ROCZNIKI HUMANISTYCZNE
Tom LXVI, zeszyt 5 – 2018
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/rh.2018.66.5-9

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LOST IN TRANSLATIONS? MALENESS, MASCULINITY, DANDYISM, LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

A b s t r a c t. The study focuses on the system of translation that combines the figures of dandyism, masculinity, maleness, literature and literary criticism. In an extensive corpus that includes literary works composed between mid-eighteenth century and early-twentieth century, the dandiacal character embodies the more or less problematic association of masculine, feminine and effeminate features. Between conformity and transgressiveness, the hero-dandy reveals the plastic, performative part inherent in individuation, while dramatizing the limits of the grand narratives of heteronormativity and patriarchy.

Key words: dandyism; masculinity; British literature.

This study revisits a corpus primarily composed of late-eighteenth century to early-twentieth century British literary works focusing on dandies—young male characters with a marked interest in sophisticated clothes and remarkable poses evocative of George Bryan Brummell (1778–1840) in public awareness. In this context, masculinity emerges through the embedded translations of (physiological) maleness into (social) gender, then undergoes new changes with the historical appearance of dandyism, which becomes an object of fiction and finally submits masculinity to critical analysis. This approach bears on the socio-political dual system of normativity and marginalization that regulates the corpus under scrutiny and formulates a generic discourse on dandyism and masculinity. Indeed, individual dandiacal charac-

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ters are subsumed under wide-ranging categories that give them emblematic status, so that they represent and typify a whole group, as is the case with the Tarleton created by Thomas Lister, whose portrait is riddled with derogatory over-determined details borrowed from femininity construed as the social translation of femaleness:

> (…) an effeminate looking young man, more particularly distinguished by a very 'recherché' attire, a profusion of chain work, several rings, a well curled head, and a highly scented handkerchief. His talk was as pretty as his appearance, and his acquirements corresponded. He had a correct taste in *bijouterie* and dress...[1]

Tarleton's effeminacy can be construed as a social mistranslation of his maleness, making him a silly misfit. However, what looks like the hero's deficient transposition of his natural substrate as a male, could in fact display the praiseworthy appropriation of appealing feminine traits, unless it expresses some innate female component in the dandy's identity—and femininity is smuggled into the male dandy's full identity under the guise of effeminacy. In brief, whatever thin line lies between effeminacy and femininity, it constitutes a controversial site where dandyism at large—fictional or historical—is policed, alienated or emancipated according to more or less tolerant sets of values and representational regimes.

Unsurprisingly, a large section of the selected corpus deals with (anatomical) male figures who fail to meet conventional expectations and are blamed for it. To this end, verbal strategies contrast conformist and divergent characteristics, in order to reinstate the norm and highlight the abnormal streak in the dandies. This is why the heroes' sexed identity is usually introduced in an unproblematic way through their denomination—Paul, Herbert, Stephen, John[2]; it might as well be Andrew / *andros*—or their anaphoric designation by the use of the personal pronoun *he*. Persistent references to set models acknowledge social order, while they prepare the readers for the jarring notes to come, and the disruptive contrast is devised so as to indicate the threats disorderly eccentricity poses to the community. The case is all the more serious when the unruly individuals are dandies, for they seem to deny the existence of a coherent male group, one which legitimately reigns supreme, one in which each individual is accountable for

[1] Thomas Henry Lister, *Granby*, vol. 1 (London: H. Colburn & S. Bentley, 1826), 84–5.

[2] Paul in *Paul Clifford* (1830) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Herbert in *Herbert Lacy* (1832) by Thomas Henry Lister, Stephen Guest in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) by George Eliot, John Dorset in *Zuleika Dobson* (1911) by Max Beerbohm.

the reputation and credit of his peers. Indeed, the society described in the various texts reflects the world as it is, with its androcentric structure, as evidenced by the number of eponymous male heroes, their diegetic central position and their institutional entitlement.[3] The proliferating signs establishing their dominant status in both society and the diegesis reveal that anatomy is superseded by a form of social (re)configuration. Catherine Gore illustrates the point in the *incipit* of her education novel, *Cecil*:

