

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN’S BODY IN MIDDLETON’S “WOWEN BEWARE WOMEN”

Yuniar Fatmasari ¹

¹The Lecturer of English Education Study Program

STKIP Islam Bumiayu – Brebes

E-mail: yuniarefes@gmail.com

Phone: 082325542478

Abstract

This essay is on an attempt of finding representation of women body, as assumed flourished in Middleton’s “Women Beware Women”. The issue of embodiment has recently been prominent in western philosophy in time philosophy starts its concept on body as simply one biological object among others, part of a biological nature, as well as an instrument to be directed and a possible source of disruption to be controlled. For feminists, the opposition between mind and body has also been correlated with an opposition between male and female, with the female regarded as enmeshed in her bodily existence in a way that makes attainment of rationality questionable. Female character occupying mostly plots gives specific advantages for the question of embodiment to satisfy.

Keywords: man, woman, oppression, objectification, woman’s body, representation, motherhood, sexual pleasure.

A. Introduction

The opposition between mind and body in theory of embodiment has been correlated with an opposition between male and female, with the female regarded as enmeshed in her bodily existence in a way that makes attainment of rationality questionable. Women are somehow more biological, more natural and more than men. Such enmeshment in corporeality was also attributed to colonized bodies and those attributed to the lower classes. Challenging such assumptions required feminists to confront corporeality in order to elucidate and confront constructions of sexual difference. To biological differences, women are regarded as the weaker class of that man, for they – as an instance – are considered to have weaker back and muscles, less muscular strength that lift less heavy weight. Furthermore, what women experienced of their own body has then position them as the object. As we know, in childhood the young girl's body is experienced in a different way from that of the young boy. He is encouraged to climb trees and play rough games. She is encouraged to treat her whole person as a doll, "a passive object – an inert given object" and learns the need to please others. Here is the beginning of her account of the way in which women live their bodies as objects for another's gaze, something which has its origin not in anatomy but in 'education and surroundings'. This experience then risks the living a body as object of another's gaze in an inhibited intentionally. Beauvoir describes the women live their bodies in such an objective way, internalizing the gaze of the other and producing their bodies as objects for others.

It is not only ended in the girl's childhood, when the girl enters puberty, the girl will make her own body as the source of horror and shame. The new growth in her armpits transforms her into a kind of animal or monster, then her menstrual blood as a source of disgust. All of

these negative descriptions are then continued to her account of sexual initiation, marriage and motherhood. Men position women body as the source of pleasure, fertility, and empowerment. Women live only for motherhood, as the object of men sexual desire, in which sexual intercourse will then result in pregnancy. Another sorrow brings to women fatigue, being a mother of children and taking care of them. Women body is then helplessly exploited by the system and it barely escapes from it.

The issue of women body is found perceptively in Middleton's tragedy play "Women Beware Women". Set in Renaissance Florence especially in the year of Jacobean, the central character Bianca Capello, is a historical figure, she was mistress then wife of Francesco de' Medici. Two plots depicting incestuous relationship of Isabella and her uncle Hippolito as well as Bianca with the Duke. This all set by the twice-widowed Livia with the essence of evil, enabling the main plot. Anything come to mind about women's body is regarded to be one among several main discussion in this play.

The central female characters in "Women Beware Women" are all indeed able to set their societies at defiance, bending all the rules, accomplishing astonishing social rises or descents, overturning the most long-established and deeply cherished of customs and taboos, and pursuing and obtaining their sexual desires. However, in the play, female nature is pater against, and ultimately proves weaker than male. Women's bodies, especially their procreative powers, take centre stage, and women's bodies and its shape represents a threatening nature in which culture must control patriarchal.

Men objectification toward women is then much more emphasized. Women bodies, considered only for sexual object and for motherhood. Women bodies are

signified at least the biological ability to be a mother, become reproduction machine. Their beauty is for sexual pleasure resulted in pregnancy, obtaining children to men. This essay, then, tries to find out how women bodies are represented through the female characters in Middleton's "Women Beware Women". As the main material object, needless to say, is the novel written by Thomas Middleton's "Women Beware Women" published in 1657, several years after Jacobean era. Female characters will be the centre or focus on the exploration of women's body discussion; how the body associates with the male culture and how it deals with the system constructed. The theory of women embodiment from feminism perspective will be used to solve the questions above.

B. Discussion

The discussion comprises "Women Beware Women" at glance, the theory of embodiment, and the representation of Women Body in "Women Beware Women".

