

## The Discursive Representation of the Social Actors in Edmund Spenser's and Sir Philip Sidney's Love Sonnets

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### ABSTRACT

This quantitative-qualitative research aims to analyze the selected sonnets composed by two Elizabethan sonneteers, Sir Philip Sydney and Edmund Spenser, based on Van Leeuwen's Critical Discourse Analysis model to reconstruct the underlying discourse through which the social actors are represented. To this end, 16 sonnets (224 lines) have been critically analyzed using Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic model of categories such as inclusion, exclusion; personalization; somatization, abstraction; overdetermination, activation, passivation, association, instrumentalization, objectivation, backgrounding, anachronism, possessiveness, and appraisal and Halliday & Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity model (Material process, Mental process Verbal process, Relational process and Behavioral process). The results of the analysis indicate an identical pattern of representation in all of the sonnets: while the masculine social actors are legitimized as the central voice, the female social actors are marginalized and unvoiced. This proves that there are ideological implications in the representation of the social actors in the sonnets. In conclusion, it is finally argued that the mentioned pattern of representation provides an image of power relations in the Elizabethan era in which the social actors are empowered or disempowered according to their gender.

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## 1. Introduction

Renaissance, the golden age of poetry, began in 1400 and extended into the 1660s. During this period, among the genres of lyric poetry, sonnet gained a special status. Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) and Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) are among the major poets of this genre in Britain (Stull, 1978, 47). Sir Philip Sidney, a politician and a prolific writer, is regarded as one of the most prominent figures of the Elizabethan age (Javed, 2020, 69). The other poet, whose sonnets will be analyzed in the present study, is Edmund Spenser. He is best known for the epic poem *The Faerie Queene*; in addition, he is recognized as one of the premier artisans of the English sonnet and is often considered one of the greatest poets in the English language (Hile, 2017).

Van Leeuwen's framework of the representation of social actors is the main framework for the analysis of the works of the poets mentioned above. In his theory, Leeuwen subverts the traditional concept of discourse as transcendental and maintains "that all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices" (2008, 5). In his theoretical framework, social actors, as a discursive analytical category, are regarded as representations of the self and others, both individual and collective. One of his widely read books *Discourse and Practice* (2008) will be the main theoretical source in this study based on which the role of social actors in the Renaissance sonnets and their relation to power structure will be explored. To this end, some sonnets from Sir Philip Sydney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* will be used as case studies. The poems that are chosen from Sydney's *Astrophel and Stella* are sonnets 3, 10, 18, 65, 74, 86, 89, and 90. In addition, the poems that are selected from Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* are sonnets 2, 4, 19, 25, 33, 66, 72, and 88. These poems provide a sufficient ground for a socio-semantic analysis of the representation of the social actors. This will be followed by an analysis of each sonnet in the light of Leeuwen's key concepts including exclusion; role allocation; genericization and specification; assimilation, etc. Following the analysis of each sonnet, the features regarding the representation of the social actors will be provided. Finally, the common patterns of representation of the social actors in the selected poems of Sydney and Spenser will be identified.

The female social actors are seemingly the central characters and the main driving force in Spenser and Sydney's erotic sonnets. In the poems, the male lovers are ready to forsake social acceptance, worldly pleasure, and even heavenly bliss to win their hands. The female social actors, however, are the silent poetic personae, who remain unvoiced and lack any power to reject or grant the lovers' feelings. Being the central characters on the one hand and unvoiced on the other hand creates a paradox regarding the status of the female social actors.

This paradox of representation has not been the focus of the studies conducted on the love sonnets by the mentioned poets. The work done on the sonnets mainly falls into two groups. In the first, the poems are analyzed to explore their semantic and syntactic features. This approach, which mainly falls within formalist criticism, falls short of an explanation of gender roles. The second group mainly analyzes the poems

from a New Historicist approach. These works are insightful in their approach; however, they fall short of explaining the actual process of female subjugation

This study opts for Van Leeuwen's representation of social actors and his "socio-semantic inventory" (2008). Leeuwen argues that socio-semantic analysis of the social actors establishes a more accurate sociological and critical relevance in comparison with the linguistic perspective (23). The main premise in Leeuwen's theory for the primacy of socio-semantic analysis is that meanings belong to culture rather than to language. His categories help to probe into the ways social actors are represented in discourses verbally or visually. It consists of three main types of transformation; deletion, rearrangement, and substitution. In other words, the "network" illuminates how social actors are excluded or included; how different roles are assigned to different social actors; and how any substitutions are used in their representation.