> At twelve months old, in the swing-glass of my mother's dressing-room […] I looked, and became a coxcomb for life! […] My self consisted, at that epoch, of a splendid satin cockade, with a puny infant face thereunto attached; while a flowing robe of embroidered cambric, four feet by ten, disguised my nonentityism […]. Master Cecil was always screaming, unless danced up and down, by the head nurse within view of the reflection of his own fascinating little person.[4]

The eponymous dandiacal hero is introduced in his prime, equipped so as to conceal his genitals, although he is unmistakingly identified as a male-master-figure. It is especially interesting to note that the first-person autodiegetic narrator represents himself as a dominant male while setting up a scene that pictures the hero gazing at his own reflection in a mirror. It indicates the narrative, composite, specular as well as proliferating side of his individuation, that operates through the imperialistic saturation of the text. Cecil comes to life within the almighty ternary structure of a fatherly narrator giving existence to his son-hero, who is duplicated in an almost spiritual mirror reflexion. Words network around "Master Cecil" but they contrast with it because of the unmanly semantic fields they explore, as if to prove that since maleness appears under the manifold guise of masculinity, dandies might felicitously introduce their own multifarious disguises as effective alternatives to signify masculinity, and ultimately maleness.

Parallel to this process, the writers' urge to fictionalize and innovate in order to secure a sizeable readership encourages them to elaborate on gendered characterization. The rhetoric of variations on conventional representation sometimes swerves from the path of decorous fiction. As a result, the corpus includes innumerable accounts of young males hardly qualifying as such in the public eye, which implicitly amounts to dismissing the ideological continuity between sex and gender. Whether the assessment be cen-

[3] See the male upper-crust hero-dandies of *The Young Duke* (1831) by Benjamin Disraeli, *Cecil; A Peer* (1841) by Catherine Gore, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) by Oscar Wilde…

[4] Catherine Gore, *Cecil*, vol. 1 (London: S. Bentley, 1841), 1–2.

sorious or not, the male dandies depicted are usually singled out for their deficit in masculinity. When the narrative voice merely echoes dominant discourse, which is a common situation in anonymous satirical poems from the second half of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the 19th century, the *persona*'s report of a dandy's effeminacy based on extreme attention to clothes occasionally seems to question his very maleness:

> For the head of a fribble or beau (without doubt)
> Having nothing within, should have something without.
> […]
> Nor forget that his breeches be roomy between 'em
> 'Twill shew that a great deal is wanting within 'em.[5]

By mentioning fashionable artifice, lack of both intellectual insight and virility due to the absence of part or the whole of the dandy's genitalia, the *persona* strives to conflate effeminacy (a male social feature), femininity (a female social feature), possibly femaleness (a physiological feature) and castration to disqualify the dandy as a male. The choice of the masculine possessive adjective *his* enables the *persona* to dramatize the reassignment of the dandy to the no-man's land where he belongs. However, the factual elements reported in the poem may be highly subjective, as shown by the use of modal phrases like *a great deal* or hyperbolical formulations like *nothing* to refer to the dandy's brains. Yet, the poem repeats and reinforces the common prejudice against dandies, in whom, it is generally reported, natural laws are flouted while physical flaws have damaging intellectual repercussions. Their differences estrange them from the general public, who seek comfort in stability or conformity and find support in the *persona*'s determination to voice the community's condemnation of dandiacal oddity, for instance in "The Dandy Lost":

> Its age is twenty five,
> But the oddest thing alive,
> It is neither man nor woman—how unhandy, O!
> Lest his gender should perplex,
> It is call'd the MIDDLE sex,
> And in the Middlesex was bred the pretty Dandy, O.[6]

[5] Anonyme, *A Receipt for Modern Dress* (no date), in *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume from the 13th to the 19th Century* (London: Percy Society, 1869).

[6] Anonyme, "The Dandy Lost" (no date), in *The Fashionable Dandies' Songster* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: J. Marshall, 1825).