1. "Women Beware Women" at Glance

The female sex, so often merely sighing or dying — or both — in plays of old, is at the turbulent centre of "Women Beware Women," a tragedy spiced with comedy, or a comedy with a hyperactively tragic conclusion, by Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Middleton. A Jacobean rarity that hasn't seen a significant New York production in two decades, this sizzling brew of adultery, incest and murder, murder and more murder has been spruced up, juiced up and set.

Middleton wrote dozens of comedies, tragedies and masques in the course of his quarter-century career as a playwright, which began at the

dawn of the 17th century. His best plays are informed by a sardonic sense of the fluid and transactional nature of human relationships that feels sharply modern. No one gets something for nothing, and very few end up with anything at all, in this cutthroat, mercantile world.

Livia, a twice-widowed gentlewoman of the Florentine court, at first appears merely to be the kind of supplementary female facilitator on hand to offer advice to love struck youngsters, or to be confided in by unhappy brides.

Livia's brother Fabritio enlists her aid in persuading his daughter, Isabella, to marry a rich young heir sight unseen, Ward. But Livia sticks up for her niece, insisting she be given at least a look.

And yet Livia's allegiance to another brother, Hippolito, trumps her sisterly affection for her niece. When he confesses a sexual attraction to Isabella, she instantly devises a plan to aid him in his incestuous designs. Isabella is about to be unwillingly marred to the rich and moronic Ward his father proposed. She quits resisting her arranged marriage once she realizes she can use it as a cover to conduct an affair with her true love, Hipollito.

Later, in the play's most famous scene, Livia plays a part in arranging another illicit liaison by diverting a good-hearted widow with a game of chess while the lecherous Duke makes the moves on her daughter-in-law, Bianca. The Duke forcefully professes his admiration for her and offers her a life of luxurious ease. Bianca, then, determined to abandon her distressed husband. Livia, the wealthy widow succumbing an attraction to Leantio, Bianca's cuckolded husband. Leantio callously agrees to be her lover in exchange for her financial support.

Both Isabella and Bianca are on one level passive victims of the cool, cruel manipulations of Livia and her collaborators, but they also learn quickly how to maximize the advantages of the hard hands they have been dealt. The Cardinal, Duke's brother, has been tut-tutting his way around the fringes of the action, invoking God's wrath on the sinners around him. All the deceit culminates in the deaths of the main characters during a play within the play performed in front of the Duke.

Middleton based plot of his play on actual events. Bianca Capello was first the mistress and then the second wife and Duchess of Francesco I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. The story of Bianca's elopement with her first husband, her affair with the Duke, her first husband's death and her marriage to the Duke, is adapted by Middleton for his play. The subplot of Hippolito and Isabella in Middleton's play is strongly similar to the plot of a French novel that was published in 1597 but not translated into English until 1627, the year of Middleton's death.

2. Theory of Embodiment, a Perspective of Feminism.

The body also came to prominence in 19th century feminism in Britain through the campaign led by Josephine Butler against the Contagious Diseases Act. This act permitted women to be forcibly examined for venereal disease. Butler extended ideas of individual rights, prominent within liberal political philosophy, to rights over one's body. The campaign of inspection was viewed as a particularly outrageous violation of such rights and the women viewed as victims of male and medical appropriation of their bodies. Here we find the beginnings of arguments

picked up later in campaigns against rape and sexual violence, as well as in campaigns for access to birth control and abortion and in the feminist health movement, all of which stressed women's rights to control what happens to their bodies. This absence of control found its most extreme example in the case of the bodies of slave women, where the body became literally the property of another, disciplined in a way that bore a marked contrast to that articulated by Wollstonecraft. "Her back and her muscle ... pressed into field labour where she was forced to ... work like men. Her hands were demanded to nurse and nurture the white man and his family ... Her vagina used for his sexual pleasure ... the womb ... the place of capital investment ... the resulting child the ... surplus worth money on the slave market".

