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An exploration of Familiarisation and Defamiliarisation in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, Johnathon Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room', and Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*

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Samuel Johnson in *The Rape of the Lock* observed that 'new things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new'.[1] Through this concept, the literary techniques of familiarisation and defamiliarisation are used in the texts of *Fantomina* by Eliza Haywood, 'The Lady's Dressing Room' by Johnathon Swift and *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope. The satires take the approach of making objects unfamiliar to draw the reader's attention and try to incorporate change into society. By using these two literary techniques, the authors are attempting to highlight social injustices and to make social commentaries. By defamiliarising concepts such as feminine beauty, evident in *The Lady's Dressing Room* and *Fantomina*, the satires make the form of women more complex. Rather than making their women conform to stereotypical norms, the defamiliarisation causes the female leads to stand out. Thus, one can argue that defamiliarisation is used to make the female form memorable in a different format

[1] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 4 vols (London: printed for Bathurst and 35 others, 1779-81), IV (1794), p. 188. Google eBook.

than what is usually seen; the use of familiarisation is a reinforcement which makes the unfamiliar objectification of feminine beauty and actions stand out. Additionally, defamiliarisation, the idea of making objects unfamiliar, makes the satires female roles significant and effective. For example, in *The Lady's Dressing Room,* the objects of disgust which surround feminine beauty are portrayed through Stephon's violation of privacy. However, to see the defamiliarisation of women in this instance, the familiarisation of the chamber pot is significant. They need to relate defamiliarisation to familiar objects and bodily fluids to change society's perception. In contrast, *Fantomina* plays to the stereotypes of women. She was considered as a stereotypical woman who was a danger to male gender because of her use of multiple disguises and aim to trick men. Alternatively, perhaps the familiarisation of her actions also causes defamiliarisation. Even though she plays to female stereotypes, she brings up awareness to the social stereotype of women. Haywood's female lead is used to show that women cannot all be forcefully fit into one group. Haywood draws attention to Pope's claim that 'most Women have no Characters at all' and goes onto show its inaccuracy with her strong female lead.[2] Haywood uses familiarisation and defamiliarisation to both fight female stereotypes and play to them to highlight social inequality. However, the concept of familiarisation is used differently in *The Rape of the Lock*; this is particularly seen at the scene of which he forcefully cuts her hair. The other two satires use familiarisation to make defamiliarisation stand out, while *The Rape of the Lock* uses familiarisation to produce social harmony and explore the inner working of the elite class.

The context of Russian formalism is essential in understanding the effects of defamiliarisation and familiarisation. Russian formalism is best described as a school of literary theory and analysis emerging around 1915. Its work attempted to give literature observable

[2] Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 2. ProQuest eBook. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

features, and this is where the concept of defamiliarisation was created. Defamiliarisation is a key concept that helps understand how satires are used by Haywood, Swift and Pope to comment on the societal effect these texts had. By defamiliarising objects and people's behaviour, the three satires create a space for change. Defamiliarisation functions as the tool the authors use to highlight new perceptions and old beliefs in a new format. Combining the concepts of familiarisation and defamiliarisation allows these texts to comment on society in general but also help in redirecting societal viewpoints that surround gender inequality and social unity.

The effect of defamiliarisation in *The Lady's Dressing Room* can be seen through the concept of female beauty and appearance. On the offset, we are told that 'Five Hours… *Celia* spent in Dressing' which portrays the idea that female beauty surrounds vanity.[3] She takes a long time to put on this façade of an appearance, thus, the defamiliarisation comes from the remnants of this façade. As Tita Chico puts it in her book 'Designing women' 'the trope of the dressing room allows for the projection of duplicity.'[4] Women in the eighteenth century were surrounded by the concept of beauty and expected to have this particular appearance. The use of the dressing room came around in the mid-seventeenth century and became a room of their own to have privacy. Thus, Strephon's invasion of this privacy becomes the cause of the defamiliarisation surrounding women's beauty. Strephon claims that the room was littered with 'various Combs for various Uses, Filled up with Dirt' (Swift, p. 430). This shows that her use of beauty products and the final outwards appearance does not match the waste that is left behind. Her dressing room becomes a means for both satirical comedy and to highlight the unrealistic social expectations of women. The products and clothing are all methods of illusion