The repeated pronoun *it* aligns with the substantive *thing* to reify and dehumanize the dandy, even if the subsequent use of the possessive adjective *his* reintroduces a degree of humanity in the picture. Yet in this case, mixing personal and impersonal identifiers dramatizes the destabilized / destabilizing abnormality of the fashionable—once more equating the dandy with a misfit in the common grid of beings. He boggles the observer's mind, hence the adoption of a teratological angle, reflected in the assertion that the dandy is "neither man nor woman", reportedly a classic ontological impossibility for a human being. However, although the subsequent reference to a "MIDDLE sex", and not a *third* sex, still ranks dandies as monsters in a dual system, it rather points to a possible reconciliation of male and female determinations in an intersexed—or in an extensive acceptation, both masculine and feminine, androgynous—dandy. This conceptual instability betrays an incapacity to make good sense of dandies, who transgress standardized modes of presentation or norms of self-presentation, and thus might shatter the system's claim to aptly describe and manage reality. Meanwhile, the fashionables are made to mark the inside margin of men's community as unacceptable males, that is, males whose paradoxical masculinity or feminization will not do.

Not always that far from such caricatural anonymous formulations that equate dandies and monsters, stands the case of fashionable novels with portrayals that seem to be neutral and objective but are truly critical. Charlotte Bury, for one, characterizes Captain Lepel, in unambiguous formulations:

> He is one of those stop-gaps of creation… a party is not a party without him; a coat is not a coat if it is not made by Lepel's tailor. A snuff-box cannot be fit for a gentleman's pocket, unless it be sanctioned by the fiat of his approbation. Well, to be sure, it is beyond belief, but quite true; he has neither fortune, nor rank, beauty of person or brilliance of parts, or depth of learning… and that impudence which placed him on an eminence, where he has no right to be, will hurl him back to his native mire —that will be charming![7]

Here, evaluation is based on the theory of the hierarchical chain of beings, and since the dandy's position is said to rest on no personal merits, the speaker anticipates the downfall of this agent of chaos, as a necessary step to restore cosmic order. In even more openly offensive accounts, ridicule results from the smear and the narrator's ethos is once again devised to encourage eccentrics to amend or discourage young males from self-marginalizing.

[7] Charlotte Bury, *Flirtation* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836), 246–7.

Following a well-established protocol, many silver-fork novels[8] resume this redemptive mission by laying bare the coexistence of diverging features in the dandies. Sometimes, their censorious remarks are only obliquely directed at the English youth, as is the case with one of Gore's characters, who compares *Incroyables*—French counterparts of *butterfly dandies*—and over-dressed French actresses:

> "The London *incroyables* are wearing collars to their coats that resemble an improved species of pillory," cried Lady Louisa, "and as much frippery in the way of *bijouterie* and *lingerie* as a French actress. Nothing can be more unmanly than the prevailing costume."[9]

The compound privative adjective *unmanly* maintains the interpretive frame of manliness, the only one the narrator chooses to activate in order to visibly as well as syntactically write the dandy off as a poor specimen of his supposedly rightful community. The tension resulting from the dandy's perplexing complexity prevents him from meeting social demands for clarity, and his last hope of ever securing a badge of masculinity is shattered, again making him a degenerate in nature, for British society and the world at large. In a strategy to legitimize the common rebuke of the dandy's blameful eccentricity, Gore devises an omniscient narrator who feeds the hero's confession by supposedly reporting his embarrassment with a gender-bending activity:

> "The gardenias are to be placed in one nosegay," said Lord Greville, ashamed to find himself involved in puerilities which, to a young Frenchman, especially if a *lion*, afford serious occupation.[10]

The wide-ranging comment cannot be entirely attributed to the fashionable, though, and so it can arguably be said to originate fully in the narrator, who passes judgement on dandyism under the pretence of exploring the character's mind, even claiming that the accusation really is Greville's self-condemnation. The semantic field of shame and morality is tapped into as a reminder that the dandy's personal freedom will painfully clash with his

[8] This common appellation is derived from William Hazlitt's criticism of Theodor Hook's introduction of characters "who eat their fish with a silver fork," in "The Dandy School", in *The Examiner*, Nov. 18, 1827 (*Complete Works of William Hazlitt in 21 Volumes*, vol 20 (London: J. Dent & Sons, 1933), 146.

