requirements for the tragic hero to McEwan's protagonist? Aristotle talked about the goodness and nobility of the tragic hero alongside his perseverance in life. As in *Hamlet*, I believe that there is morality and unselfishness in the willingness of the hero in McEwan's novel to sacrifice himself in order to avenge the murder of his father, or to impede it in this case, and his perseverance is seen here in the hero's resoluteness. But, as we have said, McEwan's is an unborn character who is imprisoned in his mother's womb. Thus, he cannot act properly and he is forced to become a mere witness of the events. In an interview, McEwan claimed that "like Hamlet, [the narrator] lacks agency" (McEwan 2017b). Unlike Hamlet, the only agency he has is the possibility to kick his mom and wake her up in order to listen to the radio, for instance, or to actually get himself born. Thus, the fact that he is bound hand and foot mocks the tragic hero's destiny and fatal flaw—McEwan's character is not a matter of misjudgment but rather of pure science—transforming the tragic hero into a contemporary anti-hero who, in spite of his failed attempt at suicide, is not willing to sacrifice himself and chooses to be born and to be master of his own identity when he says: "I'll feel, therefore I'll be [...]. My identity will be my precious, my only true possession, my access to the only truth."[50]

Despite his having evolved into a contemporary anti-hero, McEwan's protagonist is clearly related to Hamlet in term of his thoughts and actions. A feature that marks the personality of the Prince of Denmark is his suffering from an Oedipus complex. From the very beginning of the novel, the unborn hero claims that he loves his mother, "how could I not?",[51] and this statement would look like innocent filial love were it not for other instances like "[m]y father and I are joined in hopeless love",[52] or "Trudy will be mine, not Claude's",[53] which have a much more possessive tone. These statements mirror Hamlet's obsession with his mother's second marriage and her choice of husband, alongside his own unnatural desire to be Gertrude's spouse. In *Nutshell*, the narrator claims that "[m]y mother has preferred my father's brother, cheated her husband, *ruined her son*."[54] As can be seen, the narrator believes Trudy's attitude towards her son to be a much higher treason than the actual murder of her husband. He considers that she "cheated her husband" but "ruined her son", suggesting thus that the second is a much higher form of treachery. Even though Trudy is not only unfaithful to her husband but is also planning his murder, the narrator is more concerned with the fact that she cheated on him by sleeping with her brother-in-law. Besides, this rejection of Trudy's cheating is also seen in the narrator's belief that his father was much better than Claude: "My uncle – [...] no more like my father than I to Vigil or Montaigne. [...] I refuse to say I hate her – but to abandon a poet, any poet, for Claude!"[55] All this echoes Hamlet once again, who also had these dilemmas.

Likewise, Hamlet's revenge has a reflection in the protagonist of *Nutshell*, at least in his intention, since his possibility to take action is nearly non-existent. He clearly considers wreaking revenge (on his mother or uncle, though?) and seems to be justifying himself, trying to convince himself that he would be forgiven were he to execute his revenge: "Revenge: the impulse is instinctive, powerful—and forgivable. [...] no one can resist the allure of vengeful brooding. [...] Revenge may be exacted a hundred times over in one sleepless night. The impulse, the dreaming intention, is human, normal, and we should forgive ourselves."[56] But he goes on: "There'll be no reversion to the status quo ante, no balm, no sweet relief, or none that lasts. Only a second crime. Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves, Confucius said."[57] Thus, he soon realizes that he is not going to get anything out of that revenge, that it is not worth it. Hamlet was also aware of the resolution of his revengeful deed, but he accepted his fate and completed his mission. This is not the case in *Nutshell*, where the protagonist finds in this fact the perfect excuse not to take any action, showing in this cowardice his true personality as an anti-hero. Hence, he draws the final conclusion: "I've absolved myself, not of thoughts, but of actions, of avenging his death in this life or in the post-natal next. And I'm absolving myself of cowardice. Claude's elimination won't restore my father. [...] No to impetuous action."[58] This procrastination is taken to the extreme, to the point of not taking any revenge at all.