[3] Jonathan Swift, 'The Lady's Dressing Room', 2nd edn (London: Roberts, 1732), pp. 430–33 (p. 430). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[4] Tita Chico, *Designing Women: The Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Culture*, ed. by Greg Clingham (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), p. 15. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

to hide what feminine beauty truly is. The unfamiliar objects of 'Handkerchiefs forgot… Snuff and Snot' and 'The Stockings… Marks of stinking Toes' portray how women are in private and cause difficulty in perceiving women in these rose-coloured glasses of perfection (Swift, p. 431). His invasion has brought to light this image of women men would not be familiar with. As previously mentioned, the dressing room was a room for privacy, often built separately from the house. It was a form of sanctuary women had. Thus, this satire uses defamiliarisation effectively in addressing the reality of women rather than this fantasy society has constructed. Female beauty is revised through Strephons' reactions to the things Celia has left behind, 'her bodily waste'.[5] Furthermore, the satire seems to use defamiliarisation to lower women's status in society even more. Strephon claims she has 'Ointments good for scabby Chops' (Swift, p. 431). This idea of 'Chops' is about the mouth of a beast suggesting that she is animalistic rather than feminine. Swift uses misogyny to defamiliarise Celia to show how society faces deception at the hands of outward beauty. His work becomes a method to protect men by showing the true nature of women so they cannot be blinded by both physical appearance and lust.

The use of familiarisation in *The Lady's Dressing Room* is used to portray a human link to make the unfamiliar objects relatable. It allows the defamiliarised objects to stand out. The reference to the chamber pot and everyday objects leads the reader's mind to natural human instincts and needs. While exploring Celia's room, Strephon comes across her chamber pot. Tita Chico claims 'Celia's chamber pot, like her body, has a beautiful façade' (Chico, 'Privacy and Speculation', p. 46). Strephon 'lifts the Lid, there needs no more, He smelt it all the Time before' (Swift, p. 432). At this point of the satire, we are well aware that Celia's appearance is assembled through the help of her cosmetics and now Strephon has discovered that she has bodily functions. He claims 'Oh! *Celia, Celia, Celia* shits!' (Swift, p. 433). Due to a lack of

[5] Tita Chico, 'Privacy and Speculation in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Cultural Critique*, 52 (2002), 40–60 (p. 46). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

drainage, women in the eighteenth-century did their business in a chamber pot until it was disposed of through windows days later. For the contemporary audience, this holds elements of familiarisation surrounding the method of going to the toilet as a majority of people owned and used one daily. However, this familiarisation draws attention to the defamiliarisation of gender inequality. Strephon's outraged reaction highlights that women were held to a standard where even their bodily functions were ignored to give an appearance of being flawless. Celia is the embodiment used to educate the masses that women's bodies work in the same way men's do. In *Designing Women*, Tita Chico claims that this text 'suggests that defecation is normal […] these characters are naïve, if not downright delusional, for being horrified' (Chico, *Designing Women*, p. 132). Strephon's surprise to Celia having normal human needs causes him to 'drop his hand in the chamber pot, foul his Hands in Search of *Hope*'—this use of humour contributes to the effective use of familiarisation (Swift, p. 432). By making a joke and mockery of him dropping his hand in her faeces advocates Chico's claim that women have normal everyday functions and that it should not be a taboo hidden subject. Strephon's claims that 'O may she better to learn to keep Those Secrets of the hoary deep' indicates that men continue to hold this unrealistic perfect view of women (Swift, p. 432). This satire uses satirical comedy to ensure that unreasonable female expectations are brought to the surface to pave a way for societal change. Furthermore, the literary technique listing is used to portray familiarisation to make women appear just as human as men. Celia's room is full of 'Sweat, Dandruff, Powder, Lead, and Hair', all things that people possess (Swift, p. 430). In this case, Swift's satire uses familiarisation to take women off this unrealistic pedestal and effectively shows that feminine beauty is also surrounded by human bodily functions.