[9] Catherine Gore, *Greville* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1841), 307.

[10] *Ibidem*, 88.

own native culture and civilization if he does not pay enough attention to the traditional gendered do's and don'ts. In most cases, these social norms are obliquely naturalized by criticizing those who fail to comply with them, based on what is considered an excessively artificial turn of mind. This is what the narrator of an early-19th-century novel composed by Lister designs by pairing the judgmental adverb *affectedly* with an overall tone of irony to introduce Davison, who is depicted "(s)auntering up affectedly, with one hand on his hip, and in the other dangling a very delicately worked and highly scented handkerchief."[11] The satire that was often grossly explicit in the anonymous poems in the corpus becomes slightly more subtle in the fashionable novels under study, but still operates, bearing witness that the dandies' position within the gender divide remains a problem for their contemporaneous spectators and opinion-mongers alike. Actually, reprobation will be worded in drama, too, for instance in an early-nineteenth-century versified play by James Knowles. Choric characters provide effective counterparts to a narrator, so that in *Old Maids*, an opinionated moralizing figure stands forth to blame the dandy's effeminacy:

> […] and do not speak
> Between a simper and a lisp; it shames
> A mouth with a beard; and don't tread mincingly:
> 'Tis bad enough in a woman,—what, then, in
> A man! And in the art of courtesy
> Give not your body such a sway, as though
> It were a miracle the trunk and limbs
> Did hold together; […][12]

The same old notions of shame and evil are supported by the imperative mode to either induce the dandy to reform, or condemn what, in return, is performatively defined as condemnable postures and poses. They are complemented by an allusion, in the final remark, to a process of degradation that counteracts the organizing principle tying his person together ("hold together"), in echo of the fears of regression raised in the anonymous poems of the corpus which compare dandies to undignified monkeys and donkeys.[13]

[11] Thomas Henry Lister, *Arlington*, vol. 2 (London: H. Colburn & S. Bentley, 1832), 214.

[12] James Sheridan Knowles, *Old Maids*, in *Dramatic Works of James Sheridan Knowles* (London: E. Moxon, 1841), 22.

[13] "He'd be more an Ape if he had but a tail", "The Dandies; A Song", in *The Mirror of Asses!* (Manchester, no date); "all other dandies I'm sure he'd surpass, / By placing instead, the ears of an ass", "The Dandies", in *Songs* (Dublin: F. West, 1825).

Masculinity is believed to be a unifying determination on condition it is allowed to progress unaltered so that the feminized male dandy—be he effeminate or feminine—is literally disqualified as an in-dividual for he jumbles together irreconcilable elements.

The conceptualization of dandyism varies not only in time but also with individual perception. In addition, the reception of cultural material is particularly dependent on people's moods. After all, readers will differ and irony can be ignored to prioritize a literal interpretation over a satirical one—then dangling a handkerchief, like the dandy mentioned previously[14], no longer strikes the onlooker as a preposterous habit but can prove to be a feather of sorts in a man's cap. Some will see a gross biased caricature in the portraits that were maybe meant for a good laugh, while censorious others applaud the salutary exposition of devious young men, not to mention those who find either a validation for who they believe they are, or a source of inspiration—possibly role models, whatever the descriptive regime adopted by the narrator. In addition, a diachronic approach shows that many texts dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century obviously discard criticism in accordance with contemporaneous male fashion by praising some dandies' features conventionally deemed feminine. Thus, they take over the traditional *beaux* of 18th-century comedies of manners. Characterization is meant to attest to the young males' refined *nature* and *civilized* personality, for instance with Benjamin Disraeli, who defines his young Duke by mentioning "the delicacy of his extremities"[15], not unlike William Makepeace Thackeray, who praises Barnes's "beautiful small feet and hands."[16] As for George James, he singles out Darnley for the smallness of his mouth.[17] However, none of them is as radical as Gore, whose Cecil proudly declares: "*I* was the living image of my sweet mamma."[18] The positive picture relies on innate visible traits, like the size of the dandies' feet and mouths or general physiognomy, which implies deep roots in natural constitution. In other words, dandyism is essentialized to regroup individuals with a common onto-phylogenetic setup and biology is treated as predestination, possibly even destiny.