The elements of representation of social actors in Leeuwen's inventory will be briefly reviewed in the following subsections.

## **2. A brief note on previous works**

The literature on the Elizabethan sonnets can broadly be categorized into two contextual and textual groups. The first group focuses on the social, literary, and aesthetic aspects of the sonnets (a New Historicist perspective). The second group performs a textual analysis of the sonnets.

Mischo in *The Economics of Desire: Patronage and Gender in the Elizabethan Sonnet Sequence* (1990), examines five sonnet sequences written during the English Renaissance: Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Daniel's *Delia*, Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Spenser's *Amoretti* and the lyrics of Wyatt from a New Historicist perspective, post-structural literary and Hegelian dialectics. The results indicate that the sonnets represent political conflicts, class struggles, and gender differences of the era in which they were created. Iona Bell's *Elizabethan Women & the Poetry of Courtship* (1998) examines Elizabethan love poetry, courtship, and the methods through which the elements of love poetry are used to represent the women in the Elizabethan era at both court and the lower classes of society; she explores women's role as objects of masculine desire in prose, poetry, and rhetoric. Georgia Brown (1995), in her book *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, examines the period's obsession with shame, both as a literary theme and as a conscious authorial position along with probing the obsessions of Elizabethan authors in their disconnected and peripheral forms of literary expression, such as the paradoxical encomium, sonnet sequence, and complaint. In *Passion Made Public: Elizabethan Lyric, Gender & Performance* (1995), Diana Henderson explores lyrical poetry in plays by Peele, Marlowe, and Shakespeare to find out how it reflects a range of attitudes toward female power and how it creates an alternative landscape to revise political and sexual ideologies. Patricia Fumerton, in her paper "Secret Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets," argues that the secrecy prevalent in the Elizabethan age and in the social conduct of its monarch finds its way in the literary productions of the era and especially "[in] the fashionable little poem of love or sonnets" Likewise, Sir Philip Sydney, found

sonnet as a form of self-expression to present their feelings to the public “[that] could never be presented in any other form” (2020, 59). Christopher Warley in his *Sonnet Sequences and Social Distinction in Renaissance England* (2005) argues that sonneteers created a syntactic structure to explain and invent new forms of social identity before an explicit language of social class had existed. He further maintains that the tensions innate in the sonnet form provided Renaissance writers with a means to restructure the connections between the individual and society. Marquis (1994), in a paper titled “Rereading Sidney's Certain Sonnets,” analyzes the social context in which Sydney represented his subject matter and explores his interaction with the system of power while Sydney was marginalized in the court. Rosalind Smith in her book *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621: The Politics of Absence* (2005) investigates the reasons for the paucity of female sonnet writers in the English Renaissance in comparison with the plethora of male writers both in England and in the Continent. To investigate this issue, Smith explores the connection between the sonnet form and gender presumptions in the Elizabethan era. In a similar approach, Henderson (2018) in her work “*Dwelling in Possibility: Women Poets and Critics on Poetry*” examines the female voice and power along with an evaluation of the Renaissance love lyrics. To this end, she analyzes the sonnets in their representation of the female personae in works that are written by both male and female writers.

The *Art of the Sonnet*, written by Burt and Mikics (2010), a collection of one hundred sonnets in English (and a few sonnets in translation), traces the development of the sonnet along with a short analysis of each poem. In *Chamber Music: Elizabethan sonnet-sequences and the pleasure of criticism*, Roger Kuin (1998), argues that sonnet sequences – especially those of Spencer and Sydney – in their elegance of form and subject matter are similar to symphonies, using modern critical theories of Roland Barthes, Michel Riffaterre, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, and Umberto Eco. Elise Sajem Manganaro’s article “*Songs and Sonnets in Astrophel and Stella: A Reading of Sidney's Poetics*” (1989) regards the verisimilitude effect as one of the central features of sonnets. According to Manganaro, emotion, contiguity, and individuality elevate the sonnet sequences, which are grounded in the physical world. Douglas Peterson in his work *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Eloquent Styles* (2015) provide an analysis of social, historical, and rhetorical contexts in which the sixteenth-century lyric forms developed. Peterson argues that poets in this period freed their “imagination from the shackles of medieval scholasticism” through lyrical spontaneity” (2015, ix).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Theo Van Leeuwen’s theoretical framework provides a framework for an insightful analysis of the representation of the social actors in the sonnets (as textual representations). This section starts with defining representation, followed by a review of the central terms in critical discourse analysis including social practice and social actors.