Nonetheless, he has moments of Hamletian doubt—the "to be or not to be" dilemma means here to be born or to commit suicide, i.e., not being born at all. He claims: "Don't let your incestuous uncle and mother poison your father. Don't waste your precious days idle and inverted. Get born and act!"[59] The only option he has is to get born (to provoke his own early birth) and to try to appeal to his mother's sense from outside

her womb. As McEwan himself puts it, "he's bound to love [Trudy] and he will get her back with a look" (2017b). Will she have second thoughts once she has her child on her arms? Too late for that.

Not only the protagonist, but also the rest of characters have their own Hamletian counterparts. Alluding to the clues that McEwan leaves throughout the novel for the reader to identify the narrative as a reinterpretation of *Hamlet*, he also adapts and modernizes the names of the characters. Gertrude, no longer the Queen of Denmark and therefore free from protocol, becomes Trudy, a woman in her late twenties who has decided to take action. King Claudius is Claude here, "a Renaissance man, a Machiavel, an old-school villain who believes he can get away with murder."[60] However, McEwan depicts Claude as if he were already the King of Denmark, in the sense that he is a much more important figure than John, who, if we continue with the Shakespearean links, should be the king in the story, Old King Hamlet. John is not a successful figure, though—"he is a poet without recognition and yet he persists. [...] he owns and runs an impoverished publishing house [...]. He has less money than Trudy and far less than Claude."[61] All this notwithstanding, he is still the King of the Castle, the owner of the house where the action is taking place. Elsinor here is John's mansion, the house that Trudy and Claude want to claim for themselves (the castle that Claudius and Gertrude want to rule).

McEwan's revision of the characters in *Hamlet* goes much further than a mere modernization of names. Especially significant is the rewriting of the roles women have in the novel, which contrast with those female characters were seen to perform in *Hamlet*. First of all, it should be highlighted that the most interesting aspect of *Nutshell* is the fact that we are reading a story narrated by someone who is inside a woman. Thus, we know that the perspective on women is going to be unlike any other. Trudy is the woman whose womb acts as both nourishing space and binding prison for the narrator. Undoubtedly, then, Trudy is the character that is going to attract all the attention. Although we can also find other female characters in the novel, it is clear that Trudy is going to be in the constant spotlight. The narrator describes her in the following terms:

> "the gravidly ripe twenty-eight-year-old, youngly slumped [...] across the table, blonde and braided like a Saxon warrior, beautiful beyond realism's reach, slender but for me, near naked, sunnily pink on the upper arms [...]. I try to see her and love her as I must, then imagine her burdens: the villain she's taken for a lover, the saint she's leaving behind, the deed she's spoken for, the darling child she'll abandon to strangers. Still love her? If not, then you never did. But I did, I did. I do."[62]

This description provides us with quite relevant information about Trudy's character and about the narrator's position towards her. We get an exaggerated portrayal of her physical appearance, which could be taken as another instance of the Oedipal elements of the protagonist we were mentioning above, and which can be added to his declaration of unconditional love. The description also points to the unreliability of the narrator, for how is he able to discern whether her hair is braided or not? Besides, the comparison of Trudy to a "Saxon warrior," which alludes to her powerful nature, as is discussed next, is worth mentioning. Finally, if we analyse "her burdens," the fact that, for the protagonist, the first shameful element seems to be "the villain she's taken for a lover" rather than the murder she is about to commit, should be highlighted once again because, as argued above, for the narrator Trudy's main dishonorable trait is the fact that she has taken a lover, that she has abandoned his father for a much less worthy man.