This view is further supported when the dandy's body is described in action—or at least in idle motion—staging a choreographed exercise of self-

[14] Cf. note 11.

[15] Benjamin Disraeli, *The Young Duke* (1831) (London: Bodley Head, 1928), 21.

[16] William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Newcomes* (London: H. Milford, 1864), 419.

[17] "His mouth was small." George Payne Rainsford James, *Darnley* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836), 300.

[18] Gore, *Cecil*, vol. 1, 5.

display, which is in itself a conventional sign of effeminacy in the nineteenth century at least. Of course, whenever hypo-masculine effeminacy translates a genetic, hormonal or anatomical heritage, it runs very close to femininity. However, the dandy is no longer conceived of as a feminized male hybrid monster, for he is subsumed under the acceptable sub-category of effeminate masculinity. Such is the case of Oscar Wilde's end-of-the-century characterization of Lord Henry, the decorative aesthete with a "low, musical voice" and "that graceful wave of the hand that was always so characteristic of him."[19] Even the hand gesture is naturalized and essentialized by the narrator's tactical use of the adverb *always*. It becomes apparent that in more liberal times, people become increasingly drawn to literary celebrations of dandies who do not identify in the type of male brutality Robert Browning ironically exposes: "Oh, she prefers sheer strength to ineffective grace, / Breeding and culture! Seeks the essential in the case!"[20] It is noteworthy that some authors counterbalance the physical effeminacy of the fashionable's "features" with the dandy's "countenance" to restore a touch of masculinity in the portrait:

> In appearance he was an Antinous. There was, however, an expression of firmness, almost ferocity, about his mouth, which quite prevented his countenance from being effeminate, and broke the dreamy voluptuousness of the rest of his features.[21]

This composition reshuffles gender determinations and proves that individuation is based on all kinds of combinations. Consequently, the dandies crowding the corpus, and many more besides them, understandably refuse or at least find it hard to adhere to the dominant codes in matters of dress, physical appearance or conduct. In this respect, freely engendering literary dandies contributes to endangering the screening and labelling mechanism used to build the self-legitimizing system of phallocratic domination.

Yet, many of the literary works analyzed here also restore gender within the larger system of patriarchy, supposedly determining the hero-dandy's central position in the heterosexual scenario of lawful matrimony, hence writing down a diegetic destiny for him as much as ensuring everlastingness for the social system. The set role inherent in gender is a reminder that individuals are burdened with the task of continuing the human species

[19] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1899) (New York: Norton, 1988), 20.

[20] Robert Browning, *Fifine at the Fair*, in *The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning in Six Volumes* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1887), vol. 4, 431.

[21] Disraeli, *The Young Duke*, 31–2.

within society—man and woman must attract each other, unite and multiply. This duty is deemed so important that it shapes most 19th-century novels, which are ruled by a matrimonial teleology repeating patriarchal ideology, as evidenced in Bury's generic title *Marriage in High Life*.[22] Years later, Wilde's comedies of manners are still relevant, with eligible dandies resisting institutional control over their sentimental life. The following dialogue between father and son that reasserts the group's authority over the individual may serve as a good illustration:

> Lord Goring [*expostulating*]: My dear father, if I am to get married, surely you will allow me to choose the time, place, and person? Particularly the person.
> Lord Caversham [*testily*]: That is a matter for me, sir.[23]

The dandy's insecure stance reads in the syntax that combines hypothetical and interrogative clauses or in the antiphrastic adverb *surely*, conveying desperation rather than determination in front of authority. Conversely, the overbearing father's curt answer leaves little doubt concerning the balance of power or the stakes raised in the exchange. Although a whole spectrum of possibilities fans out in the corpus, heterosexual match-making orients the plots to a large extent and conditions characterization, shifting the stress from phallocentrism to heteronormativity. However, in the corpus, many are the narrators who deal with the traditional romantic scenario from an ambiguous, possibly problematic perspective, when the co-presence of the sexes is no longer a guarantee of mutual attraction. In Walter Scott's *Waverley*, remarks on the dandy's narcissism or lack of interest in the surrounding females evoke and dodge the expected scene of sexual awareness:

> I knew not whether, like the champion of an old ballad,
>
> His heart was all on honour bent
> He could not stoop to love;
> No lady in the land had power
> His frozen heart to move;
>
> or whether the deep and flaming bars of embroidered gold which now fenced his breast, defied the artillery of Cecilia's eyes; but every arrow was launched at him in vain.[24]

[22] Charlotte Bury, *Marriage in High Life* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836).
[23] Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband* (1895) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 208.
[24] Walter Scott, *Waverley* (1814) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 62.

Sometimes, apathy turns into utter misogyny, but even such radical postures fail to deconstruct entirely the given structure of heteronormativity, within which the dandies are still diegetically located and identified, were it as dissidents to the dominant social order. Provided they still refer to women to assert themselves, they may vent their distaste or anger, sometimes using strong language, like a dandy in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Devereux*: "I despise women myself—I always did […] They weary, vex, disgust me—selfish, frivolous, mean, heartless—out with them—'tis a disgrace to have their love."[25]

Admittedly, from a macrostructural perspective, the novelists in the corpus usually appropriate the standard storyline leading the main dandiacal hero from immaturity to adulthood with a clear indication that his education has been completed when an allusion to his coming wedding is finally made. The fashionables are thus occasionally depicted courting beautiful young girls whose hearts they finally win over. And yet, even though it is for the sake of decorum, narrators never pass the bedroom doors, and the overall image is one of an unfulfilled union, since the narrator dispenses with the mating episode, that serves as the foundation of patriarchy. The fact is further emphasized by the quasi absence of children or babies in the texts, leaving reproductive sex and the production of preferably male heirs out of the picture. The seminal generative pattern of patriarchy is thus inessential to the characterization of the dandy, whose procreative capacity remains inconsequential in the narrator's view. Alternately, it may not be too far-fetched to posit that in case of a final wedding, with the implicit prospect of a family, an interpretation *a posteriori* comes to validate the maleness—and therefore masculinity, considered as its automatic translation in social terms—attached to each and every prior element characterizing the hero-dandy. From this perspective, the diegetic frame of matrimony is built as a sort of Trojan horse introducing into mainstream culture exotic lifestyles or once-puzzling existential postures. Indeed, the grand narrative of marriage can be transgressively reconfigured, for instance when premarital courtship purple patches are turned into homosocial scenes, in which male characters are described, compared and pitted against one another to select the best representative of their sex to match the maid. Such a potentially homoerotic scene is found in Disraeli's mid-nineteenth century novel, *Coningsby.* The narrator lets the readers in on the eponymous hero's inner admission that he came face to face with a fascinating man, whereas what he is really confessing is his own personal fascination with Melton:

[25] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Devereux* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836), vol. 2, 128.

> What was the magic of this man? What was the secret of his ease, that nothing could disturb, and yet was not deficient in deference and good taste? And then his dress, it seemed fashioned by some unearthly artist; yet it was impossible to detect the unobtrusive causes of the general effect that was irresistible.[26]

Another significant picture of subdued homophilia is found in Gore's *Cecil*, with the report of a morning conversation between two dandies detailing each other's physical appearance or chit-chatting about fashion. Cecil's idiosyncrasies convey emotions that redirect the scene when he inquires: "By the way, Harris, where did you get that love of a waistcoat?"[27] Later in the century, Wilde offers a sexed-up variation on the theme by opening *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with a long scene of seduction in which Lord Henry and Basil Hallward are staged rivalling over Dorian Gray's affections. The narrator's condoning detachment can be interpreted as a type of appreciative validation expressed in a more or less minor key, for instance in the descriptive pause phrasing the young dandy's reaction to Henry's flights of paradoxes in terms evocative of post-orgasmic bliss: "For nearly ten minutes he stood there, motionless, with parted lips, and eyes strangely bright. He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him."[28]

These fictional accounts of dandies, whether critical, neutral or implicitly supportive, display a gallery of males who refuse to meet the social expectations at odds with their own leanings. In so doing, literature, with its diversified voices and foci, plays an emancipatory part by making the complex sexual and gendered tropism of dandyism increasingly visible to all. It sensitizes the public to marginal phenomena that do find a form of legitimacy in the very fact of being represented—that is, of being worth representing.

