Love and Madness in Renaissance Tragicomedies – *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *The Winter's Tale*

Daniela Kellermann, University of Cologne, Cologne

Abstract:
Madness is a topic often dealt with on the Renaissance stage. The article's main interest is to analyze how the concept of madness is negotiated in tragicomedies. Before elaborating on how madness is constructed in two selected tragicomedies, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the genre will be defined. The complex relations of gender, love and madness are subsequently examined in the two plays. Madness not only sets conflicts in motion but also involves notions of gender and social criticism in both tragicomedies. The paper further analyzes how madness evolves in the protagonists and how it is treated throughout the play.

1 How is the concept of madness used in Renaissance tragicomedy? Madness is a topic often dealt with in other genres as well (for example in Shakespeare's tragedies *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *King Lear*). The article's main point of interest is to analyze which purposes the concept of madness serves particularly in tragicomedies. In order to highlight specific ways in which tragicomedy deals with madness, two tragicomedies of the Renaissance period will serve as the focus of attention, namely Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. In *The Winter's Tale*, madness is closely connected to the male protagonist, King Leontes, and is associated with his unfounded jealousy. In the other play, however, the Jailor's Daughter – who belongs to the subplot as she is a part of the lower social group – is afflicted with madness. Her madness arises due to an intense lovesickness.

2 The way in which madness in constructed by the playwrights as well the way in which the characters respond to it stand at the centre of this article. Moreover, the role of madness for the outcome of the tragicomedy will be analyzed. To be able to do so, the hybrid genre tragicomedy will be presented first. The new genre developed and gained popularity in the Renaissance period. Can it be seen as a mixture of comedy and tragedy only or are there other characteristics that contribute to the genre? Since all genres can argued to be gendered, it is essential to examine features in genres like comedy, tragedy or tragicomedy which are either associated with male or female. In the following it can be specifically investigated how madness is gendered in the way male and female protagonists react to it.

3 In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes' madness is mainly related to the way he perceives the world. While none of the others can imagine Hermione's infidelities, Leontes implores everyone else to acknowledge what he believes to be obvious. His jealousy also gives evidence on his views on femininity. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, it is a woman who suffers

from madness, but this paper also wants to draw attention to the fact/likelihood/possibility that she might not be the only one. In addition, the play elaborates on the chivalric code and its relationship to love and sexual desires. Tragicomedy's connection to the chivalric romance will be closely examined in the following.

4 The genre tragicomedy cannot easily be described or grasped. The proliferation of different and often contradictory definitions makes it hard to assign early plays to the genre, especially because the term tragicomedy was not used until the Renaissance period (Banham 1120). From the early 17th century onwards, however, tragicomedy erupted "in England, France and Spain […] among its practitioners Fletcher, Shakespeare, Massinger [etc.]" (ibid). It developed in a time of inner turmoil and conflict. Although one can argue that tragicomedy combines the 'tragic' and the 'comic' or 'sadness' and 'merriment', it is, nevertheless, not just a simple mixture of the genres 'comedy' and 'tragedy' (ibid). The term was first "coined by Plautus in the Prologue to his *Amphitryon*" (ibid).

5 John T. Shawcross proposes that tragicomedy must be treated as "a genre in its own right" (21), not just as the result of the fusion of 'tragic' and 'comedy'. According to him, the term 'tragicomedy' consists of the substantive 'comedy' which designates the genre and the adjectival element 'tragic' which denotes the mode, meaning that the adjective tragic only specifies the comic genre (21). Jospeh Loewenstein, for instance, states that tragicomedy might be "described in Polonius phrase as 'tragical-comical-historical-pastoral'" and he investigates the reason why Guarini's *Il pastor fido* can be read as a pastoral tragicomedy (34). As a result, he is interested in the relation of pastoral *mode* to tragicomic *genre*. To him tragicomedy functions as the genre which will then be specified by pastoral elements (Loewenstein 34ff.).

6 In order to make an attempt of defining the hybrid genre, one has to gather features and themes that often occur in tragicomedies so resemblances can rise to surface. According to Mimi Still Dixon, "recognition" scenes are highly significant in tragicomedies (59). In these scenes long-lost characters are reunited. When the separated friends or family members finally recognize each other everything is re-evaluated. Thus, the recognition scene unites paradoxical concepts like sorrow and joy or separation and reunion. In addition, the notion of recognition is also related to the moment of "resurrection" (Dixon 57). Recognition scenes function to bring about the comedic ending. Family scenes revolve around tensions as well as reconciliation in the play. Dixon states that moments of reunion often include family members (56). A connection is established "between Providence and maternal provision" and the "theme of familial loss and the providential structure of tragicomedy" (70).

Gendered Genres

7 While tragedies have often been associated with masculinity, melodramas have been connected to femininity. And while tragedies reveal the "progress of the male hero" (Karlyn 157), women lack the chance to reach for heroic self-fulfilment: Their life stories can only be narrated "within the boundaries of heterosexual love, motherhood and loneliness" (ibid157). Consequently, women's stories are told "in those genres oriented toward the private sphere and the family" (ibid 157), namely in melodramas. Here women appear as the male hero's accessory and the plot revolves around "loneliness and/or motherhood" (ibid 157). While romantic comedies which centre love are also connoted to femininity, "the implications of gender for comedy are less clear" (ibid 157).

8 "Comedy [...] paves the way for a community liberated from structures grown so rigid [...] that they threaten its very existence" (160). In comparison with the tragic genre comedies not only feature different themes, but also different protagonists. Royal characters are replaced with protagonists on "the level of Everyman, or lower" (158). Moreover, the focus of attention is shifted: Comedy concentrates on social issues while tragedies are more concerned with the individual (159). While death is a well-known element in tragedies, sexual fulfilment is more and more included in comedies. Furthermore, the comic genre is used to ironize the male hero that tragedy praises. In addition, comedies feature themes like "antiauthoritarianism", meaning that the son, for instance, revolts against the father as well as "renewal and transformation", revolving around stories "of birth, death, and rebirth" (160). The connection between tragedy and comedy is still difficult to define. Kathleen Rowe Karlyn argues that comedy and tragedy are interrelated insofar as "every comedy contains a potential tragedy. But every tragedy can also be seen as an incomplete comedy" (161). She stresses that point because themes like birth, death or rebirth as well as family and power appear in both genres, in the end, however, "comedy gets the last word" (161).