In his work, *Discourse and Practice* (2008), Leeuwen considers all texts as forms of social practice and contends that they are all oriented towards social or political

backgrounds. He argues that “all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in them, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices” (2008, i). Participants and actions are the main components of a social practice. The participants, who are also referred to as social actors, can be the instigators, agents, affected actors, or beneficiaries of the social practice.

### **A. Deletion**

Deletion, an important discursive feature in critical discourse analysis (CDA), consists of inclusion/exclusion. As Van Leeuwen (2008, p.28) states inclusion and exclusion refer to types of representations that omit or include some social actors according to the invested interests of groups or/and individuals. Exclusion happens through suppression and backgrounding. In suppression, there is no reference to the social actor in the text; whereas in backgrounding, although the reference might be absent for a particular action, it is mentioned somewhere else in the text, and it can be inferred with reasonable certainty who the social actors are (2008, 30). When social actors are included in the social practice, their roles can take many forms. These roles, Leeuwen argues, are not fixed and can be relocated and rearranged based on the social relations between participants (2008: 32).

### **B. Role Allocation**

Role allocation, another discursive structure, is significant in CDA, too. In Van Leeuwen’s words, “representations can relocate roles or rearrange the social relations between participants.” In this connection, Leeuwen distinguishes either active or passive roles of social actors. For instance, in inactivation “social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity and passivation, they are represented as “undergoing” the activity, or being “at the receiving end of it” (2008, pp. 32-33). Activation is realized through participation, circumstantialization, or possessiveness. Activation through participation foregrounds the actor as the grammatical initiator of the action. Circumstantialization is created through prepositions “by” or “from.” Possessiveness occurs when either a social actor is pre-modified or it is post-modified through possessive structures (Leeuwen, 2008, 28). Passivation branches into subjection and beneficialization. Subjected social actors are regarded as objects in the representation. Beneficialization happens when social actors are beneficialized in the process of representation (Leeuwen, 2008: 33).

### **C. Substitution**

Substitution includes different categories such as personalization, impersonalization, functionalization, classification, relational identification, nomination, individualization, assimilation, and association. Social actors are almost always personalized. Impersonalization, however, comprises two further categories abstraction and objectivation. Abstraction happens when social actors are represented in terms of a feature assigned to them. But objectivation occurs when a place or an object is used to represent the social actors. Objectivation is divided into four subdivisions: spatialization, utterance autonomization, instrumentalization, and

somatization. In spatialization, it is the place that stands for the social actors. Utterance autonomization refers to instances in which the social actors are represented by their utterances. Instrumentalization and somatization are used to represent social actors through the instrument with which they perform actions or a body part, respectively. The social actors can be represented as classes or as specified identifiable individuals. The genericization and specification of social actors is dependent on the ideological orientation, the context, or the social class in which the representation is performed (2008, 35). Nomination another important feature used to represent social actors includes formal, semiformal, and informal references and titles to males and females. Individualization and assimilation, are another two discursive strategies, where social actors are represented as specific, identifiable individuals or as groups (2008, 41). Assimilation is divided into aggregation and collectivization which are linguistically realized through statistic/percentage and plural nouns consecutively. The association represents groups of social actors either generically or specifically (Leeuwen, 2008:37). Identification occurs when the social actors are represented based on who or what they are. Identification includes three subdivisions: classification, relational identification, and physical identification. Regarding classification, the social actors are represented based on the social or institutional divisions e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, etc. Relational identification is a mode of representation according to the occupational, social, or personal relations of the social actors. Finally, physical identification represents the social actors in terms of the appearance or physical features in the context they are represented. The third subdivision of categorization, appraisal, is performed when social actors are represented based on interpersonal terms. This can be realized through nouns and adjectives that convey such semantic features (Leeuwen, 2008: 42). Different functionalization of male and female actors reveals what jobs or activities (high-status or low-status) men or women are associated with. Social actors can be either represented as personalization or impersonalization. In the former, they are represented as human beings but in the latter, they are not (2008: 46). Leeuwen uses the term overdetermination for a type of representation in which “social actors are represented as participating, at the same time, in more than one social practice” (2008: 47). Leeuwen further divides this term into four categories: inversion, symbolization, connotation, and distillation. Inversion is the representation of social actors in practices that are opposite to one another. This term is further divided into two subcategories: anachronism and deviation (2008:48).