It is in the context of these remarks that we need to consider some of the descriptions which she gives of these facts, some of which seem to imply that the female body *per se* offers more of a constraint to the exercise of freedom than its male counterpart, even in the animal kingdom. In reproduction, "female individuality is sacrificed for the benefit of the species". "From puberty to menopause woman is the theatre of a play ... in which she is not personally concerned ... the menstrual cycle is a burden, and a useless one from the point of view of the individual". "... It is during her periods that she feels her body most painfully as an obscure, alien thing ... Woman, like man, is her body; but her body is something other than herself". How are we to interpret these remarks? For Beauvoir it was essential to recognise differences between male and female bodies "for, the body being the instrument of our grasp on the world, the world is bound to seem a very different thing when apprehended in one manner or another". In this she

was, importantly, drawing attention to the masculine of accounts of embodied experience which simply took the male body for the norm. She therefore offers us an account of those biological facts as they were then evidenced. In retrospect we can see in her accounts of biology the truth of her general claim that it is impossible to disentangle the biological body from the body as lived in specific situations.

Beauvoir provides an account of the phenomenology of the body as lived throughout the different stages of a woman's life. Here she is explicitly offering her narrative as an account of lived experience, the body in situation, and not as part of the data of biology.

In childhood the young girl's body is experienced in a different way from that of the young boy. He is encouraged to climb trees and play rough games. She is encouraged to treat her whole person as a doll, "a passive object ... an inert given object", and learns the need to please others. Here is the beginning of her account of the way in which women live their bodies as objects for another's gaze, something which has its origin not in anatomy but in "education and surroundings". The consequence of living a body as an object of another's gaze is an inhibited intentionality, her spontaneous movements inhibited, "the exuberance of life ... restrained" "lack of physical power" leading to a "general timidity". Beauvoir's descriptions of the way in which women live their bodies in such an objectified way, internalising the gaze of the other and producing their bodies as objects for others, has been one of her most important contributions to a phenomenology of female embodiment, and anticipated the work of later feminists such as Bartky and Marion Young.

As the girl enters puberty Beauvoir describes the way in which her body becomes to her a source of horror and shame. “This new growth in her armpits transforms her into a kind of animal or algae”(333), her menstrual blood a source of disgust. These negative descriptions are continued in her account of sexual initiation, marriage, and motherhood. Her description of the maternal body has been especially controversial. “Ensnared by nature the pregnant woman is plant and animal ... an incubator, a conscious and free individual who has become life's passive instrument ... not so much mothers... as fertile organisms, like fowls with high egg production”. These descriptions have been a source of criticism, particularly when later feminists sought to celebrate the female body as a source of pleasure, fertility, and empowerment. However it is important to recognise that what she was offering was a descriptive phenomenology of female bodies as lived in specific situations. As she explicitly says, “If the biological condition of women does constitute a handicap, it is because of her general situation ... It is in a total situation which leaves her few outlets that her peculiarities take on their importance”. It is this situation which her writings hoped to highlight and change.

Feminist writers from Wollstonecraft onwards have drawn attention to the way in which dominant discourses in society prescribe norms in relation to which subjects regulate their own bodies and those of others. “Our bodies are trained, shaped and impressed with the prevailing historical forms of ... masculinity and femininity (Bordo, 1993: 91)”. By regimes of dieting, makeup, exercise, dress, cosmetic surgery, women, and increasingly men, try to sculpt their bodies into shapes which reflect the dominant societal

norms. Such disciplinary practices attach not only to the production of appropriately gendered bodies, but to other aspects of the bodily identity subject to social normalization. Hair straightening, blue tinted contact lenses, surgical reconstruction of noses and lips, are practices in which the material shapes of our bodies are disciplined to correspond to a social ideal, reflecting the privileged position which certain kinds of, usually, white, always able, bodies occupy.

This became a major theme in 1970's feminist writing. Andrea Dworkin (1974: 113-114) writes "In our culture not one part of a women's body is left untouched, unaltered ...From head to toe, every feature of a woman's face, every section of her body, is subject to modification". From the 1990's, feminist attention to the *power* relations working through such disciplinary practices has made extensive use of the work of Foucault. Foucault an insights regarding disciplinary practices of the body are applied to the disciplining of the gendered and most insistently the female, body. Such accounts stress the way in which women actively discipline their own bodies not only to avoid social punishments, but also to derive certain kinds of pleasure. Power works, here, not through physical coercion, but through individuals policing their own bodies into compliance with social norms. There are two key features of such accounts. One stresses the way in which the material shape of bodies is modified by such practices. The second that such modifications are a consequence of such bodies carrying social meanings, signalling within specific contexts, sexual desirability, or availability, or respectability, or participation in social groupings. With attention to the work of Foucault and other poststructuralist writers, also came the recognition that practices of bodily modification could have

multiple meanings, with disagreements over responses to cosmetics, fashion and cosmetic surgery (Davis 1997). It was against this background that Bordo (1993) developed her complex and influential reading of the anorexic body: “female slenderness ... has a wide range of sometimes contradictory meanings ... suggesting powerlessness ... in one context, autonomy and freedom in the next.”

