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The Dramatic Monologues of Constance Naden: The Voice of the Misfit

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□ ABSTRACT □

This paper discusses the ways in which Constance Naden, a major female Victorian poet, used the dramatic monologue genre as a tool for female empowerment and for the acquisition a female voice. It explores the major aspects and functions of traditional dramatic monologues and examines the ways in which Naden departed from these traditions: Firstly by redefining the character of the misfit, and secondly by giving the female the role of the active speaker, rendering the male a mere passive silent listener. These aspects are mainly studied in the light of four of Naden's major monologues: "The Astronomer," "The Carmelite Nun,""The Confession," and "The Sister of Mercy."

Keywords: Victorian age, dramatic monologue, the misfit, female voice.

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المونولوج الدرامي عند كونستانس نادين: صوت اللامنتمي

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□ ملخّص □

تناقش هذه الدراسة الطرق التي استخدمت بها الشاعرة الفيكتورية كونستانس نادين اسلوب المونولوج الدرامي كوسيلة لتقوية الهوية الانثوية واكتساب الصوت النسوي. يستكشف هذا البحث على الجوانب والوظائف الرئيسة للمونولوج الدرامي التقليدي وفحص الطرق التي ابتعدت بها نادين عن هذه التقاليد: اولاً عن طريق إعادة تعريف مفهوم اللامنتمي، و ثانياً عن طريق اعطاء المرأة دور المتكلم الفاعل في القصيدة و ترك دور المستمع الصامت للرجل. يقوم البحث بدراسة هذه الأفكار من خلال أربع من أهم قصائد المونولوج الدرامي لنادين و هي: "عالم الفضاء،" "الراهبة الكرملية،" "الاعتراف،" و "ملاك الرحمة."

الكلمات المفتاحية: العصر الفيكتوري، المونولوج الدرامي، اللامنتمي، الصوت النسوي

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Introduction:

Born in 1858, when Victorian science and art were reaching their peak, Constance Naden is now considered to represent the perfect image of the New Woman: educated, strong, intelligent, and independent. She was a biologist, a botanist, a geologist, and above all a recognized poet. Her numerous scientific essays and her two collections of poems *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime*(1881) and *A Modern Apostle, The Elixir of Life, The Story of Clarice and Other Poems* (1887) offered her wide-spread reputation among her contemporaries as a young talented scientist and artist. Her untimely death of ovarian cancer in the year 1889 came to shock her audience and to reconfirm misogynist myths about the fragility and inferiority of female body.

Naden started her career as a poet and a scientist. But after the publication of her second collection of poems, she decided to abandon poetry completely for the sake of science, considering it a finer and more reliable pursuit. Despite her claims, Naden's poems uncover the poet's talent and skill, in addition to her keen endeavors to change and redefine existing poetic traditions. Naden tended to use different poetic genres. She made use of the Shakespearean sonnet form in her first collection *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime* and she also wrote long epics like *The Elixir of Life* and *A Modern Apostle*. But, being a Victorian poet, she inevitably had to write dramatic monologues.

Pioneered first by Alfred Lord Tennyson in "St. Simeon Stylites" (1833) and Robert Browning in "Porphyria's Lover" (1836), the dramatic monologue was the major poetic invention of the Victorian era. It was considered a vehicle to express the thoughts and beliefs of the monologist, identified specifically as someone other than the poet. These thoughts were mainly reflections on controversial issues and actions. It is believed now that the origins of the stream of consciousness technique are to be found in the dramatic monologues of Tennyson and Browning. The only difference between the two is that the stream of consciousness represents the unconnected thoughts of the protagonist while the dramatic monologue is the oral expression, "the public exhibition or display" (Pearsall,67) of these thoughts either to the speaker himself or to a silent listener.

