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"De-Shamed. Feminist Strategies of Transgression : The Case of Lorna Crozier's Poetry", Zuzanna Szatanik, Katowice 2011 : [recenzja]

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**Zuzanna Szatanik (2011), *De-Shamed. Feminist Strategies of Transgression: The Case of Lorna Crozier's Poetry*.
Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego; 190 pages.
ISBN 978-83-226-2079-3**

Shame, writes Zuzanna Szatanik, is an unpleasant and destabilizing sensation felt in and on the body, and one intimately connected to our sense of self. Unsettling and “unframing” the person who experiences it, shame affects social relations, and must therefore be seen as “an instrument of power and subjection.” Szatanik’s *De-Shamed. Feminist Strategies of Transgression: The Case of Lorna Crozier’s Poetry* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2011; 190 pages) uses the lenses of shame psychology, feminist theory, and queer theory to elucidate Woman’s shame (the capital “W” stands as a reminder of constructed notion of “woman” in Western society), and, most significantly, to illuminate the feminist potential of creative literature to re-write shaming scripts and *de-shame* women.

The shame affect has been an intensifying area of interest for literary scholars in recent years. Studies of shame in individual authors from Toni Morrison to Chaucer have taken their place among the wider body of the multidisciplinary studies and theories of affect that have appeared since the “affective turn” of the mid-1990s. This shift in scholarly attention toward affect, defined by Patricia Ticineto Clough as “pre-individual bodily forces, linked to automatic responses, which augment or diminish a body’s capacity to act or engage with others” (back cover), is often concerned, broadly speaking, with the interrelationship between embodied experience and the larger society (encompassing its political, economic, and cultural aspects). As the editors of *The Affect Theory Reader* noted in 2010, this scholarship currently shows no sign of falling into “some kind of integrated lockstep” but continues to generate “theories as diverse and as singularly delineated as their own highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds” (Gregg and Seigworth 3, 4). In offering

a study that brings an interdisciplinary lens to Woman's shame, recognizing it as both a major site of inquiry and one in need of a cultural remedy, *De-Shamed* offers a valuable contribution to this rich and multifaceted field of scholarship.

Szatanik's thesis is that shame, as a cultural phenomenon, is a function of language, specifically the androcentric metanarratives of Western society, and must be remedied by language. Following an engaging introduction, *De-Shamed* opens with a chapter outlining the theoretical currents informing the study. The first part or subchapter, on shame psychology, expertly synthesizes the state of knowledge on the shame affect, revealing that, while the sources and manifestations of shame are understood to be intimately connected with gender, gender-specific studies of shame are conspicuously absent from the literature. The next two subchapters, on feminist and queer theorizing of shame, provide an overview of feminist analyses of the cultural shaming of women as a form of oppression, and the work of theorists in queer studies to investigate the transformative potential of shame to "[unfix] and [reframe]" identity in a positive and empowering way. The subsequent interpretative chapter (and second half of the book) turns to seven poems by the Canadian writer Lorna Crozier to illustrate how these texts "turn language against itself," to challenge and revise the binaries enshrined in Western cultural traditions and popular culture.

It would be misguided to think of the theoretical chapters as a prologue to the main event; rather, the chapters on theory and poetry are equally concerned with language and mutually informative. The short subchapters of the interpretative part of the study offer a fluid series of meditations on the Judeo-Christian creation story, so-called classical theories of sex and gender, and the female body and the male gaze, allowing space for the author's wide-ranging discussions of Crozier's poems and their intertexts (notably, the Book of Genesis, Freud, and fairy tales). The connections thus drawn are fresh and thought-provoking. Throughout, Szatanik's argument is lucid, her perceptions acute, and her style highly readable.

The connection between the book's primary focus on Woman's shame and de-shaming, and the exploration of "Canadianness" is more tenuous, though useful in persuading readers of the transformative potential of an indefinite, unfixed identity. As the author points out, Canadian identity is often conceived of as marginal (in relation to the European and American cultures), "queer" (in the sense of transgressive, challenging dominant cultures), and "trans-" (transgressing and transforming any exclusionary national identity grounded in a particular language, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or isolated geographic region). The chapter that most fully develops this subject, "gazing the gaze. subverting the 'ocular regime,'" first delineates the longstanding literary tradition of equating Canada with a feminized physical landscape to be "'mapped' and 'colonised,' i.e. objectified, possessed, and hence shamed"

(118) and goes on to introduce the exploration of Canada as a queer space, focusing on “the concepts of transgression, re-vision, multiplicity, and ... de-shaming” opened up by feminist and queer theorists. While the ideas here are sound and intriguing, the discussion loses sight of the notion of nation as it turns to the poetry.

An arresting cover design by Karolina Wojdała and layout design by Paweł Jędrzejko and Szatanik underscore the freshness of this book’s subject and theoretical approach. The analysis of Crozier’s poetry is a welcome addition to the criticism on the intellectually engaged and often humorously subversive work of this fine poet. For all the reasons, *De-shamed* is a valuable contribution to studies of affect, as well as feminist, queer, and Canadian literary studies.

Works Cited:

- Clough, Patricia Ticineto and Jean Halley. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.