3. Representation of Women Body in “Women Beware Women”

The representation here covers women body as men object and belonging, as motherhood principle, and as reproductive system.

a. Women Body as Men Object and Belonging

Beauvoir, in the first chapter of *The Second Sex*, proposes that female biological characteristic is for reproductive role; the body was also a source of vulnerability. They were born as the source of sensual pleasure constrained to the risk of pregnancy. Omolode (1983: 345) further states that “her hands were demanded to nurse and nurture the white man and his family... her vagina used for his sexual pleasure ... the womb ... the place of capital investment ... the resulting child ... surplus worth money on the slave market.”

The way men see women’s body affects the way women define themselves. An understanding of what most men desire on the women such as becoming a mother of their children and a “slave” in her own house, is inevitably sink them into a definition of who they really are, of what mostly society regarding them as – similar with how men see their body as an object of beauty generating a sexual attraction and intercourse, as other instance. Jacobean husbands tend to have a good wife,

taking care of children, demand nothing from the wealthy husband, serve her as the property of the husband; even they live both as slave and object. Women in this era are “forced” to practice passiveness and no desire of escaping the bounding body system. They even accept the situation as the consensus constructed and believed among the society.

“Women Beware Women” depicts the objectification of women in the era. Being a wife, she must obey and ready to be an object of his husband pleasure; then becoming a mother is respectfully regarded as a faith after marriage.

The admiration addressed to Bianca generates the feeling of satisfaction as well as pride Leantio must bear with. What further comes into mind is that the womb must have had something to produce, children. He believes that Bianca will be a proper mother providing children as well as grandchildren to his own mom, thus the feeling of satisfaction would finally fulfilled. Understanding himself as an excellent success husband managing the wife means the superiority is completed. To this point of view, we may say, positing woman under such condition and requirements would inevitably objectify the woman itself. Women plays the role of inferiority under the patriarchal norm society believes in. She becomes the second creature among the superiority in every aspect of life. To this evident, after marrying, woman would lost all her freedom to express herself as an independent creature. The right to decide, the property she possesses even the identity are ceased to exist. By the law as well as society beliefs, sad to say, she was under the complete and total supervision of her husband. This coincident with

what women in Victorian era still have to confess; whereas marriage makes women as one with her husband. Everything she has automatically owned by that the husband. The husband has complete control of his wife's body that is why many women in the era saw marriage as falling little short of slavery. This condition indeed lasted long a hundred years before, whereas "Women Beware Women" set clear the picture of women in Jacobean era.

Facilitated with satisfaction as well as pride, Leantio pushes himself to the feeling of anxiety. He understands that 'the belonging' risks a losing while starting to consider the achievement might be harmed by other's superiority – in this case is men. Bianca used to be a girl belongs to a wealthy and respectful family who is unexpectedly corrupted by this penniless gentleman. He realizes that his belonging must be the reason for other men to envy as well as her intention to return back home. Thus, Leantio persuades his mother to keep Bianca away from everyone's eyes, makes her saving Bianca by locking the house door and prohibits her to take Bianca away during Leantio's absence for job.

Leantio treats Bianca respectfully as jewel to keep from other's hand safely. How proud Leantio with his new "belonging" is, that he locks his wife with his widowed mother in the rotten house. Man superiority, practiced by Leantio, posits itself as the base energizing oppression toward Bianca as a woman. She has no option to reject or protest this practice but accept it as rules constructed among society. She has no power to rebel as long as she convicts the rules created for no harm and for her own good. Seeing this evident,

we would like to conclude such as the following two intertwined insights; first Bianca accepts the rules as the way it is supposed to be accepted with the absence of desire of rebellion and second she realizes the rules would ban her from the action of freedom and independency but she has no power to gain under this oppression thus an acceptance is the only choice. To this issue, if we take the first sight as our study on the case of embodiment, we have no clue to go further; however when we take the second notion, we would figure out several interrelated issues to explore more in an account of getting a vivid picture on the issue of woman embodiment in this play. As I desire more, the second notion is preferable to use in this exploration.