Objectives:

Naden wrote many dramatic monologues, most of which could be found in her first collection *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime*. She chose her monologists very carefully. Varying from scientists to nuns and mystics, those speakers offered Naden the freedom to express beliefs or dilemmas too controversial for sonnets, epics or ballads. The aim of this paper is to explore the ways in which she was able to take advantage of this genre not only to prove her own abilities as a female poet but also to express her own convictions about science, religion, and women.

Methodology:

To reach the objectives mentioned above, this paper uses a comparative and an analytical approach. The reader is first reminded of the traditional aspects of dramatic monologues, like having misfits as active male speakers. Similarities between traditional dramatic monologues and Naden's monologues are highlighted then, but only to focus on her different understanding of the idea of the misfit. Her two monologues "The Astronomer" and "The Carmelite Nun" are analyzed thoroughly to show Naden's departure from the traditional representation of the misfit. In a similar manner, the dominance of the male voice and male identity in traditional monologues is compared to the overpowering presence of the female monologist in Naden's "The Confession" and "The Sister of Mercy." These two poems are also studied and analyzed in order to reveal the remarkable qualities of their female speakers and their success in finally acquiring a female voice.

Discussion and Results:

The dramatic monologue, for its speaker, is not only a mere vehicle for self-expression. Critics argue that, through the monologue, the speaker is actually seeking some kind of transformation "whether spiritual, professional, or personal. And yet these speakers display a marked tendency toward adopting extreme positions, including those not represented in any way as disturbing or insane" (Pearsall, 73). For this reason, one important aspect of the dramatic monologue is found in the choice of the speaker. The monologist is usually a misfit, an outcast who lives on the peripheries of society: a demented criminal, a lunatic, or a prostitute. Pearsall explains how "the form featured monologists whose deviance was in some sense their subject"; consequently "a theme of transgression, or, unwholesomeness, seems to have been characteristic of the genre from its inception" (73). This genre gave the poet the chance to express views that were usually considered controversial or unacceptable by common moral judgment since the monologist was able to voice out his own convictions openly without worrying about the restrictive sensibilities of his society. Thus, dramatic monologues were bound to shock their Victorian audience. However, by shaking such conservative sensibilities and seeing the world through the eyes of a lunatic or a prostitute, Victorian readers were able to sympathize with the plight of these misfits and even identify in themselves close affinities that relate them to such outcasts.

Scientists and Nuns:

Naden's first poem in *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime* is "The Astronomer." It is a long monologue that expresses the yearnings of an astronomer for a common human life, for the passions and joys of common human experience. Isolated from his fellow men, the astronomer is presented as a lonely god residing on a high mountain and leading a "cold," "white," "icy," and "passionless" existence.

The astronomer wonders at the beginning of his monologue whether he could rejoin "life's tumult" and "breathe the lowland air again." He seems regretful for choosing the path of science which, though "sacred" and "divine," is lonely and isolating. The astronomer then tries to convince himself that a common life near "a household fire" with "a wife and child" would only make him fevered and restless. While contemplating, or perhaps day-dreaming, about his past decisions and options, the speaker is visited by Urania, the muse of astronomy in Greek mythology. Urania's cold presence is supposed to give the astronomer reassurance of the validity of his choice. However, with her majestic orders to worship only her, promising him wisdom and knowledge in return, she fails to pacify the throbbing heart of the astronomer. She leaves him wondering:

How shall immortal splendor wed the gaze
Of man, who knows but that which seems,
Whose sight were blinded, if the sun should blaze
With unrefracted beams?
Void were the earth and formless, if arrayed
In purity of perfect white;
All things are clear by colour and by shade,
Glorious with lack of light.

What makes life glorious is the diversity of human experience: knowledge combined with pleasure, wisdom combined with passion.