Gendering of Madness and Illness in Tragicomedies

9 The eruption of madness in tragicomedies can be related to various reasons, however, it often involves issues of love, sexuality or family since these topics appear in tragicomedies every so often. In the Renaissance period, it was often assumed that women's lovesickness can develop "into full-scale madness" (Dawson 1). In connection to lovesickness one can distinguish "three other female maladies: hysteria, green sickness, and uterine fury" (ibid). In the early modern days hysteria was also called "the suffocation of the mother" and Edward Jordon, an English physician who elaborated on the malady in his book *Briefe Discourse of a*

Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother (1603), once diagnosed a patient with "hysteria rather than melancholy" (MacDonald xxix).

10 According to Jordon, the disease "is an affect of the Mother or wombe" (C 5). People suffering from hysteria are thought to have been imbalanced or disturbed, for example due to extreme emotions like jealousy or love (Dawson 13). Symptoms are for example "incoherence, delusions, and a lack of sensation" (ibid). In addition, patients are usually unable to speak, that is why hysteria is often called the suffocation of the mother (13-14). Cures involved "applying scented oils to women's sexual organs [...] and using scents to coax the womb back into its accustomed place" (Dawson 14). Sexual intercourse was also seen to have healing powers and also had the effect to press women "into their social roles as wives and mothers" (ibid).

11 Green sickness is an illness closely connected to virginity, seeing women's virginity as a sign for an incomplete and unnatural state. In Dawson's opinion green sickness is a disease which is "most relevant to lovesickness" (5). However, people which suffer from lovesickness are both mentally and physically affected while green sickness not necessarily involves sexual desire. Although sexual intercourse is again a possible treatment, it is not applied to satisfy one's sexual appetite. However, studies of this female malady also want to bring across that sex is necessary "in order to remain in physical and psychological health" (9).

12 Uterine fury, on the other hand, does involve sexual desires, but is also the least known female malady. It is assumed to arise "either from a problem of temperature in the womb, or from vapours which emanate from corrupted seed" (9). The "sexual overexcitation" (ibid) often spotted by widows or virgins is one of a few other symptoms often referred to by doctors or family members. Interestingly, uterine fury is often referred to as "love melancholy" (20), as it relates to madness that derives from (unrequited) love. In sum, one can highlight that the three maladies depicted above confirm that in Renaissance England illness and gender were closely related.

Madness in *The Winter's Tale*: Leontes's Jealousy

13 In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes' jealousy initiates the play's "tragi-comic cycle" (Wright 225). Leontes' jealousy erupts all of a sudden early in the play. Being the king of Sicilia, Leontes occupies the highest position in the social hierarchy. Moreover, he is blessed with a wife, Hermione, and a son named Mamillius. However, Leontes sees everything he holds dear endangered: "Bohemia nothing; My wife is nothing;" (I.ii. 94-95).

His jealousy erupts so fast that the event that triggers his inner turmoil is hardly recognizable and it is indeed questionable whether it can be led back to a specific event. After he unsuccessfully tried to persuade his old friend Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, he wants his wife to talk his "brother" into staying for a little while longer (I.ii. 15). Derek Cohen puts it in a nutshell: "He [Leontes] encourages Hermione to persuade Polixenes to stay through the use of – what else? – her womanly arts. Her success, paradoxically, is her undoing." (208). And indeed this short scene turns everything on its head as Leontes begins to reinterpret his wife's relation to Polixenes. While Leontes first appreciated the fact that his wife was able to convince Polixenes to stay, her success soon makes him suspicious. Leontes observes that Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes which serves as conclusive evidence. Leontes "steps away too far" and thereby he "places between himself and his wife a chasm of jealousy" (212). His exclamation of "Too hot, too hot!" marks the turning point: He is now convinced of her treason (I. ii. 108).

14 However, neither Hermione's speech nor her gestures can actually be proof enough to reach the conclusion that she is betraying her husband. Leontes allows himself to be overwhelmed by the fear of her possible unfaithfulness which is so powerful that he even convinces himself of its validity. One can argue that his unfounded jealousy resembles a kind of madness which continuously intensifies. Even others cannot convince him to see reason: Camillo insists that the king is mistaken, but he cannot change Leontes' mind (I. ii. 248-322). Henceforth, other characters refer to the king's behavior as a sign of illness. Camillo warns Polixenes of the king's suspicions and explains about Leontes' "distemper" and "disease" which will affect him, too, if he does not decide to flee (I. ii. 383-384).

15 Nevertheless, Shakespeare deliberately introduced Leontes' jealousy in the beginning of the play and might have constructed his outburst so suddenly to link his jealousy to affection. Wright argues that Leontes' jealousy is the result of an affection which "is no longer taken to mean simply 'lustful passions" but rather relates a mental perturbation (227-228). Leontes bursts out:

> Affection! Thy intention stabs the center; Thou dost make possible things not so held, Communicat'st with dreams;--how can this be?— With what's unreal thou coactive art, And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent Thou may'st co-join with something; and thou dost, (And that beyond commission) and I find it, (And that to the infection of my brains And hard'ning of my brows). (I.ii.138-146)

The play centers on the notions effect, affect and experience. Leontes short speech is self-reflexive insofar as he tries to analyze the "effect which his own emotion has on him" (Neely Speech, 325). His imagination makes him believe that his jealousy is founded in reality.