In relation with the patriarchal history in society, we would find out that man occupies the role of *the Self*, or subject; woman is the object, *the Other*. He is essential, absolute, and transcendent; she is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated. He extends out into the world to impose his will on it, whereas women are doomed to immanence, or inwardness. This can be seen, Leantio leaves house for work as machine clerk and hanging out of town leaving his wife, Bianca; meanwhile Bianca has to keep herself calm indoor, with her mother-in-law. She suffered from the rotten house without able to see the outside world. *The Self* posits himself as the rules maker, creator, as well as the primer element in a family construction meanwhile *the Other* appears to be the object of rules, the product, as well as the secondary element. The rules imposition toward Bianca's shoulder – as a body – is well-seen as a practice of oppression as well as objectification, a hierarchal system unconsciously

constructed. Recalling to the evident figure out in the citation above, the way Leantio treats Bianca is clearly representing an objectification toward Bianca's body. The body is objectified among the rules he makes, restricted from independency, absence from self-expressions, lack of self-determination, deficiency of self-action, etc., lead to the shortage of identity.

Beauvoir discovers that female develops through its formative stages: childhood, youth and sexual initiation. At each stage, a girl is conditioned into accepting passivity, dependence, repetition, and inwardness. Every force in society conspires to deprive her of subjectivity and flatten her into an object. Denied the possibility of independent work or creative fulfilment, the woman must accept a dissatisfying life of housework, childbearing, and sexual slavishness.

Bianca, on this case being reduced into an object, is corrupted by the rules his husband created; particularly accepts the life of housework, childbearing and sexual slavishness as an obedience as well as obligation. As what cited from the play, germane to the childbearing life, Leantio assures her old mother as grandmother within forty days. This might as well presumed as sexual objectification which is, honest to say, merely a desire of sexual. He treats Bianca as the object of releasing sexual desire, a practice of sexual slavishness neglecting woman as subject. When he is about to leave Bianca, what makes him uneasy is the absence of sexual pleasure he must risk for being away. His complaining is solely addressed to his own feeling, as a subject and an actor, of unfairness he should bear from being

away; he would rather hang himself than go for work.

Marriage, furthermore, becomes the control of women's body and rights. Women in Jacobean era marry in a very young age, their early teens, and marriage was often arranged between families. Both partners are supposed to be agreed on the match. Fabritio, father of young girl Isabela, arranged her daughter marriage to a young heir man, Ward. He prepares her daughter to be a wife of this unknown man. Isabela never met him, and is refuse to marry a man she doesn't know. However, she cannot deliver an objection to this marriage arrangement. She learns that Ward is as moron as young man, she thinks of how could this man be a good husband. She accepted it anyway to her obedient to a father.

According to Beauvoir, women is a burden of a father, it is a sin to have a daughter left unmarried in his house. A father will try hard to find his daughter a good husband to support her life economically. Father will find good wealthy man to maintain his daughter life, thus, the life as well as body is then controlled by husband after marriage. Even the marriage itself will be hard for both partners. Women know their position, as well as Isabela. Her disobedient to her father will leave her nothing but a sinner. Her identity is being reduced into an object. She is no longer subject upholding independence to determine her own life choice. Meanwhile Ward seeks for the perfection of Isabela; he assures himself that she deserves to be his wife, another instance of the practice of superiority.

When a man proposes a girl for a marriage, plenty of considerations are encountered. An ideal woman is characterized as skilful hand woman, available for a housekeeper, child keeper, and provides more benefit for man. When women get married, they were expected to be obedient to their husbands. As occurred in Jacobean era, the wives must be of chaste thought, stout courage, patient, not tired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbourhood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick at speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilful. These characters make women as passive-skilful human being; emplaced them as objects. "Women Beware Women", a drama appeared in Jacobean era, often constructs women through the absence and silence of its female actors, as represented by Bianca and Isabela.

Physical performance, further, has also become prominent requirements for being a wife. Sordido comes for this point of view to Ward's wife supposed to be. He describes the wife with several physically characteristics to fulfil.

The perfection of women physical appearance is necessarily presented as requirement. It describes women as a perfect thing to buy. No lack will accepted since women supposed to be that way. Women appeared not to be in the way proposed by man, will left behind and become a burden to the society. Unmarried women are considered as trash of society, a sin of a family. Thus, women are forcefully to be as beauty as much, as perfect as much, in order to be picked and married.

b. Women Body as Motherhood Principle

Family relationships are crucial in “Women Beware Women”. In particular, images of motherhood abound throughout the play. This can be seen in the very opening of the play. When Bianca arrived at her husband’s house, Leantio, Leantio’s mother appreciated her well, with words draw explicit attention to her role as a mother.