The astronomer continues explaining his dilemma: should he rejoin the joyful colourful yet ignorant life of common people or should he resume his divine cold and

lonely quest for knowledge among the stars? Suddenly, the astronomer reaches his moment of epiphany when he finally witnesses what he calls "the elemental Power":

When the skies glitter, when the earth is cold,
In some divine and voiceless hour,
The heavens vanish, and mine eyes behold
The elemental Power
Now has the breath of God my being thrilled;
Within, around, His word I hear:
For all the universe my heart is filled
With love that casts out fear.
In one deep gaze to concentrate the whole
Of that which was, is now, shall be,
To feel it like the thought of mine own soul,
Such power is given to me.

Meditation offers the astronomer knowledge which in turn opens his eyes to true wisdom. The dilemma of the astronomer seems to be resolved with the reconciliation of his mind with his heart, not through illusionary muses but through deep meditation into the cosmos and its laws:

My sight, love-strengthened, Time and Space controls;
No more are Force and Will at strife;
Beyond the sun I pass; around me rolls
Infinite-circled Life.
In suns, that shining for some nobler race
Their twin-born light commingled give,
And through black depths of interstellar space
A boundless life I live.
To me the orbs their fiery past reveal,
With each minutest change designed;
Till, in this harmony of worlds, I feel
The future of mankind.
Where each shall aid the universal plan,
When every deed its end shall serve,
When e'en the wildest comet-thought of man
Shall flash in ordered curve.

Man is at one with the universe, they are made of the same essence. Through contemplating the stars the astronomer can see the past and the future of humankind. The knowledge that each individual has a certain role to play within this universe offers the astronomer some solace. Now he feels himself to be part of, not a divine, but a "universal plan" which connects him to the sun, moon, and stars: "Man shall hold communion with the stars, / Constant and calm as they." This unity with the universe gives the astronomer feelings of freedom and immortality. The joy and ecstasy he feels is similar to that reached through a mystic experience, when a mystic is unified with God. The appearance of Urania, a mere muse, was necessary but was not enough for the speaker to reach this sense of union with the universe. Only contemplation and reflection can guarantee him such a result. The heart of the astronomer finally finds rest and peace.

Yet, just like any other mystic experience, these feelings of ecstasy do not last for long. The astronomer ends his monologue exactly where he started. His yearnings for a

colourful common life return to haunt him just as before. He wishes to experience such moments before his death:

I were content, though palsied, sightless, dumb,
If, blasting toil-worn brain and eye,
The heights and depths of human joy to come
Shone clear, before I die.

In this poem, Naden uses a key figure in Victorian society: the scientist. Science in the nineteenth century was a very important factor for the progress and prosperity of the British Empire. Scientists, hence, were respected and highly-valued. To use a scientist as the monologist is a major departure from the traditions of dramatic monologues. A central Victorian figure as the scientist is represented as a transgressor and a misfit. His transgression is found in his rejection of his divine status and his longing for a simple human life, to "breathe the lowland air again." The transformation he reaches at the end, his union with the "elemental Power," proves to be temporary. It fails to satiate his thirst for the life of those "rude peasants" whom he watches and secretly envies. The astronomer, preoccupied with scientific pursuits, lacks an essential necessity: communal life in nature with fellow men. This is why when describing what he mostly longs for in life, he uses peasants who are closely connected to nature. He voluntarily chose to abandon the world of common people, only to find himself a misfit in the community of scientists. He cannot be satisfied with what knowledge offers, and yet he can never return to his past state of ignorance. Stuck between two worlds without belonging to either, the astronomer is doomed to a life of anguish and sterility.