The present study has established that in the analyzed corpus of late-eighteenth-century-to-early- twentieth-century British works of literature, the dandy is granted a degree of male determination and undergoes various influences and interventions that do not automatically make him a male's male in the narrator's opinion and rendering. In the process, the patriarchal matrix of compulsory procreation within the institution of matrimony—which I term the *patrix*—is at least obliquely questioned by dwelling on unmarried, free-floating characters who stand conspicuously on the margins of the *patrix* and whose very eccentricity lands them at the center of the narrative.

[26] Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby* (1844) (London: J. Lane, 1927), vol. 3, 207–8.
[27] Gore, *Cecil*, vol. 1, 40.
[28] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 20.

This emancipatory gesture threatens to turn masculinity into an empty concept, one that would be irrelevant to deciphering society's overbearing effort to prosper and multiply. However, the literary treatment of the dandy demonstrates that gender remains a persistent category with a root in anatomy. Meanwhile, would-be hegemonic patriarchy is demoted to the status of a backcloth or an inherited motif that can be appropriated, ignored or freely elaborated upon. In other words, masculinity no longer induces individuals to be fixated on the heteronormative scenario set in the grand narrative of marriage. Wording this *a scenario* and *a narrative* insists on the artificiality, possibly arbitrariness of the part males are encouraged to play on the public scene, and whatever their former options or choices, it hints at the performative side of masculinity and its load of prospective developments. This perspective gives extra meaning to Henry Jones's evocation of reality in *Masqueraders*, with its hypothetical formulation: "I think we are all masquerading! Look at them! If you touched them with reality they would vanish."[29] There might be distress in this dematerializing statement but in dandyism, reality, nature and physiology are playfully kept at a distance and can never really touch the dandies, who relish masquerading, forever lost in the happy maelstrom of self-translations.

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[29] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Masqueraders* (London: Chiswick Press, 1894), 44.

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UTRACONE W TŁUMACZENIU? MĘSKOŚĆ, MASKULINIZM, DANDYZM, LITERATURA I KRYTYKA

Streszczenie

Studium koncentruje się na systemie tłumaczenia, który łączy postaci dandyzmu, maskulinizmu, męskości, literatury i krytyki literackiej. W obszernym korpusie, zawierającym utwory literackie z połowy XVIII wieku i początku XX wieku, charakter dandysowaty uosabia mniej lub bardziej problematyczny związek cech męskich, kobiecych i zniewieściałych. Pomiędzy zgodnością a transgresją bohater-dandys ujawnia plastyczną, performatywną część związaną z indywiduacją, jednocześnie dramatyzując granice wielkich narracji heteronormatywności i patriarchatu.

Przekład streszczenia angielskiego

Słowa kluczowe: dandyzm; męskość; literatura brytyjska.

LE MÂLE, LE MASCULIN, LE DANDYSME, LA LITTÉRATURE ET LA CRITIQUE : ENFER DES ÉQUIVALENCES IMPARFAITES ?

Résumé

L'étude porte sur le système de translations qui permet d'associer les figures du dandysme, de la masculinité, du mâle, de la littérature et de la critique littéraire. Dans un corpus élargi constitué par des œuvres littéraires composées entre la moitié du 18e siècle et le début du 20e siècle, le personnage dandyesque incarne l'association plus ou moins problématique des caractères masculin, féminin et efféminé. Entre conformité et transgression, le héros-dandy révèle la part plastique et performative de l'individuation, tout en mettant en scène la limite des grands récits de l'hétéronormativité et de l'idéologie patriarcale

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Mots clés : dandysme ; masculinité ; littérature britannique.