This may well read as a celebration of motherhood, with its emphasis on the unique event of childbirth which sets a mother’s experiences apart, but it also contains the nature of mother-child relationships. When Mother looks at her adult son, she still sees her baby. The idea of motherhood is invoked repeatedly in the play. The Ward is complained of by a protective mother whose child he has hurt; Fabritio reminisces at length about Isabella’s mother getting ready for parties; Bianca describes the Mother’s house as paying her the duty of a child and the Duke, in his seduction to Bianca, invokes the idea of her mother. Indeed, the sexual initiations of both Bianca and Isabella are almost immediately followed by a general presumption that they themselves will shortly be mothers, a general Jacobean tendency to suppose that sexual activity is inevitably followed by pregnancy.

In Bianca’s case, the expressions of this assumption range from Leantio’s promise to his mother at the beginning that he will make her a grandmother in forty weeks; to Guardiano’s ‘Much good may’t do her – forty weeks hence, i’faith, and to Bianca’s own “her’s a house For a young gentlewoman to be got with child in!”. Bianca also says, ‘If you call’t mischief, It is a thing I fear I a

conceived with' and vouchsafes her thoughts on how she would bring up a daughter. Even before married, Isabella is the subject of similar comment (datum 10, see appendix).

Isabella herself takes up the theme in her song. "She that would be / Mother of fools let her compound with me' and towards the end of the play she pointedly comments, 'Well, I had a mother, / I can dissemble too'. Perhaps most odd of all, Leantio figures the adulterous relationship between his wife and the Duke as one mother and child: 'There's no harm in your devil, he's a suckling: / but he will breed teeth shortly, will he not?.

Among all references of motherhood, Livia can be read as the arch-mother. On a literal level she is, there are many aspects of Middleton's portrayal of her that bring motherhood into mind. She is the centre of the issue of motherhood itself. Livia presents herself as a motherly figure to Fabritio, Isabela, Hippolito, and Bianca. At her first appearance, she described herself as figure mother to Fabritio, her brother.

Livia, the only woman of the play trying to locate herself as *subject* on behalf of motherhood, appears as rare middle-aged women in Renaissance drama. She seems ready to renounce her sexuality and take her place as one of the older generation rather than among the still marriageable. Her existence in the play seems trying to protest the system of patriarchal ideas flourished in the play; through the advantage of motherhood, she tries to reconstruct the whole current values of society. Middleton puts Livia as an antagonist representing his ideas on the issue of women inferiority.

However, sad to say, he proposes crimes as the only way Livia could provide for being a *subject*.

More strikingly, Middleton enables Livia attacks her victims through mothers and images of mothers. She lures Bianca to her house with her mother-in-law companion and it as the supposed confidence of her niece Isabella's mother that she is able to trick her into incest.

Livia repeats the topic of the dead mother to guarantee her psychological ascendancy over her niece and ensures that Isabella is involved into the affair that will eventually cause both her bitter self-disgust and her death. Livia – is at her best and safest when she acknowledges no special ties of kinship – when she speaks the language of motherhood, she is dangerous.

Livia keeps repeating herself to be as a mother to entrap the younger women, Isable as well as Bianca. Livia's literal ability accesses herself to be both wicked stepmother and good real mother. Her first presentation seems to be a good mother; yet, her involvement with Leantio then leads her to sexuality of bad stepmother.

Motherhood in reality was not any more respected than marriage. Formally it was a sacred and honoured position, as a mother was viewed as “an angel in the house,” and motherhood was ‘the crowning achievement of a woman's life. Such was an overall view. However, as with marriage, there were unjust requirements and unfair expectation. Firstly, motherhood was almost always separated from anything sexual. Sex for any other reason than creating children was viewed as dirty and scandalous, was quite separated from the revered sexless image of motherhood.