Like *The Lady's Dressing Room*, *Fantomina* uses the concept of feminine beauty to portray familiarisation. However, while Swift uses the construct of feminine beauty in society to bring defamiliarisation to the character of Celia and her bodily functions, Haywood uses her

character to play to the stereotypes men had of eighteenth-century women. We are introduced to the female character as someone who is deceitful. She uses multiple character changes to seduce her lover Beauphlaisir, 'her Hair and Eye-brows black'd, made it impossible for her to be known;' this indicates that women use their appearance to manipulate unsuspecting men and become a cause for their downfall.[6] Here Haywood uses the familiarisation of women's reputation in a patriarchal society to comment on societal attitudes. Women to men were something to be owned and many writers throughout the century warned men of the dangers of feminine beauty. She is described as 'admirably skill'd in the Art of feigning, that she had the Power of putting on also what Face she plaeas'd,' portraying the idea that 'the place of the female body is occupied by the materials with which it is adorned, or ultimately shored up: from dress to paint to plaster.'[7] In other words, it is not reality; Fantomina's action to try and seduce Beauphlaisir shows femininity is a façade used to entrap men. As Felicity A. Nussbaum claims 'the satires frequently remind one single male soul that his plight is not unique—that all men are likely to be jilted or made fools of by women' (Nussbaum, p. 42). This is seen through Haywood's female lead when she plays the role of a widower to get Beauphlaisir to take her with him. 'Time provided herself of another Disguise to carry on a third Plot,' which resulted in the 'Impossibility of denying a Place in his Chariot to a Lady, who he could not behold without yielding one in his Heart' (Haywood, pp. 8–9). It is this familiar concept that women pray on men causing them to be grouped into this female sex which 'embody all that is offensive to the larger society—most frequently as a threat to the patriarchal order' (Nussbaum, p. 4).

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[6] Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Browne and Chapman, 1725), III (1725), p. 7. Digital.library.upenn.edu eBook. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

[7] Laura Brown, 'Reading Race and Gender: Jonathan Swift', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23 (1990), 425–43, p. 428.

On the other hand, the focus on female lustful actions draws attention to the familiarisation of the actions of the seduced and seducer. However, it swaps gender expectations in these roles. Women were often seen throughout this period to be these lustful agents who easily gave into the desires of her body. However, this satire produces the idea that Beauphlaisir has become the seduced rather than the seducer making men weak in the face of sex. This is clear to see when he is 'fir'd with the first Sight of her' and 'His wild Desires burst out in all his Words and Actions' (Haywood, p. 8). Haywood uses this form of male desire to produce defamiliarisation. Felicity A. Nussbaum claims 'men could generalise that unlike men, all women personified lust', but here Beauphlaisir is personifying lust (Nussbaum, p. 15). His actions where he 'devour'd her Lips, her Breasts with greedly Kisses' advocates that he is being overwhelmed by his passion and desire for the female body (Haywood, p. 8). While Haywood's female lead has had sex with only Beauphlaisir, he believes to have had sex with multiple women. This portrays that he is driven by lust and as a result, is tempted by all the disguises that are created by this 'young lady' (Haywood, p. 1). Defamiliarisation of gender roles is used in this satire effectively to show men to be the weaker sex; Beauphlaisir cannot seem to control himself. It is arguable that Celia/Fantomina cannot control herself either because she continuously changes outfits to entice him, but he is not innocent in it either. The language that surrounds his actions proves men are just as lustful as women; one cannot say one sex to be weaker as through defamiliarisation Haywood portrays both to have this insatiable desire for sex. Haywood uses satire to empathise social hypocrisy while simultaneously questioning the social injustice that surrounds women.