16 Leontes' outburst of jealousy is based on several levels and the play alludes to some. First of all, his strong reaction might be explained by the fact that he regards Hermione as his "possession" (Schwartz 266). One could argue that madness can be distinguished "from conditions that look just like it: bewitchment, possession, or feigning" (Neely 46). Cohen points out that Leontes refers to Hermione as "my wife" and by doing so he perceives her in her "typical role[]" (213). Now his best friend seems to have won his trophy. Leontes states: "Why, he that wears her like his medal, hanging About his neck" (I.ii. 305-306). Therefore, it becomes clear at the very beginning that the play is concerned with stereotypical images of femininity and that Leontes wants to reestablish the ideal image of a woman. However, the feeling that another man might be interested in her makes him furious.

17 On the other hand one can also argue that Leontes secretly desires to take Hermione's place beside Polixenes in order to act out "the prohibited homosexual role Leontes repudiates in himself" (Schwartz 251). Hermione's lively conversation with Polixenes might have reminded Leontes of the "homoerotic memory" (Cohen 208) he and Polixenes share when they "were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk I' th' sun" (I.ii. 67). Again, the notion of affection plays a significant role in the play as it is "'rooted' between Leontes and Polixenes in their boyhoods" (Kahn 215). However, one has to bear in mind that the term 'homosexual' was non-existent in Renaissance England, although the concept was already known (Bray 13-14). Hattaway argues that Leontes' behavior indicates his rejection towards the "notion of paradisal marriage" (101). In Hattaway's opinion, Hermione takes on the role of the intruder and might be best compared to the serpent that ends their time in paradise as well as Leontes and Polixenes' "masculine friendship" (101). In sum, this scene might just allude to their intimate male friendship or indeed refer to a homoerotic discourse.

18 Moreover, according to Cohen, a wife maintains the "social order" and "security" (207). Men rely on "feminine loyalty" as women are widely seen as "guarantors of masculine honor" (Schwartz 260). Her perceived unfaithfulness therefore comes across as "a potential threat to the sexual security and the social status of the hero" (Cohen 207). Leontes might also see his image as the masculine hero and leader at stake, fearing the humiliation which he might have to endure because of his wife's sexual infidelities. Her affair would signify that she disregards social norms and expectations and thereby she would take some of the king's authority away from him. In sum, Leontes' accusations seem to be unfounded and Cohen suggests that Leontes projected "a secret fear" on Hermione which is in fact the "fear of chaos" resulting in the reversal of "patriarchal social formations" (207).

19 Last but not least, Leontes' jealousy might be deeply rooted in his fear of women's sexual desires which he cannot control. Traub argues that the "masculine perspective of desire expresses an attitude toward female bodies that […] is revealingly paranoid" and focuses on the relation of desire and anxiety in Shakespeare's plays (3). Greenblatt for instance classes it "a primal male nausea of the female body" which came into being due to Hermione's pregnancy (132). Cohen suggests that Leontes is frightened of "an unsatisfiable sexual appetite in woman" (213). Hermione's second pregnancy might function as a lively reminder of her sexual drives as sexual intercourse naturally precedes pregnancy and it thus supports Leontes' perception of her adultery. Consequently, Hermione is imprisoned by her own husband and awaits her verdict. Prison excludes her from society and symbolizes Leontes' way to tame the female (Greenblatt 132-133).

Perceptual Truth

20 Evidence for the fact that Leontes is trapped in a visual crisis can be provided by Stuart Clark who points out that vision's efficiency and credibility is doubted in the Renaissance period. In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, one largely deals with the crisis of vision in the Renaissance period, too. In *Vanities of the Eye* Stuart Clark argues that "during the early modern period […] vision was anything but objectively established or secure in its supposed relationship to 'external fact'" (1). According to Clark, humans naturally want to believe that everything they see is true (1), since "the eyes provided the most direct knowledge of things" (10). However, especially in Renaissance Europe a gap developed between what can be seen and what is true. In fact, "vision came to be characterized by uncertainty and unreliability, such that access to visual reality could no longer be normally guaranteed" (2).

21 Clark argues: "The clearest cases were those of imaginary phenomena, when illness, madness, or just fear made people see completely non-existent things" (209). "Melancholy" as well as other kinds of madness has the power to influence the visual senses, resulting in an "inability to distinguish between sensible truths and sensible fictions" (61). Leontes' behavior indeed seems to suggest a kind of "illusion and lack of correspondence with reality" (62), when he accuses his wife to be "slippery" and a "hobby-horse" (I.ii. 272 + 275).

22 Leontes sees reality differently as jealousy and passion become the dominant part of his personality. The play shows how a subjective vision of reality changes everything and it furthermore points out how destructive this kind of vision tends to be. And realism is nothing

else than an illusion and effect. Barthes differentiates between two levels of signification, the level of denotation and the level of connotation:

> eliminated from the realist speech-act as a signified of denotation, the "real" returns to it as a signified of connotation; for just when these details are reputed to denote the real directly, all that they do – without saying so – is signify it; (234)

The levels of signification relate to what Barthes calls the "referential illusion" (234). At the end, "the very absence of the signified […] becomes the very signifier of realism: the reality effect is produced" (ibid).

23 Reliance on vision is discussed in the play as well, as there are many references to perception in *The Winter's Tale*, namely how characters see the world. According to Leontes' view there can be no doubt that his wife betrayed him because he trusts his visual abilities completely. He believes that his eyes transmitted the truth and cannot understand how others like Camillo need so much time to reach the same conclusion:

> Ha'not you seen, Camillo, - But that's past doubt, you have, or your eye-glass Is thicker than a cuckold's horn – or heard, – For, to a vision so apparent, […] (I.ii. 266-269)

One can argue that Leontes' mad jealousy erupts due to a shift of perception that makes him reflect upon everything he had once believed to be true. He begins to distrust his former perceptive abilities, believing that he had been tricked. He acknowledges to Camillo: "but we have been / Deceived in thy integrity, deceived / In that which seems so. (I.ii. 238-240)"

24 Apparently, Camillo fails to recognize the things Leontes can (or imagines) to see with his "bare eyes" (I.ii. 307). Again and again Leontes turns to Camillo: "Canst with thine eyes at once see good and evil" (I.ii. 301). He also accuses his other lords to be ignorant to the obvious truth: "You smell this business with a sense as cold As is a dead man's nose: but I do see't and feel't" (II.i. 150-151). Leontes strongly believes in his judgment as he as the king of Sicilia cannot come to false conclusions. He is outraged that the others seem to be "ignorant by age" (II.i. 172) and that they seem to doubt his observations: "What! lack I credit?" (II.i. 156).