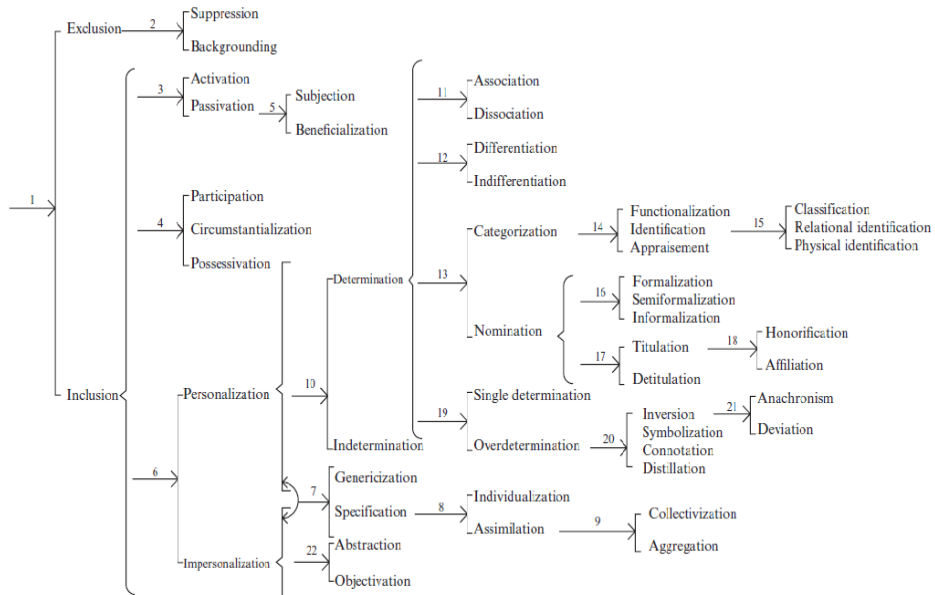


Figure1. Network of Social Actors (Leeuwen 2008, 52)

Halliday's transitivity system is chosen as the second framework which “construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 170), and conceptualizes the actors of those processes as Actor in material processes, Behaver in behavioral processes or Senser in mental processes, Sayer in verbal process or Assigner in relational processes. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), there are two types of representation of experience: on the one hand, actions or events as 'outer' experience; on the other hand, the reactions and reflection as 'inner' experience. Therefore, this model codifies these inner and outer experiences into these five categories Material process, Mental process Verbal process, Relational process, and Behavioral process. The transitivity model shows which actors are mostly involved in which processes.