Furthermore, by using familiarisation surrounding the prejudice of women being deceitful is used by Haywood to portray the deceitful nature of men rather than women. The defamiliarisation focuses on the unfamiliar region that questions the nature of men. In *The Lady's Dressing Room* we witness Strephon's deceit when he enters Celia's private space.

However, the deceit and sly nature of men can be seen clearer in 'Fantomina'. When Beauphlaisir first meets the widow he 'began to think he should have but a dull journey' due to her performance of mourning; we see him formulating a plan to allure her, 'she who seem'd equally susceptible of *Sorrow*, might not also be so too of *Love*' (Haywood, p. 10). Beauphlaisir is using her loneliness and possible need of love for his benefit. Felicity A. Nussbaum claims 'men…describe women as inherently giddy,' however, the familiarisation of the stereotypical female selfishness and lust-filled appetite is being used to represent the defamiliarisation of men and their true nature (Nussbaum, p. 5). Beauphlaisir 'did not, however, offer, as he had done to *Fantomina* and *Celia*, but by a thousand little softning Artifices…gave her leave to guess he was enamour'd' (Haywood, p. 10). One may argue, that this is an action of a man who cares about the woman he is about to sleep with, but I would argue that it is a sly rouse to sleep with the widow. Here Haywood is showing that men may not change their physical appearance, but they alter their characteristics to get what they desire. Men use deceitful tactics like Beauphlaisir satisfy their sexual desires. Beauphlaisir uses a ruse of care and love and Celia is using a disguise to fulfil her sexual longing. Thus, the use of familiarisation surrounding deceit is used by Haywood effectively to draw attention to men and oust their inappropriate behaviour. Additionally, Haywood is portraying that both men and women are controlled by their lust. The defamiliarisation of Haywood's female character's disguises effectively creates a framework surrounding the behaviour and nature of men. Not only is this satire in my eyes questioning the way people treat women, but it also questions the way men's power in society is through the same techniques of seduction and deceit that they believe solely lies in women.

The Rape of the Lock portrays familiarisation through the actions of Lord Petre. Other satires at the time such as *The Lady's Dressing Room* and *Fantomina* used defamiliarisation of feminine beauty and actions to portray women in a new light; this satire's approach is different. The mock-epic writing of this satire is based on a true incident among Pope's acquaintances.

Robert, Lord Petre, cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair and the families fell into strife as a result. Pope was asked to write a light poem that would put the episode into a humorous perspective and reconcile the two families to rid of any strife. As Richard I. Cook claims 'the only "duty" the poet urges us to follow in *The Rape of the Lock* is the duty of good humour'.[8] This is seen through the exaggeration of actions over the cutting of the lock. For example, 'the pitying Audience melt in Tears' and 'The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone' makes it appear as though some foul death or murder has occurred.[9] Pope is ridiculing the energy and passion that is often applied to serious situations and is now being used on an insignificant moment. This links to what Cook means, the melting in tears and the concept of the relational link of the hair creates an overdramatic scene where the reader cannot do anything but laugh. The use of anthropomorphism by giving the lock of hair humanistic trait is melodramatic, and we as readers cannot help but see the humorous side of where one is asked to 'See the poor Remnants of this slighted Hair!' (Pope, IV). Furthermore, her reaction and the repetition of 'restore the lock' to advocate that trying to arouse sorrowful emotions for a lock of hair is just foolish (Pope, V). As Cook argues, 'the quarrel Pope describes is social rather than moral' (Cook, p. 109). Thus, the use of familiarisation with the context of this satire brings a way to show people not to take things so literally and laugh at misfortunes. I would argue this is particularly shown through the defamiliarisation of the title. By calling the satire 'The Rape of the Lock' instead of something like 'Cutting off a Lady's Hair' Pope not only illustrates exaggeration over the action of cutting the hair, he also reinforces the idea that the anger between the two families is unnecessarily dramatic. Pope here is attempting to make people laugh and fix social bonds rather than change stereotypical views like the other two satires.