25 In order to "Give rest to the minds of others" (II.i. 191) he sends people to get the oracle's prediction. According to Leontes, this is the only way to verify his observations and to make sure that how he perceives the world is true. Interestingly, he does not want empirical proof, but requires an oracle instead. However, he accuses Hermione of her wrongdoings in court. Thereby the court case and the oracle's prediction become opposite and conflicting poles in the play. The court represents the legal judgment system as well as

empirical evidence while the oracle signifies a believe system. Leontes' recollection of the latter can allude to the fact that Leontes longs for old times and desires a lost certainty. He also strives for superior knowledge and tries to know and to enclose the truth. Language and vision are instruments to perceive the world, but they seem to have become unreliable.

From Jealousy to Remorse

26 The oracle's prediction functions as a reality shock in the play. Leontes has to acknowledge his error, but the oracle's judgment does not make him see reason. Quite the contrary: Leontes still cannot differentiate between truth and falsehood. He asks: "Hast thuough read truth?" (III.ii. 137), but even after being reassured that the oracle's evaluation can be trusted the king exclaims: "There is no truth at all i'the oracle: / The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood" (III.ii. 140). A message delivered by an attendant brings back his senses at last: "The prince your son […] is gone" (III.ii. 143-144). Only this delivery makes the king realize his "injustice". However, the "news is mortal to the queen" (III.ii. 147), who appears to be dead. Meanwhile, Hermione's lady Paulina takes her anger and frustration out on the king himself. She exclaims: "Thy tyranny / Together working with his jealousies […] And then run mad indeed, - stark mad!" (III.ii. 178-182). In her opinion, Leontes is "monstrous" and a "devil" (III.ii. 189 +190). Leontes lets her continue with her rage, feeling that he deserves this sort of punishment.

27 Hermione, like *King Lear*, seemingly dies of a broken heart. To be precise, the queen dies of a loss she can neither bear nor handle. The reality of death appears as the only reality that remains on the Renaissance stage. There are many examples of such shocks of perception on the renaissance stage. Tragicomedy functions to visualize the strings connecting and separating birth and death, madness and remorse as well as melancholy and sanity. While Hermione will be awakened again at the very end, Mamillius will not. His death is already foreshadowed in the first scene of Act II by himself: He wants to tell his mother "A sad tale's best for winter: I have one / Of sprites and goblins" (II.i. 24-25). This announcement not only alludes to the title of the play, but also to supernatural powers. The old wives' tale deals with a man "dwelt by a churchyard" (II.i. 29). The tale's introduction can already function as a premonition: This could be an allusion to Mamillius' later death. As a result, Mamillius indicates the turning point and therefore he takes a decisive role in the play. The cause of his death is not revealed, but Leontes will indeed visit his grave. In addition, the tale functions as a meta-commentary of the whole story. As storytelling is about capturing the audience and about having an effect on the audience, one can conclude that the

scene is not about truth but about telling. This indicates that Leontes is less interested in whether Hermione is a loyal and faithful wife but deeply self-absorbed. Leontes is confronted with the fear that he cannot rely on anybody – neither his family and friends nor his vision.

28 The topic of the supernatural is again discussed in the play when Hermione's ghost appears in Antingonus' dream. The "ghostly resurrection" again functions as a premonition (Neumeier 118). Antingonus has to realize that "the spirits o'the / dead / May walk again" (III.iii. 16-17). However, Antingonus remains skeptical. Unlike many of his contemporaries he is not a believer. In his opinion "Dreams are toys" (III.iii. 39). Paradoxically, he decides on an affective level to go along with it which is both strange and ambivalent: Why does he suddenly start believing although he claims he is not superstitious? He exclaims: "Yet, for this once, yea […] I do believe" (III.iii. 40-41). Moreover, Hermione appears as an idealized saint. She is visualized "in pure white robes; / Like very sanctity" (III.iii. 22-23). Nevertheless, her appearance can also be compared to a demon – depending on perception: "her eyes / Became two spouts: the fury spent" (III.iii. 25-26). The two images of the saint and the demon are conflated. The nightmare or ghost story foreshadows the later resurrection scene as Hermione has "ungentle business" on earth which needs to be sorted out (III.iii. 34).

29 The fifth and final act of the play displays Hermione's awakening. The resurrection scene, which reunites the protagonists, corresponds to many traditional endings of tragicomedies. Before Hermione comes back to life, Paulina and Leontes remember the "perfect woman" (V.i. 15). Hermione was not only perfect in life, but has become an ideal in death. Leontes swears: "No more such wives" (V.i. 55) and even further exclaims: "I'll have no wife, Paulina" (V.i. 68). Paulina is sure that Leontes will marry again though. Therefore, she insists: "Yet, if my lord will marry, - if you will, sir, / No remedy, but you will, - give me the office/ To choose you a queen" (V.i. 76-78). Paulina also refers to Hermione with the phrase: "Were I the ghost that walket" (V.i. 62). Again, Paulina alludes to the fact that Hermione might exist in some form. "Leontes is still haunted by guilt" (Neumeier 118). In fact, as a ghost Hermione has an unnatural possessive hold on Leontes, mirroring the one he had on her when she was still alive.