Although Trudy is the Gertrude-like character in *Nutshell*, she plays a different role from that of the Shakespearean Queen. At the beginning of the novel, her resemblance to Gertrude is made evident in the submissive part the latter seems to play in the story (if we leave aside the plotting of her husband's murder which, as mentioned, is only hinted at in passing in *Hamlet*). In fact, it is Claude that seems to be in charge of the bloody operation, with Trudy merely playing a supporting role. Trudy is described as Claude's "own darling mouse"[63], suggesting that her position with regard to Claude is that of a pet, with the sense of ownership that that implies.[64]

Nonetheless, Trudy refuses to be merely following her lover's orders and decides to turn the tables: "His mouse! What humiliation. In the palm of his hand. Pet. Powerless. Fearful. Contemptible. Disposable. Oh to be his mouse! [...] Is she a woman or a mouse?"[65] This observation marks the ending of the chapter and the beginning of a new Trudy, who realizes the fault she has committed and the villain she has taken between the sheets. Trudy is willing now to take action, to take the reins of her own life and turn against Claude, even if absolving herself implies condemning him: "What a distance she's travelled, treating him like a child, when just now she was his pet."[66] [67]

The other two female characters that we encounter in the novel are Elodie and Chief Inspector Clare Allison. The former is a tool John uses to make Trudy believe that he has a lover, in an attempt to win Trudy back by trying "to make [Trudy] jealous."[68] In this sense, Elodie can be read as the modern counterpart of Shakespeare's Ophelia in her role of the woman who is used to provoke some jealousy on the Gertrude-like figure. Although Elodie proves to be just a friend of John and a fan of his poetry, Trudy feels jealous of her but she also feels superior to her. Trudy's aggressive and hostile attitude towards her proves that John knows her well but, far from getting her love back, Trudy's jealousy ultimately accelerates his own death. Besides, Elodie's role is also significantly different from Ophelia's. Whereas Ophelia ends up committing suicide, Elodie helps the police trick the murderers. Elodie is thus an active character in that she manages to take revenge on the murdering couple by snaring them and sending them to prison.

The inspector of the murder case, on the other hand, appears as a threat to Trudy from the start. She is powerful

enough to send her to prison, and she shows this superiority in the way she behaves in the family mansion "as if the house were hers."[69] Besides, the narrator points out that he imagines Trudy "thinking that she might more easily mislead a man,"[70] as she did with her husband.

Although Trudy is clearly the main female protagonist in the story, the other two female characters also have their share in the action, no matter whether we constantly hear Trudy's opinion of them or read about her attitude towards them (once again, as interpreted by the narrator-fetus). Trudy seems to see herself as threatened by both of them and reacts to them as a result in different ways: on the one hand, she is hostile towards her ex-husband's younger lover who might be able to snatch the mansion out of her, and she is cautious towards the woman capable of exposing her murderous nature, on the other.

The success of McEwan's literary endeavor in *Nutshell* resides not only in its being a hilarious modern adaptation of the classic story of *Hamlet*, but also in its portraying a unique kind of narrator. Indubitably, the appeal that a novel such as this one has is found in its literary style, in how the novel is shaped—after all, the story is not new, and it is not the first time that we find the Queen as the mastermind of the plot.[71] Once again, it is McEwan's narrator who attracts the spotlight and leads the reader through the novel even before knowing anything about his similarities with Hamlet. McEwan, as he once did with Briony in *Atonement* (2001), is again playing with an unreliable narrator. In this case, I believe we can speak of a first-person homodiegetic unreliable narrator, since he is a character of the story being told. However, it is more difficult to ascertain whether he is an autodiegetic narrator (the one who is also the protagonist of the story) or not, given that, even though I consider him the (anti-)hero of the story, I believe he could be read as a Dr Watson for a Sherlock Holmes, in this case Trudy and, to a lesser extent, Claude. He is not able to take action but is only a mere witness and transcriber/interpreter of the events taking place. This notwithstanding, this narrator is highly obtrusive, due to the fact that he is all the time providing his own personal opinion of the events and of the rest of the characters, therefore his narration is biased and driven by his own views on the matter. He even has to silence his thoughts in order to listen to the rest of the characters: "But shush! The conspirators are talking."[72]