Longing for basic human experience is found again in "The Carmelite Nun," another dramatic monologue in *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime*. Here, the nun is praying to Virgin Mary asking for forgiveness. It is surprising here to find that the nun's only sin is her longing for her past adolescent days. The poem reveals the mixed feelings of fear and regret a nun has after spending years in solitude. At the time when the poem was written, Anglican sisterhoods were becoming popular with middle-class Victorian women, and Naden chose to comment on this phenomenon in her poem. The fact that the nun here is Catholic rather than Anglican, as the word "Carmelite" indicates, is irrelevant. The feelings Naden portrays could be those of any nun who chose to abandon her family and friends for a life of solitude:

Silence is mine, and everlasting peace;
My heart is empty, waiting for its Lord;
All hope, all passion, all desire shall cease,
And loss of self shall be my last reward.
For I would lose my life, my thought, my will;
The love and hate, the grief and joy of earth:
I watch and pray, and am for ever still;
So shall I find the death, which yet is birth.
Yet once I loved to hear the wild birds sing,
I knew the hedge-row blossoms all by name;
Keen sight was mine, to trace the budding spring,
Clear voice, for songs of joy when summer came.
Too dear I held each earthly sight and sound,
Too well I loved each fair created thing,
And when I prayed to Him I had not found,
I called Him in my heart "the mountains' King."

All, all is past—gone, every vain delight;
No beauty tempts me in this lonely cell:
Yet why, O Lord, were earth and sky so bright,
Winning the soul that in Thyself should dwell?

In her essay "Rethinking the Dramatic Monologue: Victorian Women Poets and Social Critique," Glennis Byron comments on Naden's usage of the dramatic monologue form to portray the nun's life:

Naden's "The Carmelite Nun"...begins with this apparently confident pronouncement from the speaker: "Silence is mine"....What the monologue then goes on to show, however, is precisely how little peace this woman has. Instead of being blessed by silence, she seems haunted by the sounds of the world and longs for death, for that time when the "music of the heavenly throng" might drown out these other voices. Her heart is not empty, but full of old emotions; loss of self might well be seen as a "last reward," since it is an intense consciousness of self that so torments her. (88)

The first stanza is obviously ironic: loss of hope, passion, and self can hardly be a reward. The nun, just like the astronomer, lives in a state of sterile suspension, a death-like life void of any kind of excitement. She is passively "watching" and waiting. She is not waiting for union with God, but for an escape from her death-in-life state.

The nun then moves to reminisce about how bright and cheerful her old days were. To do this, the nun uses nature. All the early joys she experienced before entering the convent were associated with nature, which suggests that the gloom in her present life is due to her distance from nature. Even God was associated with nature; he was "the mountains' King". "Earthly" here takes its original meaning as natural, belonging to earth and nature, not "sinful." The astronomer in the earlier poem is alone, yet he has the advantage of being close to the cosmos, observing all its laws and wonders. The nun's life became miserable the moment she departed from nature. The nun is taught to believe that even thinking about the beauty of nature is sinful. She admits that such beauty could have higher power over her than God:

I cannot quite forget that I am young;
I sometimes long to see my mother's face:
Oh, when I left her, how she wept, and clung
About my neck in agonized embrace!
And there was one—Ah, no, the thought is sin—
Why come these thronging forms of earthly grace?
Close, close, my heart! Thou shalt not let them in,
To break the stillness of this holy place.
Oh, Mary, Mother, help me to endure!
I am a woman, with a heart like thine:
But no—thy nature is too high and pure,
Thou canst not feel these low-born pangs of mine.
Oh, for the vision of the Master's face!
Oh, for the music of the heavenly throng!
I have but lived on earth a little space,
And yet I cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

She feels sinful even for remembering her own mother. To help her endure her longing for her mother, the nun turns for solace to another mother figure, Mother Mary. However, this attempt is futile. Marion Thain argues that:

Naden is interested in exploring the individual's struggle when he or she feels torn between commitment to the physical world and an allegiance to the spiritual. Unlike Rossetti, however, she sees the pull of the physical as the stronger, and more important, force. "The Carmelite Nun"...enacts a struggle in which the narrator knows that she is supposed to be looking to the spiritual "father" (waiting for a "vision of the Master's face") but in fact seeks the "mother." "Mother," here is identified with Mary, the earthly mother of Christ, but in Naden's terminology, "mother" is always Mother Nature, the physical world, as opposed to the spiritual father. (162)