30 The resurrection scene is highly interested in the transition of life and death which is again a central topic in tragicomedies. It "foreground[s] unsettling links between fear and desire" (ibid). A statue of Hermione was created and surprisingly the artist even managed to capture age. Leontes rightly notices that the Hermione he knew was not so "wrinkled" (V.iii. 28). Art seems to be able to capture things that memory cannot hold on to. Everyone admires Hermione's stature and Leontes even tries to kiss her twice, but Paulina points out that the

color is not dry yet (V.iii. 46-79). Finally, Paulina transforms Hermione from statue to life, but insists that "to awake your faith" is necessary for the transformation. While Leontes screens the statue for "comparisons and contrasts, his faith is awakened" (Garber 180). Hermione's resurrection therefore revolves around the notions of art versus miracle and belief in contrast to skepticism. The ending of the play remains open. Paulina again alludes to the notion of experience and insists that the others will not require the truth but experience it. Concerning Leontes and Hermione, the play also gives no further information. Surely one could assume that Leontes suffered long enough from his own mistakes and longs to spend the rest of his life together with his wife, but Hattaway argues differently (102). He notices that Leontes – who strongly desired to kiss Hermione before her awakening – not even talks to her nor does she address him. They do embrace each other, but Leontes is more concerned with the marriage of his long lost and initially rejected daughter (ibid). Moreover, the play constantly shifted between two modes: Can truths be gathered via empirical evidence or with the help of a belief system? The tragicomedy settles for a balance between the two forces.

31 All in all, *The Winter's Tale* is based on notions like honor and madness, but also questions ideas of love. Leontes' love for Hermione that results in madness becomes the centre of criticism. Leontes is still linked to the past since he longs for old belief systems. However, the old order does not work any longer, but the new order cannot yet be trusted. Although tragicomedy uses madness, value systems and concepts of love to look back to conservative role models of the past to express dissatisfaction with the present, it only casts a glance at future role models. In fact, Leontes realizes the (sexual) needs of his wife, but is tremendously afraid of the reversal of social orders. As a result, his jealousy develops as a sign for his incapability to handle the situation. Jealousy is henceforth described as a disease by nearly all characters; realizing its disruptive power and force.

Madness in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*: The Chivalric Code

32 *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is about vision, power and love at first sight. The play deals less with soul mates, but rather features desire and lust. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* also refers to views on femininity, not only portraying the view of woman as a partner to man, but even going so far as likening her to a goddess. This consideration can be linked back to the chivalric romance pattern which thinks of love as something pure. The chivalric code is concerned with honor and love and the play is based on the typical love and honor conflict. In the following, it will be important to look at how tragicomedy treats this pattern and especially how love and honor are defined in the play. In connection to this, one has to

explore whether there are different versions of love displayed in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and what chivalric romance and love have to do with madness.

33 According to Mary Beth Rose, chivalry became “an international phenomenon” in medieval times (187). Fused with political history, chivalry played a significant role in “late medieval power relations” (187-188). Even when the “political functions of chivalry” vanished in the sixteenth century, a chivalric ethic remained which was deeply concerned with “ideals of honor and nobility” (188). Looking at the origins of chivalry, Rose points out that the notion can be traced back to “knighthood (la chevalerie)” (190). In the twelfth century, knights were employed by “superior castle owners” and even when they left their workplace “they adopted the idea of inheritance as a value” (ibid). Knights were eager to show themselves which could be done best in tournaments and battles. Rose stresses that the knight’s youth could be regarded as the most exhausting time as it was a period of “impatience, turbulence, and instability” (191). The knight longed to win “glory in tournaments and war” (ibid).

34 However, the knight not only wanted to gain a good reputation among his fellows, but was also on a quest for a wife (ibid). Consequently, the chivalric pattern was not rarely related to the phenomenon of ‘courtly love’ (196). Love, however, seen from the male’s perspective only, is reducing women to desirable objects and emphasizing male desire (192). Chivalry, Rose argues, also articulated the problematic relationship between private and public spheres in the sixteenth and seventeenth century: Thus in times of cultural formations chivalry “was to facilitate violent processes of change by idealizing and – potentially – denying them” (195). Tragicomedy then processes the chivalric ideal and thereby redefines “the relationship between chivalric heroism and sexuality” (199).

35 Applied to Fletcher and Shakespeare’s tragicomedy *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Rose argues that “love and sexuality” become “the exclusive focus of the play” (214). The play tries to solve the conflicts that were caused by love and sexuality in the first place and revolves around the chivalric code to articulate the new relations of private and public spheres. In the opinion of Mary Beth Rose, the contradiction of the two realms is not really the focus of attention, but conflicts erupting in the private life only will be discussed in the play (216). All in all, one can argue that main problems arise due to different concepts of love and also because of conflicting notions of “chivalric heroism and sexual love” (228).

Same-sex Relationships

36 Already in the first two acts of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, same-sex friendships are established and highly valued. During their stay in prison (Act II scene ii), the two cousins Palamon and Arcite realize how fond they are of each other. Arcite is convinced they "shall know nothing here but one another" (II.ii. 41) and remain "unmarried" (II.ii. 29). According to them being together will allow them to endure everything. Only the unfortunate situation makes them reflect upon their relationship. Moreover, the prison allows a closeness which is impossible outside. Arcite is more and more comforted by the mere presence of Palamon. He even thinks of the imprisonment as the following: "I think this our prison" (II.ii. 62). It is an isolated area which is remotely placed from society and holds the opportunity for the two kinsmen to express their feelings toward each other. The prison indeed became "holy sanctuary" (II.ii. 72). The prison insofar turned into a refuge for them as no woman can woo them "to wander from" (II.ii. 76). Instead, with the help of their imagination, they can enjoy the new form of togetherness. Arcite confesses:

> We are one anothers wife, ever begetting New birthes of love; we are father, friends, acquaintance; We are, in one another, Families, I am your heire, and you are mine. (II.ii. 80-83)

The short passage foregrounds a certain homoerotic discourse in the play – a discourse to which tragicomedy has been linked to as well. Of course one could also argue that Palamon idealizes the merit of male friendship, however, utterances like "in one another" (II.ii. 82) might indeed express a particular fondness for "same-gender bonding" (Sinfield 72).