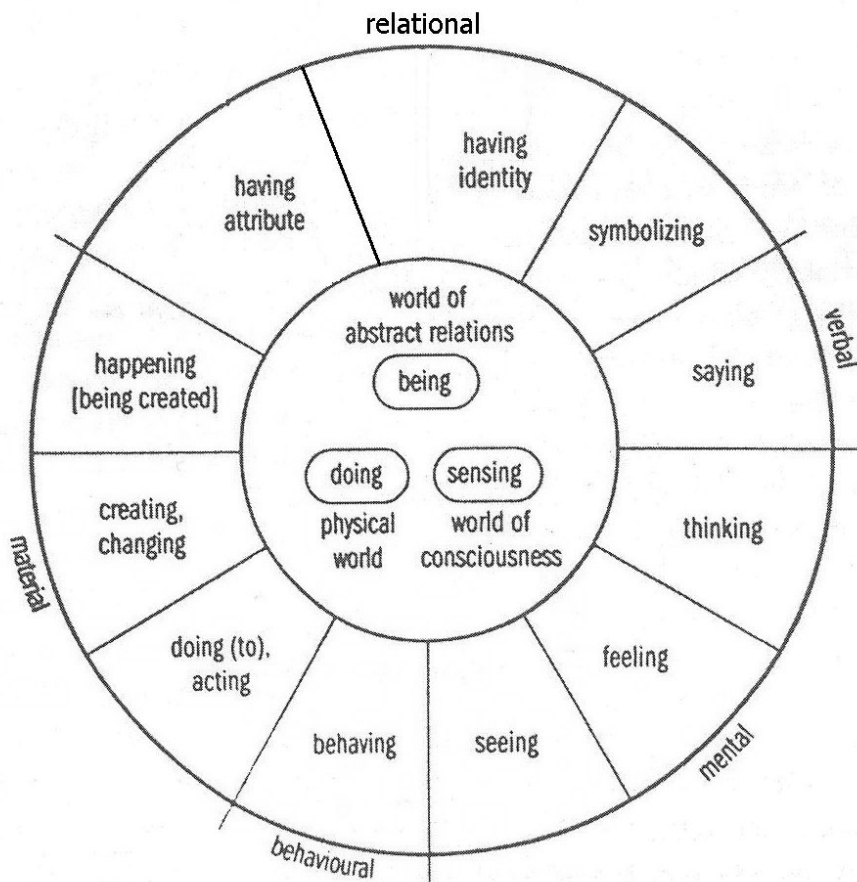


Figure 2. The grammar of experience: types of process in English  
Source: Halliday & Matthiessen (2004:216)

#### 4. Research Methodology

The present study is an attempt to analyze some sonnets of Sidney and Spenser under the rubric of CDA. The impetus for choosing these love sonnets is that love is expected to be impartial and have nothing to do with domination or power relations. Love is a matter of sacrifice and self-effacement.

##### 4.1 Procedures

In this research, the lines of 16 sonnets (224 lines) have been critically analyzed in light of the features introduced by Van Leeuwen (2008) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) transitivity model. Van Leeuwen's model is an apt framework for examining the social actors in representation since it connects the representation of the social actors to the social issues. Since the sonnet (as a type of discourse) do not contain all the categories and modes of representation in Leeuwen's framework, the following sociosemantic categories were selected from Leeuwen's framework for the analysis: inclusion, exclusion; personalization; impersonalization, somatization, abstraction;



overdetermination, activation, passivation, association, instrumentalization, objectivation, indetermination, abstraction, categorization, backgrounding, anachronism, possessiveness, and appraisalment.

Table 1. Select numbered Sonnets from Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*

Socio-semantic category	3	10	18	65	74	86	89	90
Inclusion	*		*	*		*	*	
Exclusion			*	*		*	*	
Personalization		*						
Impersonalization					*	*	*	*
Somatization	*						*	*
Abstraction								*
Overdetermination			*	*	*			*
Activation	*	*			*			
Passivation	*	*						
Association	*							
Instrumentalization		*						
Objectivation				*	*			
Indetermination					*			
Abstraction					*			
Categorization						*		
Backgrounding							*	
Anachronism								
Possessivation								
Appraisalment								

Table 2. Select numbered Sonnets from Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*

Socio-semantic category	2	4	19	25	33	66	72	88
Inclusion	*					*		
Exclusion	*						*	*
Personalization	*	*						
Impersonalization	*			*	*		*	*
Somatization	*			*			*	
Abstraction	*				*	*	*	*
Overdetermination	*			*	*	*	*	
Activation		*	*		*			
Passivation		*	*	*	*			
Association		*	*					
Instrumentalization								
Objectivation				*				
Indetermination					*	*		
Abstraction					*			
Categorization								
Backgrounding				*			*	
Anachronism				*				
Possessivation					*			
Appraisalment					*			



Table 5. Sociosemantic categories representing male actor in Spenser's *Amoretti*

Socio-semantic category	2	4	19	25	33	66	72	88
Inclusion				*				
Exclusion								
Personalization								
Impersonalization								
Somatization	*							*
Abstraction	*				*			
Overdetermination								
Activation			*	*	*			*
Passivation				*	*	*		
Association		*	*					
Instrumentalization								
Objectivation							*	
Indetermination								
Abstraction							*	*
Categorization								
Backgrounding				*			*	
Anachronism								
Possessiveness								
Appraisalment								

Table 6. Sociosemantic categories representing female actors in Spenser's *Amoretti*

Socio-semantic category	2	4	19	25	33	66	72	88
Inclusion								
Exclusion								*
Personalization								
Impersonalization								
Somatization	*			*	*		*	
Abstraction				*	*		*	
Overdetermination					*	*		
Activation			*			*	*	
Passivation		*	*					
Association								
Instrumentalization								
Objectivation	*			*				
Indetermination								
Abstraction								
Categorization								
Backgrounding							*	*
Anachronism								
Possessiveness								
Appraisalment								