The Virgin is locked in the convent away from nature just like the nun. She is "too high and pure," which further alienates her from the nun and her "earthly" desires. Hence, the nun feels that the Mother of the Lord cannot console her and sympathize with her. Furthermore, the nun feels intimidated by the Virgin's purity and sublimity. Just like Urania, another queen of heaven, Mother Mary's divinity makes her too cold and "pure" to sympathize or understand the pangs and passions of a human heart like the nun's. Her sacredness distances her from the nun who cannot find any affinities between herself and the mother of God. She cannot understand human sins because she is too pure to experience them. The nun's prayer at the end expresses her regret for leaving her family and depriving herself of the embrace of her mother and nature. Her cry for death is not out of her hope to meet her "Master." She only wants death to deliver her from this life of emptiness and solitude.

What makes this monologue interesting is that the misfit here is a nun, a very unusual choice in dramatic monologues. In a way this nun is a misfit in her community as she was not able to abandon her human desires and lead a frigid life in a monastery. This reflects Naden's own beliefs about sisterhoods and convents. Naden, through this monologue, attacked Anglican sisterhoods that were becoming popular in Victorian England, deeming the whole practice as isolating and unnatural. The nun's words, her feelings of guilt from just missing her mother and her adolescent years reveal the rigidness of convent life and its opposition to every human passion and experience. Even prayers to the Queen of Heaven fail to pacify her anxious heart. Just like the astronomer, the nun is yearning for a normal human life. However, her words reveal more anguish and restlessness than those of the astronomer's. He seeks transformations and is able to find temporary solace in knowledge and wisdom; whereas the nun cannot achieve even that through religion. It fails to offer tranquillity to the agonized heart of the nun. The only transformation she seeks to achieve now is death.

Female Speakers:

The two monologues discussed above represent examples of Naden's departure from the traditional form of dramatic monologue in her redefinition of the misfit and her choice of unusual speakers like scientists and nuns. Naden, however, did not stop there; she went further to use female speakers addressing silent male listeners. The purpose of this was to shed light on individual female experience away from male dominance and misogyny. In other words, Naden used her dramatic monologues as a tool for female empowerment. This could be found in two of her famous poems: "The Confession" and "The Sister of Mercy."

The dramatic monologue started as a masculine genre that specifically represented the thoughts and experience of a male speaker. The female only existed as a silent listener:

The dramatic monologue from the start, in such fundamental works as Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" concerned itself with female subjectivity,

including and perhaps especially the modes of consciousness of women who we do not hear speak. (Pearsall, 78)

Naden needed to transform this genre to make it accessible for female monologists. This was not an easy task. In fact, Naden here had to go through the same challenge her fellow female poets faced. Poetry was considered a male vocation, following male thoughts and sensibilities. The female, hence, was always the passive object of either male adoration or hostility. This tendency was intensified with the coming of the Romantics, who associated nature with femininity, limiting thus the role of the female and allowing her only to be the passive recipient of male desire and passion:

Where the masculine self dominates and internalizes otherness, that other is frequently identified as feminine, whether she is nature, the representation of a human woman, or some phantom of desire. Although this tradition culminates in Romantic poetry, it originates in the Bible....To be for so long the other and the object made it difficult for nineteenth-century women to have their own subjectivity. (Homans,12)

So Naden's problem was not only with the dramatic monologue, it was with poetry in general. She was able, however, to overcome this double challenge by taking advantage of the dramatic monologue's conversational nature, shifting thus the focus from the male subject to the female object. Now we listen to the story from the point of "the other." What Naden succeeds in doing through her monologues is to voice out the inner thoughts of females, their contemporary views and opinions. The female no longer had to be the passive object of the poem; she is now the active subject who explains and justifies her deviance and transgression while seeking her social or spiritual transformation.