37 The two kinsmen are not the only ones who value same-gender relationships. Emilia, Arcite and Palamon's later object of desire, also "rejects heterosexual bonds in favour of same-sex friendship" (Dawson 31). Emilia expresses that she is attracted to her childhood friend Flavia who died when they were eleven. Emilias "idealized discourse of same-sex friendship" functions as the counter image of Palamon and Arcite's intimate relationship (ibid). Emilia makes clear in reference to Flavia: "But was her pattern; her affections - pretty, / Though, happily, her careles were - I followed" (I.iii.72-74). She even further exclaims "That the true love `tween maid and maid may be / More than in sex dividual" (I.iii. 81-82). Thus Emilia prefers a single life and "embodies the 'clear virginity'" (ibid).

38 The prison scene also alludes to the chivalric code as the two kinsmen talk about how they "desire the ways of honour" (II.ii. 73). Male bonding might contribute "to the ties of heroism, loyalty and self-sacrifice", but Sinfield adds that it can be "strikingly dysfunctional" when it turns into "male rivalry" (76). The kinsmen temporarily value chivalric heroism

higher than sexual desires, but as soon as Emilia appears, Arcite and Palamon's ideal friendship seems to be forgotten. The mere side of her dissolves their precious friendship. The happening is depicted quite superficially as none of them knows Emilia at all. Instead, all that Arcite and Palamon care about is how they can manage to possess the desired object. Arcite and Palamon both fall for Emilia by love at first sight which symbolizes the starting point for their ongoing rivalry in the future. Nevertheless, one can also argue that their love seems to be "more the product of their love for one another than any actual understanding of the woman they are pursuing" (Dawson 36).

Love at first sight

39 When the two kinsmen fall in love with Emilia, she becomes a "treasured object of desire" and a price that is ought to be won (Rose 221). In this rivalry for Emilia she herself has no say in it. The kinsmen take "no notice whatsoever of her feelings, or, indeed, of her" (ibid). Instead, they remain deeply engaged in their "self-absorption" (222). Emilia on the other hand cannot decide whom she wants to marry or if she even wants to marry either one of them. Her lack of options is superficially highlighted in the play. However, the play gives her plenty of opportunities to articulate her thoughts and feelings. Although her opinion might not be valued she nevertheless had the chance to reveal her emotions. Rose also implies this view: "Is she merely a passive victim in regard to choosing a mate, or is she unwilling to assert her prerogative as a subject and make a choice?" (ibid). Nevertheless, Emilia refuses to present a kind of inner co3nflict and she also avoids a conflict between public and private spheres (ibid). She does not state that she is secretly in love with either Arcite or Palamon. She deliberately does not want to make a choice. Emilia knows that the two men want to fight to their deaths because of her, but she cannot reach a conclusion. Her long monologue illustrates her inner feelings: "I am a fool, my reason is lost in me,/ I have no choice" (IV.ii. 34-34).

40 Emilia's long speech signifies her indifference toward her two wooers. She goes back and forth in her speech and cannot decide for one or the other as she favors none of them. In the chivalric pattern women indeed have no say. "[C]hivalric love is constructed exclusively in terms of male desire" (Rose 221). However, Emilia allows herself to be objectified even further because of her own indifference. She further makes her lovers appear indistinguishable: "Cannot distinguish, but must cry for both" (IV.ii. 54). Emilia does not seem to be in love. There is no hint of mutual affection, although the idea that marriage involves mutual affection was already a part of Renaissance ideas of love. One explanation

for her reversed behavior is brought forward by Dawson who claims that Emilia cannot decide for one or the other – or even a man at all – because her intimate friendship with Flavia goes beyond the grave (32). It is equally likely that her desire cannot be pinpointed: "Desire is thus constructed as imitative and displaced, so that it matters less what the object is, than that it is loved by the friend" (Dawson 32). In sum, Emilia decides to play the passive part till the very end while the Jailor's Daughter gets to play the progressive part: Her decision of loving Palamon is made very early in the play. In the end, the Jailor's Daughter is afflicted with madness as she tries to break out of her role. The Jailor's Daughter appears as the counter image to Emilia.

Madness: The Jailor's Daughter and the Kinsmen

41 The Jailor's Daughter has many lines and scenes. She frees her love Palamon from prison because – like the two kinsmen – she falls in love with her object of desire at first sight. The Jailor's Daughter is aware of the hopeless situation due to the social gap that divides their lives. She exclaims: "To marry him is hopeless; To be his whore is witless" (II.iv. 4-5). This awareness results in the Daughter's "sense of her own unworthiness" (Dawson 30). After his escape Palamon owes his life to the Jailor's Daughter. Both flee into the forest. She foregrounds her sexual desire and her confession cannot yet be considered mad love. The Jailor's Daughter is interested in sexual fulfillment. She further elaborates on her absolute love. After she gave Palamon his liberty, the Jailor's Daughter admits: "I love him beyond love and beyond reason,/ Or wit, or safety; I have made him know it;/ I care not, I am desperate" (II.vi. 11-13). To love someone beyond reason is an acknowledgement of her absolute love as a kind of madness after all. The Jailor's Daughter not only reveals her love for Palamon, but also points out the unmanly behavior of Palamon as he not even thanked his rescuer let alone declared his feelings for her as well. With his dishonorable behavior Palamon violated the chivalric code and the Jailor's Daughter cleverly reminds the audience of his ruthlessness: "He made such scruples of the wrong he did / To me and to my father" (II.vi. 25-26).