Mother of Leantio, is a widow without sexual desire, she is then figured as good mother in “Women Beware Women”; opposite to Livia, a middle-aged-twice-widowed who consider herself as an asexual women, yet she acts sex scandal with Leantio. She also tries to provoke her niece Isabela to have an illicit liaison to her uncle Hippolito. The figure of motherhood does not exist in Livia’s attitude. She plays tricks to trap her victims and turn into evil.

a. Women Body as Reproductive System

Women could not be considered simply as a sexual organism, for among the biological traits, only those have importance that take on concrete value in action. Woman’s awareness of herself is not defined exclusively by her sexuality: it reflects a situation that depends upon the economic organisation of society, which in turn indicates what stage of technical evolution mankind has attained. We have seen, the essential traits that characterise woman, biologically speaking, are her grasp upon the world is less extended that man’s and she is more closely enslaved to the species.

Yet, women as sex still occupy men’s mind as the world’s gaze. This creature has suffered painful experience since the beginning of her life. As been stated by Beauvoir, in reproduction, female individually is scarified for the benefit of the species. From puberty to menopause women is the theatre of the play, in which she is not personally concerned. The menstrual cycle is a burden, and a useless one from the point of view of individual. It is during her periods that she feels her body most painfully as an obscure, alien thing.

Woman, like man, is her body, but her body is something other than herself.

Starting from the very childhood, a girl is differentiated to those boys. They play with doll, meanwhile boy plays outside. The girl unconsciously learn to become passive, meanwhile boy to become active. The doll is a passive object, and girl tries to imitate the object she played with. The beauty, slim body, round eyes, straight hair, bright skin, and other physical performance in female doll will automatically absorbed as a doctrine. The doll played to do anything domestic; making up, doing the dress, doing the hair, cooking, becoming mother, etc. This domestic activity then becomes familiar to the little girl; soon she'll find that she herself as a doll.

Marriage has become a legal rape for women, according to Beauvoir. Wedding nights “transform the erotic experience into an ordeal” that “often dooms the woman to frigidity forever.” She adds that conjugal duties are often only a repugnant chore for the wife. It is a complex mixture of attachment, resentment, hatred, rules, resignation, laziness and hypocrisy.

Women are then described as source of pleasure, fertility, and empowerment. Sexual initiation in a marriage wills constraint a risk of pregnancy. This is in accordance with Beauvoir description of the way women live their bodies in such an objective way since the very child. They internalise the gaze of other and produce their bodies as object for others. Female characters in “Women Beware Women”, has been stated before, are the objects of men surround them. Their body are seen as the representation of sexual pleasure in

which childbearing be the goal of it. Bianca, as the beginning of the entrance to her mother-in-law house, has been rated as the reproductive system that will bear a baby within forty weeks. Her husband, Leantio assures her mother that he will be an excellent husband. The word “excellent husband” merely signifies men power of controlling women as the second sex. It is a form of real oppression, when men object women body as reproduction system. He lacks the consideration of humanity.

Women as well as men, also have their own sexual pleasure. They have right to experience the freedom of becoming sexual creature. Irigaray proposes a re-imagined and rearticulated women body to enable women to both feel and think differently about their embodied form. She replaces the image of female sex organs as a lack or a hole, with one in which women’s genitals are seen as ‘two lips touching. Women sexuality, always at least double, goes even further; it is plural. The pleasure of the vaginal caress does not have to be substituted for that of the clitoral caress. They each contribute irreplaceably to women’s pleasure.

The discourse of women in “Women Beware Women” as reproductive system is clearly seen through the Duke statement addressed to Bianca. He seduces her with his admiration of Bianca’s beauty. The first time the Duke made his lecherous interaction with Bianca, he pointed out to part of women’s personal body to express his willingness to her.

The words addressed to Bianca are too rough and dirty. This shows that men’s appraisal

toward women is tend to the shape of body. Using part of women's personal body in the very first meeting of the Duke and Bianca reflects how man sees women. They see women as the object of pleasure and seduction.

The Duke would rather make negotiation with Bianca, flattering her to betray her husband, Leantio. He proposes his wealth as the wage of his belonging to Bianca's body. He promises her fortune and a life of respected mistress of the Duke.

Women as sex or reproductive system after marriage are also seen to the Fabritio statement about her daughter Isabela. He proposes the goodness of Isabela's qualities as a gentlewoman to be wife. He has taught her some skills in which man would appraise and have a proud of marrying her. He said, "She has the full qualities of a gentlewoman / I have brought her up to music, dancing, was not, that commend her sex, and stir her husband". Clear to the point of women as sex become the most gazes. This assumption leads to women as reproductive system, in which sex for women in this play means bearing child.