Her poem "The Confession" does exactly that. The female speaker here is confessing her horrific sin to a priest. Using confession as the medium for the public exhibition of female thoughts guarantees Naden's monologist the freedom to openly speak about her transgression without the fear of public humiliation, maintaining at the same time the presence of a silent male listener. The speaker starts relating her story to the pries: She fell in love with a man and they were engaged to be married, he committed a murder and consequently he fled the country after making her promise not to tell anyone about his crime:

Ah, wherefore ask me more? Some hated foe—
But 'tis a common tale—thou knowest all:
A word, a gesture; then a sudden blow;
And then—a dead man's fall.
"Farewell," he said, "farewell! Yet bury deep
My bloody secret, that it shall not rise;
Or it will track and slay me, though I sleep
Nameless, 'neath foreign skies."
Such boon he craved of me, his promised wife:
Earth's hope, heaven's joy, for him I lost the whole:
Some give but love, and some have given life,
But I gave up my soul
Ah, not to fiery love would Christ deny
The gift f mercy that I cannot seek:
Father, a guiltless man was doomed to die,
And yet I did not speak.

The sin of the speaker, the transgression from which she could never be absolved, was her allowing of the death of an innocent man. She promised her fiancé to keep his secret, and she kept her promise even though it led to the death of an innocent man. She only chooses to confess now after hearing the news of her fiancé's death:

But now they say that he I love is dead;
Calmly I listen; see, my cheeks are dry;
My heart is palsied, all my tears are shed;
And yet I would not die.
Let me do penance to save his soul,
And pray thy God to lay the guilt on me;
Strong is my spirit; I can bear the whole.
If that will set him free.
For could my expiating woe and shame
Raise him to Paradise, with Christ to dwell,
Then were there joy in purgatorial flame—
Nay, there were Heaven in Hell.
And then, perchance, when countless years are past,
Ages of torment in some fiery sea,
The grace of God may reach to me at last,
Yes, even unto me.

Surprisingly, the speaker's aim in confessing is not to gain forgiveness through penance, but instead to achieve the absolution of her fiancé. She does not seem to have any regrets about her own sin, or any worries about her own salvation. The transformation she seeks is for her lover rather than for herself. The speaker here emerges to be a female Christ whose sacrifice offers man salvation. The presence of the male priest is not felt at all in the poem. The speaker does not even give any clues about his reaction to her confession. He is passive and remote. The male lover is also represented as passive object of love and adoration. He is not responsible even for his own salvation. It is up to the female to achieve his safety in this world, when she keeps his secret, and his salvation in the other world with her prayers and penance. And she seems confident to successfully complete the second task just as she completed the first one. It is the active female speaker who dominates this poem: confessing, protecting, and saving.

In this poem, Naden is able to combine stereotypical feminine concepts like love and sacrifice with active male characteristics like power and confidence. Perhaps this is the transformation the speaker finally reaches. At the beginning she appears hesitant and weak, yet her monologue gives her the power to achieve the salvation of both herself and her lover.

"The Sister of Mercy" offers another unusual monologist. The speaking female here is a nurse addressing her silent recovering patient. It seems that the patient here confuses his feeling of gratitude with those of love, asking hence the nurse to marry him. The nurse's monologue sounds cold and indifferent. She explains to the listener his error of judgement and her lack of interest in any romantic affair with him, or any of her other patients:

Speak not of passion, for my heart is tired
I should but grieve thee with unheeding ears;
Speak not of hope, nor flash thy soul inspired
In haggard eyes, that do but shine with tears.
Think not I weak because my task is o'er;

This is but weakness—I must rest today:
Nay, let me bid farewell and go my way,
Then shall I soon be patient as before.
Yes, thou art grateful, that I nursed thee well;
This is not love, for love comes swift and free:

The nurse sounds exhausted from her long hours caring for her patient. She seems also to be used to such proposals from her male patients. The nurse's sound-mindedness is reflected in her definition of love: it is swift and free. For her, love should not be the result of long hours of labour and it should not be imprisoned by feelings of gratitude. Here, Naden breaks the stereotypical gender roles again without jeopardizing the loss of her female voice. The nurse is still compassionate and caring but she is not emotional or deluded like her suitor.