McEwan himself claims that he did not want "an unreliable fetus", that he wanted "to make him accurate, a really reliable person. He gets things wrong, but that's different. And then he corrects himself" (2017b). McEwan states in several occasions that he considers his narrator to be reliable and trustworthy, alluding to the non-existence of any "previous convictions" (2017a). However, my point of view is somehow different. I agree with the author in his rejection of the narrator's unreliability because he is a *tabula rasa* and consequently his point of view is not biased by any previous experience. Nonetheless, even if the narrator's intent is to be reliable (after all, why shouldn't he be?), his physicality impedes him to be so, turning him therefore into an unreliable narrator. This unreliability stems from the narrator's peculiar way of access to information, in the fact that the reader has to take with a pinch of salt what he or she is being told; since our narrator is blind, he can only tell his own interpretation of the things he hears: "I have my sources, I *listen* [...]. I hear [...], the news, wellspring of all bad dreams."[73] However, even if he only listens, he also makes assumptions or takes things for granted: "I've listened carefully and now I'm *assuming* the following."[74] For instance, the narrator clearly acknowledges his incapacity to act: "I've no authority to direct the action. I can only watch."[75]

Conclusion

We can all agree on the modernization of the hero and the current taste for the anti-hero in his adaptation to a contemporary audience which is not able to relate to the perfection of the classical tragic hero anymore. The figure of the anti-hero is quite popular in the culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, not only in literature but also in movies or television. Some may consider Jay Gatsby as an anti-hero[76] or even Hamlet,[77] but I believe there are other characters that would fit more clearly in this category. In literature, we could name Patricia Highsmith's Tom Ripley (1955), Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1605), or even Tyrion Lannister in *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996); and in television and cinema we find Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003), or Frank Underwood in Netflix's *House of Cards* (2013-2018), among many others. What do all these characters have in common? As we can see from the most famous novels, TV shows, or movies, now the audience is demanding the presence of anti-heroes in whom they can see themselves, since the classic hero is no longer believable. This explains the boom of characters such as Walter White in *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013), Dexter in the homonymous TV series (2006-2013) or Dr Gregory House in *House M.D.* (2004-2012).

Therefore, it is not far-fetched to argue that McEwan employs this kind of hero in his contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* In this case, the unborn hero shares more features with Hamlet than he is conscious of. Once again, his purpose is Hamlet's—to avenge the death of his father, although in this case he is trying to avoid his father's murder in the first place. He does not come from a celebrated family, however, and he will not fall in the end—rather the contrary, he comes into being, although he views it as his downfall, being born into such a wretched and twisted world. Nonetheless, I believe that this hero is also slightly parodical, in the sense that he is a bound-hand-and-foot hero, unable to take any action whatsoever. He is a mere spectator in the tragedy and, as a consequence, his role as a tragic hero casts some doubts.

The novel also understands the rest of the characters in Hamletian terms, in the sense that we can encounter figures resembling Gertrude, Claudius or Ophelia. For his retelling McEwan proposes a perspective in which the Gertrude-like figure is in charge of the mischievous plot and plays with Claudius at will. Therefore, there is not only need for the

adaptation and modernization of the hero to a contemporary ambience, but also the role played by the female characters requires reshaping. Shakespeare's perspectives on gender have been widely analyzed and discussed, and McEwan does not want to miss the debate. He introduces powerful female figures who are juxtaposed to their counterparts in *Hamlet*. Thus, the author is not presenting the female characters at the center of the stage, but rather is analyzing the female perspectives through the eyes of the male protagonist.

In conclusion, the adaptation of *Hamlet* chosen not only addresses contemporary concerns in terms of identity and gender, but it also shows the need to find a more accurate protagonist and to reevaluate his relationship with the female characters. Women are subtly given the center of the stage, to some extent, and therefore are allowed to challenge not only the protagonist's perspective on life but also Shakespeare's himself. Even if the novel follows the (anti-)hero's quest for his identity, the ending does not fully establish it. As a consequence, the hero is now the pathetic echo of what the tragic hero once was.