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[8] Richard I. Cook, 'Garth's Dispensary and Pope's Rape of the Lock', *CLA Journal,* 6 (1962), 107–16 (p. 110). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

[9] Alexander Pope, 'The Rape of the Lock', in *The rape of the lock: An heroi-comical poem. In five canto's* (London: printed for Bernard Lintott, 1714), IV–V, in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive* <http://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/o3695-w0010.shtml> [accessed 8 December 2018]. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Additionally, *The Rape of the Lock* differs from *Fantomina* and *The Lady's Dressing Room* because of its core focuses. Pope uses familiarisation to comment on the lives of the elite class. The other two satires reiterate a desire for change in social attitudes, but Pope only includes this social disorder as an additional topic. Instead, Pope is fascinated by the society of the elite and uses the literary technique zeugma to upset understood hierarchies which creates defamiliarisation. As Cook argues, 'it is true that Pope clearly implies a moral disorder in the society he portrays, but he is by no means insistent about the fact, and it reflects only a part of his purpose in the poem' (Cook, p. 109). Pope's key aims are first, to show people that life does not need to be taken seriously all the time, and second, to comment on the trivialities and vanities of the upper class in general. Both of these points are represented through the use of zeugma when describing Hampton Court Palace as a place where 'dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea' (Pope, III). The two opposing terms 'tea' and 'counsel' are modified by the use of 'take' which insinuates that the royal palace caters to both serious matters regarding the state and frivolous social events. By defamiliarising the elite Pope shows how small insignificant activities such as tea are cast with great importance. Thus, Pope is ridiculing the elite for their seriousness of everyday life and is attempting to tell his contemporary society to be more facetious.

Furthermore, the exploration of vanities and attempt to find humour in one's self is evident in his portrayal of Belinda. She is used to satirise the fashionable women during this period who were considered to be solely obsessed with their appearances. Pope describes 'That all her Vanities at once are dead: Succeeding Vanities she still regards' (Pope, I). This comments on how women's souls are consistent with the vanities they possess; that their self-worth is bound to excessive pride in only their appearance. This form of familiarisation illustrates how the upper-class women are surrounded by a desire of the flesh. Belinda's 'Joy in gilded Chariots, when alive, And Love of *Ombre*, after Death survive' (Pope, I). Pope uses

the familiarisation of the stereotypical female gender to introduce the defamiliarisation of using it as a method of light-hearted comedy. This is further shown through the mock-epic writing of Belinda's' catalogue of belongings, 'Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows, Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux' (Pope, I). This represents an echo of a catalogue of weaponry in epics. The dramatic comparison is used by Pope to mock the inner lives of the elite class and draw attention to how seriously they take minute things. Thus, Pope's use of Belinda is to demonstrate how everyday activities of the elite can be seen as ridiculous and how these insignificant activities can become a form of light entertainment in society.

In conclusion, the usages of familiarisation of femininity in *The Lady's Dressing Room* and *Fantomina* are used to show the misunderstood female nature through defamiliarisation. From Strephon's surprise of the aftermath in Celia's dressing room to Haywood's female character playing to the stereotypical conventions of female deceit, both Swift and Haywood effectively use these conventions to portray a satire which attempts to fix the double-gender standards in society. Similarly, Haywood uses familiarisation to prove the deceitful nature of men. Haywood's use of the female stereotype is applied to Beauphlaisir to highlight his own deceitful nature. Ergo, familiarisations in *The Lady's Dressing Room* and *Fantomina* are used to bring female stereotypes to the centre of attention and demand social change. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* uses the concept of familiarisation to settle the dispute surrounding Pope's group in society. The familiarisation here is different from the other two satires. Rather than attempt to change social expectations and stereotypes, Pope attempts to reinstate relationships, explore the inner workings of the elite, produce a way to take life less seriously, and to learn to laugh at one's self.

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