42 While Palamon disappears, the Jailor's Daughter remains alone in the forest and eventually loses her identity in the woods (III.ii.). Instead of acknowledging to herself that her love has left her, she rather believes and fears that Palamon has been attacked by a wolf. Another long monologue gives evidence of her inner turmoil. Her confused state brings her so far to long for a "deathlike swoon" (Neely 85): "Least I should drowne, or stab or hang my selfe. O state of Nature, faile together in me, […] The best way is the next way to a grave"

(III.ii.30-34). By referring to the 'state of nature' the Jailor's Daughter explicitly links her (sexual) desire directly to the instincts which are so overpowering that she cannot control her emotions any longer. Her state of being in love makes her appear mad and her female malady can also be characterized as a "delusional melancholy" (Neely 84). Dawson points out: "For lovesickness, like melancholy, is a disease that can be manifested *either* as a destructive bodily illness, *or* as an ennobling intellectual affliction" (2). In Renaissance period, Dawson elaborates further, lovesickness can be related to three other female maladies, namely hysteria, green sickness and uterine fury (1). Dawson states that in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* lovesickness is also connected with "uterine disorders" (1) as well as "green sickness" (27). One can conclude that the Jailor's Daughter undergoes several "stages of lovesickness before descending into madness" (Dawson 29).The Daughter's sickness is also insofar linked to female maladies as it is associated with her "menstrual cycle" (Dawson 22).

43 Still in the forest, the Jailor's Daughter allows herself to be dragged away by fantasies. She dreams of a "stormy sea" which can be interpreted as a metaphor for her inner turmoil. She starts singing – a behavior which is generally associated with female mental maladies. The Doctor who was later consolidated to cure her also diagnoses "madness" (IV.iii. 49), which is more specifically "melancholy" (IV.iii. 50). The Doctor comes up with a treatment based on the symptoms the Jailor informs him about: "She is continually in a harmless distemper:/ sleeps little; altogether without appetite, save often/ drinking; dreaming of another world and a better" (IV.iii. 3-5). The Jailor's Daughter becomes "increasingly unsettled from her lack of food and sleep" (Dawson 30). What makes her appear unsettled is the way she openly confesses her love to Palamon. She not only conveys the message that she is deeply in love with the kinsmen but also directly expresses her sexual desires. Quite like the two kinsmen her world resolves around the question how she can get sexual fulfillment. However, her pleading for sexual fulfillment does not go along with the images of femininity (for example virginity) and her role in society. Her longing must come across as a disease to explain her desires. Dawson states: "the distemper of the Jailor's Daughter fits into paradigms of gender and illness, which suggest that female lovesickness is sexual, irrational, and self-destructive" (30). Being lovesick or longing for sexual pleasures are henceforth seen as maladies which can explicitly be linked to the female sex. However, this does not mean that her plea for sexual fulfillment was overlooked or suppressed by male society. On the contrary: Whereas the Victorians assumed that women had or should have no sexual desire and that men had plenty, the English Renaissance assumed that women had more sexual

desire than did men. (Bach 29) In sum, the play strongly revolves around “male anxiety about female sexuality” (Thompson 3).

44 The treatment of the Daughter’s melancholy results in the loss of her maidenhead. The Wooer plays a major part in the cure as he pretends to be Palamon. The Jailor’s Daughter is not in love with the real Palamon, “but her ideal” (Dawson 36) and lets herself be fooled by the imposter. It is the Doctor in particular who approves of the illusion: “It is a falsehood she is in, which is with falsehood to be combated” (IV.iii. 93-94). Interestingly, the Doctor no longer decides on religious treatment. The play is also no longer concerned with guilt and punishment, but only with the treatment of the Jailor’ Daughter. Only the Jailor objects sexual intercourse as a possible treatment as he fears for his daughter’s honor. According to Carroll, this fear can be linked back to the “mystery of virginity” in the English renaissance (28): Due to the “cult of Virgin Mary”, virginity was strongly valued (Barber 196). However, the Doctor makes clear that the Jailor’s Daughter has long lost her honor anyway. And even the Jailor himself acknowledges that her current behavior makes her “So far from what she was, so childishly, / So sillily, as if she were a fool” (IV.i. 39-40). To avoid ruining the honor of the Jailor’s Daughter and him even further, the Wooer promises her to marry her afterwards and thereby he wants to live up to the standards set by the chivalric code. The treatment also suggests that women depend on men for a stabilized personality and a healthy condition.

45 The treatment, resembling “a kind of rape” (Sinfield 80), puts an end to the madness of the Jailor’s Daughter. However, one could claim that neither the Jailor’s Daughter nor Emilia got what they wanted. Emilia is about to get married although she would have preferred her single life and concerning the Jailor’s Daughter: “erotic satisfaction is also the moment of its loss” (Dawson 36). This goes along with Carroll’s point of view: “The state of virginity thus exists only as a condition of potential loss” (21). Dawson further points out that the Jailor’s Daughter might come to her senses in the future, realizing that her Wooer is not what he pretended to be, but that can just be related to “the delusional nature of erotic love itself” (ibid). In sum, the tragicomedy settles for “uneasy compromises” (ibid).

46 All in all, the play “tests chivalric idealism against private (primarily sexual) experience” (Rose 223). The women’s longing for sexual experience and the foregrounding of sexual desires is associated with madness. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* highlight the gendering of madness as a female malady. However, gendering madness also means that during the Renaissance period one can realize gender shifts from the one-sex theory to the two-sex theory. Originally women were seen as deficit men, but that image shifted. Suddenly

differences between men and women were recognized. One could argue that tragicomedy performs and shows the shift and indeed also displays the constructiveness and artificiality of the shift.

47 It has also been emphasized that madness in the tragicomedy cannot be linked to the subplot only which features the lovesickness of the Jailor's Daughter. In contrast, madness can be linked to the main part as well which depicts the story of the two kinsmen. They both fall in love with Emilia at first sight by neither knowing her personality nor being interest in her. Their falling in love can also be described as a love beyond reason and thus it can be connected to madness as well. As a result, madness in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* functions as a connecting link between the subplot and the main plot.