Notes:

1. This article is an updated and revised version of a master's dissertation, "The modernization of Shakespeare's Hamlet: identity and gender in Murdoch's *The Black Prince* and McEwan's *Nutshell*" (Universidad de La Rioja, 2017), and the articles "Hamlet Upside Down: Ian McEwan's *Nutshell* as a Modernization of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" (Conference Proceedings, 6th International Conference on Literature, Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2017) and "The Modernisation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: Identity and Gender in Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*" (*Estudios Irlandeses*, Special Issue 13.2 (2018), 90-102).
2. Some critics, such as TyaCamellia Allred, for example, have read Hamlet as an anti-hero instead (2012).
3. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 158-9.
4. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 21.
5. Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.
6. Michael Riffaterre, "Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality". *New Literary History* 25, no. 4 (1994), 786.
7. Voicu Mihnea Simandan, *The Matrix and the Alice Books* (Lulu Books, 2010), 32.
8. Deirdre Bair, "Simone de Beauvoir: Politics, Language, and Feminist Identity," *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986), 155.
9. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.* (London: Vintage, 1989), 196.
10. Aristotle, *Poetics,* trans. S.H. Butcher (The Project Gutenberg, 2008), 53.
11. Ibid., 158.
12. Josef Froula, "Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Suitable Tragic Hero according to the standards set forth in Aristotle's *Poetics*" (California State University Dominguez Hills, 2011), 14.
13. Aristotle, *Poetics,* 158.
14. Froula, "Shakespeare's Hamlet", 15.
15. Ibid., 19.
16. Aristotle, *Poetics,* 14.
17. Froula, "Shakespeare's Hamlet", 13.
18. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (New York: Norton Critical Editions, 2011), 29.
19. Ibid., 128.
20. Ibid., 60.
21. Ibid., 60.
22. Ibid., 60.
23. Ibid., 68.
24. Ibid., 130.
25. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton,* ed. J. Payne Collier. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1856); William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (New York: Norton Critical Editions, 2011), 248.
26. Ibid., 249.
27. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 76.
28. Emily Graf, „Gertrude's Role in *Hamlet*", *Senior Honors Theses* 359 (2013), 23.
29. Ibid., 27.
30. Ibid., 28.
31. This is the way in which some contemporary writers have interpreted Gertrude in their adaptations/rewritings of Shakespeare's play. A case in point would be that of Margaret Atwood's short story "Gertrude Talks Back" (1992), which gives the Queen the voice that Shakespeare had denied her.
32. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 30.

33. Ibid., 78.
34. For instance, in the 2009 adaptation of the play by the Royal Shakespeare Company, starring David Tennant as Hamlet, the actress Penny Downie plays Gertrude as consciously drinking from the poisoned cup, perhaps because of the reasons aforementioned.
35. Graf, "Gertrude", 44.
36. Wendy Rogers, "Female Norms and the Patriarchal Power Structure in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*", *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 1, no. 11, 2009.
37. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 126.
38. Ibid., 126.
39. Mesut Günenç, "Ophelia and Gertrude: Victimized Women in *Hamlet,*" *The Journal of International Social Research* 8, no. 41 (2015), 165.
40. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 65.
41. Ibid., 20.
42. Günenc, "Ophelia", 167.
43. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 64.
44. Ibid., 36.
45. Elaine Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London: Methuen, 1985); William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (New York: Norton Critical Editions, 2011), 283.
46. Ibid., 283.
47. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 15.
48. Interestingly enough, McEwan has pointed out in some interviews that the reception of the novel in the US was quite revolutionary, since it was introduced in the abortion debate. The fact that we have a fully conscious thirty-eight-week-old fetus arose some questions regarding the morality of abortion in advanced pregnancy. The author has claimed in several occasions that his intention was never to enter that debate and that this perspective was never on his mind when he was shaping the story.
49. Ian McEwan, *Nutshell* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 33.
50. Ibid., 146.
51. Ibid., 7.
52. Ibid., 16.
53. Ibid., 44.
54. Ibid., 33 (emphasis added).
55. Ibid., 33-34.
56. Ibid., 134-135.
57. Ibid., 135.
58. Ibid., 135.
59. Ibid., 46.
60. Ibid., 147.
61. Ibid., 10-11.
62. Ibid., 47.
63. Ibid., 121.
64. The choice of the mouse also refers to *Hamlet*, not only in terms of *The Mousetrap* but also of the bedchamber scene in which Hamlet advises Gertrude to "let the bloat king [...] call you his mouse." Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 84.
65. McEwan, *Nutshell*, 122.
66. Ibid., 133.
67. This new Trudy is miles away from the Shakespearean Queen but resembles the Gertrude we encounter in Margaret Atwood's short story, "Gertrude Talks Back" (1992), in which she admits her role as mastermind of the whole operation.
68. Ibid., 142.
69. Ibid., 170.
70. Ibid., 170.
71. See Margaret Atwood, "Gertrude Talks Back," *Good Bones* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992), 15-18.
72. McEwan, *Nutshell,* 54.
73. Ibid., 4.
74. Ibid., 10 (my emphasis).
75. Ibid., 158.
76. See John Sutherland and Jolyon Connell, *The Connell Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* (London: The Connell Guides, 2010).
77. See TyaCamellia Allred, "Hamlet: Anti-Hero," *Delta Winds: A Magazine of Student Essays* (San Joaquin Delta College, 2012).