From the very beginning, the nurse is portrayed as a strong, confident, and intelligent woman who understands the passions and desires of a human heart:

Nay, tell me not thy strong young heart will break
If to thy prayer such cold response I make
It will not break—hearts cannot break, I know,
Or this weak heart had broken long ago.
Ah no! I would not love thee, if I could;
And when I cry, in some rebellious mood,
"To live for others is to live alone;
Oh, for a love that is not gratitude,
Oh, for a little joy that is my own!"
Then shall I think of thee, and shall be strong,
Knowing thee noblest, best, yet undesired:
Ah, for what other, by what passion fired,
Could I desert my life—work, loved so long?
.....
Farewell! I am not bound by any vow;
This is the voice of mine own steadfast will.

The reason why the nurse rejects the offer of her patient is simply because she loves her job too much. She wants to continue her active role in the public sphere as a saviour of human lives. This is her transgression; this is what makes her a misfit in strictly gendered Victorian mentality. The nurse is not interested in such prejudice. Still, she confesses some moments of weakness, when she feels the need to have a loving companion. The speaker here is not seeking transformation alone; she is trying to strengthen her determination against the pleas of her patient. She succeeds at the end and offers her patient a firm resolved farewell. The nurse is here voicing out the experience of a new generation of Victorian women, a generation that chose to lead an independent active life working and pursuing their dreams. These women, Naden included, were deemed "strange" and "unfeminine" simply because intelligence and strong will were considered exclusively male qualities. The misogyny these talented women faced pushed Naden to write poems like "The Sister of Mercy" to give voice to those silenced females and make the world listen to their side of the story.

Conclusion:

The dramatic monologue was an established genre by the time Naden started writing her poems. Belonging to a new generation of young female poets, she had to face the challenge of adopting masculine poetic tools while at the same time remaining faithful to her female identity and female voice. She chose to write dramatic monologues because they offered her the freedom to do exactly that. With its conversational nature, the dramatic monologue was able to represent the silenced opinions of misfits and outcasts, opinions that were usually controversial and transgressive. This specific aspect of the dramatic monologue was the one which Naden utilized to express her thoughts and concerns. Her unusual choice of speakers offered her the chance to explain her own convictions about the frigidity of life away from nature and human interaction. In her poems "The Astronomer" and "The Carmelite Nun," the speakers illustrate their restlessness and their yearnings to be part of nature and human communities, despite the sacredness of their missions. They both express their secret wishes to give up their voluntary isolated life and dwell among common people again. This view was very uncommon for Victorian readers who believed in the important roles of science and sisterhoods for the physical and spiritual well-being of societies. The anxiety of both speakers is soothed yet never quenched by the appearance of divine queens of heaven (Urania and Virgin Mary). They both end their monologues with throbbing yearning hearts. The conclusion a reader could draw from both poems, what Naden herself believed in, is that leading a secluded frigid life could only lead to sterility, it could cause the destruction of the individual rather than his/her salvation.

Naden's choice of unusual speakers was extended to cover female speakers. Again, she used them as iconoclasts to express this time the silenced voice of the female. In "The Confession" and "The Sister of Mercy" Naden goes completely against one important tradition in writing dramatic monologues, i.e. having an active male speaker and a silent passive female listener. In these two poems, the female seems to be the one doing all the talking and all of the work. She is a protector, a carer, a redeemer, and a saviour. She plays all these roles single-handedly and in absolute independence from any male authority or ideology. While the male listener silently and passively receives all these offerings from the speaker.

Naden's redefinition of the concept of the misfit, as represented in her dramatic monologues, reflects the experience of female poets in Victorian England, their struggle against misogyny and stereotypes, and their success in creating an active female voice.

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