Conclusion: Depiction and Function of Madness in Tragicomedies

48 The tragicomedies *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *The Winter's Tale* reveal many differences and similarities. Both plays conclude with marriage and family celebration. However, one can argue that marriage is worked out as a compromise to comfort the protagonists in the face of the loss of Mamillius and Arcite. Rose even argues that "the heroics of marriage" emphasizes the "increasing prestige of private life" in tragicomedies (235). However, it remains dubious whether Hermione and Leontes or Palamon and Emilia actually enjoy their future life as a married couple. Madness, either erupting due to unfounded jealousy or overpowering lovesickness, not only sets conflicts in motion, but also involves notions of gender and social criticism in both tragicomedies.

49 Gendering of madness is strongly highlighted in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. One could argue that not only the Jailor's Daughter, but also the kinsmen develop an uncontrollable madness. The Daughter falls hopelessly in love with Palamon while Palamon himself as well as Arcite immediately fall in love with Emilia. One can conclude that the kinsmen are also afflicted with madness, however, they deal with it differently: The Jailor's Daughter tries to break out of her role and turns mad while the two kinsmen stick to the masculine roles expected from them and decide on a chivalric tournament to solve out their rivalry. Leontes' jealousy develops into madness and arises due to a shift in perception and a visual crisis. Unlike the Daughter's madness, Leontes' madness is not treated by a doctor, but gets cured by a reality shock. Both tragicomedies allude to gradual gender shifts. Tragicomedy acknowledges the shift, but also refers to its problems. These problems for instance involve the chivalric code and its relation to sexual love and the way women and men are still defined

by the pattern. Although both plays indicate gender shifts and reversed roles, the future is still considered in a skeptical way.

50 Linked to the expected roles of male and female are the men's views on women's sexual desires. Women's sexuality is no longer denied, but still causes anxiety and fear in the male population. The desire for sexual fulfillment of the Jailor's Daughter is consequently treated like a madness that needs to be cured. With regard to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Palamon and Arcite are also eager to possess Emilia as she becomes their desired object, but react in the framework of the chivalric code as they fight for their loved one in a tournament. In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes unconsciously cannot handle Hermione's sexual attraction and the uncontrollability of her desires and even considers her death as he fears the reversal of patriarchal social formations. Both plays depict women as objects of desire that need to be possessed by men; thereby involving the notion of social criticism. The plays not only deal with desire in the realm of heterosexual relationships, but further include homoerotic discourses. All in all, both tragicomedies dwell on madness, value systems and concepts of love to illustrate how tragicomedy remains in between a nostalgic past and a not yet optimistic future.

Author's Note

The article is based on findings from Prof. Dr. Neumeier's seminar on "Hybrid Genres: Tragicomedy" and relates to her article "Vision and Desire: Fantastic Renaissance Spectacles" (forthcoming).

Works Cited

Bach, Rebecca Ann. *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature before Heterosexuality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Banham, Martin. [Ed.] *The Cambridge Guide to Theater*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 1120-1121.

Barber, Charles Laurence. "The Family in Shakespeare's Development. Tragedy and Sacredness". *Representing Shakespeare. New Psychoanalytic Essays.* Ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. 188-202.

Barthes, Roland. "The Reality Effect". *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000*. Ed. Dorothy J. Hale. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 229-234.

Bray, Alan. *Homosexuality in Renaissance England.* London: Gay Men's Press, 1982.

Carroll, William C. “Language and sexuality in Shakespeare”. *Shakespeare and Sexuality*. Ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 14-34.

Clark, Stuart. *Vanities of the Eye. Vision in Early Modern European Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Cohen, Derek. “Patriarchy and Jealousy in Othello and The Winter’s Tale”. *Modern Language Quarterly.* 1987, Vol. 48 (3). 207-223.

Dawson, Lesel. “Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature”. *Oxford Scholarship Online*. 2008. 1-46.

Dixon, Mimi Still. “Tragicomic Recognitions: Medieval Miracles and Shakespearean Romance”, *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*. Ed. Nancy Klein Maguire. New York: AMS Press,1987. 56-79.

Hattaway, Michael. “Male sexuality and misogyny”. *Shakespeare and Sexuality.* Ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 92-115.

Garber, Marjorie. *Coming of Age in Shakespeare.* London: Methuen, 1981.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Kahn, Coppélia. *Man’s Estate. Masculine Identity in Shakespeare.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Karlyn, Kathleen Rowe. “Comedy, Melodrama, and Gender: Theorizing the Genres of Laughter”. *Screening Genders*. Ed. Krin Gabbard and William Luhr. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008. 155-180.

Loewenstein, Joseph. “Guarini and the Presence of Genre”. *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*. Ed. Nancy Klein Maguire. New York: AMS Press, 1987. 33-55.

MacDonald, Michael. *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London.* London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991.

Neely, Carol Thomas. “The Winter’s Tale: The Triumph of Speech.” *Studies in English Literature.* 1500-1900. 15.2. (1975): 321-338.

Neely, Carol Thomas. *Distracted Subjects. Madness and gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

Neumeier, Beate. “Vision and Desire: Fantastic Renaissance Spectacles”. *Gothic Renaissance: A Reassessment*. Ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014 (forthcoming).

Rose, Mary Beth. *The Expense of Spirit. Love and sexuality in English Renaissance drama*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Schwartz, Murray M. "Leontes' Jealousy in The Winter's Tale". *American Imag*o. 30.3. (1973): 250-274.

Shakespeare, William. *"The Winter's Tale"- The complete works of William Shakespeare*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2007.

Shakespeare, William and John Fletcher. *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Ed. Lois Potter. Walton-on-Thames and Surrey: Nelson, 1997.

Shawcross, John T. "Tragicomedy as Genre, Past and Present." *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*. Ed. Nancy Klein Maguire. New York: AMS Press,1987. 13-32.

Sinfield, Alan. *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality. Unfinished business in cultural materialism*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Thompson, Ann. "Shakespeare and sexuality". *Shakespeare and Sexuality*. Ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 1-13.

Traub, Valerie. *Desire and Anxiety. Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Wright, Laurence. "When Does the Tragi-Comic Disruption Start?: The Winter's Tale and Leontes' Affection". *English Studies*. 70.3. (1989): 225-232.