Bibliography:

Allred, TyaCamellia. “Hamlet: Anti-Hero.” *Delta Winds: A Magazine of Student Essays.* San Joaquin Delta College, 2012.
Aristotle. *Poetics*. Translated by S. H. Butcher. The Project Gutenberg, 2008.
Atwood, Margaret. *Good Bones*. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992.
Bair, Deirdre. “Simone de Beauvoir: Politics, Language, and Feminist Identity.” *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 149-162.
Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
Beauvoir, Simone de, *The Second Sex.* London: Vintage, 1989.
Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
Breaking Bad, Dir.: Vince Gilligan et. al. US: AMC, 2008-2013.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*, edited by J. Payne Collier. London: Chapman and Hall, 1856.
Dexter, Dir.: Michael Cuesta et. al. US: Showtime*,* 2006-2013.
Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. London: Penguin Classics, 2010.
Froula, Josef. Shakespeare’s Hamlet: A Suitable Tragic Hero according to the standards set forth in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. California State University Dominguez Hills, 2011.
Genette, Gerard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
Gerstell, Emily C. *Trafficking Women: Interest, Desire, and Early Modern English Drama*. Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations, 2014.
Graf, Emily. *Gertrude’s Role in Hamlet*. Senior Honors Theses, 359 (2013).
Günenç, Mesut. “Ophelia and Gertrude: Victimized Women in *Hamlet*.” *The Journal of International Social Research* 8, no. 41 (2015): 164-172.
Hamlet, Dir. Gregory Doran. [DVD]. UK: BBC, Royal Shakespeare Company, 2009.
Highsmith, Patricia. *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. London: Vintage, 1955.
House M.D., Dir.: Bryan Singer et. al. US: Fox, 2004-2012.
House of Cards, Dir.: David Fincher et. al. US: Netflix, 2013-2018.
Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
Martin, George R.R. *Game of Thrones*. New York: Harper Voyager, 1996.
McEwan, Ian. *Atonement.* London: Vintage, 2001.
McEwan, Ian. *Nutshell* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016)
McEwan, Ian. “Ian McEwan in Conversation with Steven Pinker,” 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA2W8E5_Yfw.
McEwan, Ian. “Ian McEwan, *Nutshell*,” 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNaZ53-v28M, min. 13:55 - 14:20.
Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Oxford Journals* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18.
Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl. Dir. Gore Verbinski. [DVD]. US: Walt Disney Studios, 2003.
Riffaterre, Michael. “Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality.” *New Literary History* 25, no. 4 (1994): 779-788.
Rogers, Wendy J. “Female Norms and the Patriarchal Power Struture in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.” *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 1 (2009): 1-11.
Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. New York: Norton Critical Editions, 2011.
Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.
Showalter, Elaine. “Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism.” In *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, edited by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman. London: Methuen, 1985.
Showalter, Elaine. “Toward a Feminist Poetics.” In *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, edited by Elaine Showalter, 125-143. London: Virago, 1986.
Simandan, Voicu Mihnea. *The Matrix and the Alice Books*. Morrisville: Lulu Books, 2010.
Sutherland, John, and Jolyon Connell. *The Connell Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s* The Great Gatsby. London: The Connell Guides, 2010.
Tooley, John Kenney. *A Confederacy of Dunces*. London: Penguin Classics, 1980.