Breast of women are often called as the pleasure of sex. Men admire women with beauty breast, to fulfil his sexual pleasure. Women body then unavoidly presumed as the pleasant of sexual experience itself. Man will experience good marriage when he has women with nice breast; it will supplement his proud of having this belonging. Good breast also associated to good motherhood. A child born from these women will serve her baby well for she supplies it with qualified breast milk.

This is what Fabritio tries to propose, thrusting his own daughter as sexual object for men.

The illicit liaison arranged by Livia, do the same extravagant of women as an object of sexual pleasure. Her idea of trapping her own niece, Isabela, into mischief relationship with her own uncle, Hipollito, is initiated by Hippolito's confession of sexual desire to Isabela. Livia, then, invokes Isabela to accept the true admiration and affection from Hippolito to feel the truly love.

Livia's evil wit on the Duke desire of Bianca's body also appeared as the testimony of women as sexual pleasure, leading to reproduction system. The lecherous Duke seduces Bianca to feel the love between them, and supply another friend for her husband, Leantio. The Duke is eager to feel the body of Bianca, as men's pleasure of his object. He insists Bianca to do treachery, wealth as the wage. Objectification on women is plenty to be seen.

Another evidence initiated the play is when Leantio assures her mother to bring her children soon after his marriage to Bianca. The marriage always risks in bearing children, the sex always risks in pregnancy. That is what women supposed to have in her lifetime, living the body as an object, as the machine of bearing children and so on. She lives only for function as sexual object, mother, and entertaining. A wife is sexual object of his husband, which endured to a pregnancy and becoming mother. Child keeping as well as housekeeping untiringly, and those their body shape works as entertain among men.

As been stated before, re-imagining the gaze of women as sexual pleasure, fertility and

empowerment, would then place women as subject. Not an object anymore. She has right to feel her own sexual pleasure, since her genital is plural, not singular like what men have. She must grab the pleasure itself as her own freedom, escape from men's control. She is not again the object, but subject of her own pleasure. Motherhood then became a work of an angel at home. They are the angle of her husband and children. Without her existence man could not bear long happy live. She deserved to have an assistance of husband taking care of the children. Thus, the equality will be manifested in the family. Empowerment is then no longer derived, since women have the same position as subject, in their domain area.

C. Conclusion

Middleton's masterful 17th century tragedy, "Women Beware Women", is packed with adultery, incest, intrigue, revenge, and inventive methods for murder. Leantio elopes with Bianca against her family's wishes and tries to hide her in the house he shares with his widowed mother. Yet the Duke sees Bianca at the window and is powerfully attracted to her, threatening Leantio's security. Livia, a wealthy widow, delights in intrigue, aiding the Duke to satisfy his desires with Bianca, and bringing together her brother Hippolito with her niece Isabella, despite their familial relationship. Yet even Livia is not immune to love. The final play-within-a-play, one of the goriest and most sensational conclusions to a Jacobean tragedy, is also laced with dark humour.

This analysis brings the discourse of women body as the centre point; two female characters for victimization, Bianca and Isabella, are the representation

of man objectification. The body is presumed as man's belonging as well as object. Both Bianca and Isabela are the sign of entertainment, sexual pleasure, and fertility. Bianca is the object of sexual pleasure of her husbands, Leantio and lecherous the Duke. The incest between Bianca and the Duke is encouraged by the lust possessed by the Duke; the marriage of Leantio and Bianca is initiated by the wish of bearing children. Whereas, the marriage arrangement between Isabela and Ward is based on the trading of wealth, in which father of Isabela trade his daughter for the glory, still Isabela is positioned as the object for man. Ward desires a perfect wife, having perfect physical appearance, especially if not for occupying his own desire of sexual pleasure. Isabela's illicit liaison with Hippolito cannot be released from her position as object of admiration leading to incest. Hippolito possesses desires to his own niece as a desire to a wife, this open our mind that all men characters in this play uphold the idea of women as object.

Bibliography

Bordo, Susan. 1993. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Davis, Kathy. 1997. *Embodied Practices*. London: Sagey

De Beauvoir, Simone. 1953. *The Second Sex*. London: Jonathan Cape

Dworkin, Andrea. 1974. *Women Hating*. New York: Dutton

Irigaray, Luce. 1985. *This Sex Which is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Middleton, Thomas. 1657. *Women Beware Women*. London.

Omolade, Barbara, 1983. 'Hearts of Darkness' in Snitow, A.; Stansell, C; and Thompson, S. (ed.) *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, pp. 350–367. New York: Monthly Review Press.