## 5. Findings and Discussion

As is observed in Table 4 the socio-semantic categories representing female actors in 8 sonnets in *Astrophel and Stella* are mostly somatization (4 times), passivation (3 times), objectivation (2 times), exclusion (2 times), backgrounding (2 times) and activation (1 time). In other words, Stella, the female social actor, is represented in

terms of her body (21%), being passive (16 %), an object (10.5%), excluded (10.5%), and backgrounded (10.5%). She is, however, represented through the socio-semantic category of activation only once (5 %). In contrast, the male actor in *Astrophel and Stella* is mainly represented through activation (7 cases), that is, 37%. He is backgrounded only once throughout 8 sonnets (figure 5).

In Spenser's *Amoretti*, the female actor is represented through somatization (4 times), abstraction (3 times), activation (3 times), passivation (2 times), objectivation (2 times), backgrounding (2 times), overdetermination (2 times) and exclusion (1 time). To put it differently, she is primarily represented through her body (21%), through quality (16%), being active (16%), being passive (10.5%), as an object of (10.5%), as backgrounded (10.5%). The male actor, however, is represented through activation (3 times), somatization (2 times), association (2 times), passivation (3 times), backgrounding (1 time), and abstraction (3 times). As it is observed, the male actor in Spenser's *Amoretti* is represented mostly as an active person in the select sonnets. Moreover, he is depicted as possessing a quality (16%) and referring to his own body (10.5%). Although he is represented through the category of passivation (16%), he is depicted as the more powerful presence within the chosen sonnets.

The most important discursive strategy in the sonnets is substitution. Under substitution, the female actor (beloved) is almost always impersonalized, whereas the male actor is most often personalized. Substitution involves those features that construe the person in terms of a quality or a feature rather than the person. In other words, the social actors are impersonalized. Male and female social actors are not equally represented in that the female beloved is mainly associated with somatization, passivation, and objectivation. For example, somatization, as a socio-semantic category, represents the female beloved in terms of the body. In the select sonnets, the female beloved's body gains more prominence and attention which demonstrates an ideological move.

In Sonnet 3 'Loue and Beautie', Stella is entirely passivized in the sonnet. This mode of representation is defined by Leeuwen as the cases in which "the social actors are treated as objects in the representation, for instance, as objects of exchange (2008, 33). She is primarily passivized about the social action of "reading" in line 12. Another instance of passivation is in line 14 in which Stella is subjected. Here, she is presented as the subject in the prepositional phrase and about the verb "write." Stella, in addition, is impersonalized through the reference to her face in line 12. Here, the lover claims that the description of the beloved's face is the only legitimized pretext for composing poetry. This is an instance of somatization, the subcategory of impersonalization, which, according to Leeuwen, is realized when the social actors are represented through a reference to their body parts (2008, 47). Here, the beloved is reduced through an organ with which she is associated. Stella, in addition, is objectified and passivated in the representation. Thus, the beloved is "flattened and under characterized [sic]" in the representation and, as a sign, her existence is reliant on the choice of the male lover (Merrens, 1992:184).

In Sonnet 10, Astrophel, introduced in the sonnet through the personal pronoun “I”, is represented “as the active, dynamic forces in an activity” of addressing Reason throughout the sonnet (Leeuwen, 2008, 33). In line 2, he is the Senser concerning the Mental process of “wishing.” In Sonnet 18, the lover is primarily represented through inclusion and, in a further subdivision, activation. Astrophel is the Actor of the Material process of “go” in line 2, and in line 6, he is the Assigner of the Relational process of “owe.” In the final line of the octave, in addition, he is the Actor of the Material process of “spending.” Similarly, in the final three lines of the sonnet, he is represented as a Senser in the Mental process of “see” and an Assigner in the Relational process of “lose.” In Sonnet 65, out of four cases of activation and passivation, Astrophel and Cupid are involved in three of them. Stella, Astrophel’s object of desire, is the excluded social actor in the sonnet. This is carried out through suppression, a mode of representation in which “there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text” (Leeuwen, 2008, 29). In Sonnet 74, Astrophel is represented as an active, dynamic force and is the participating Actor in lines 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10. In addition, in line 3, the word “Muses” is the participating Sayer concerning the Verbal process of “scorn.” Stella, the beloved, is included through the prepositional circumstantial “with” and, therefore, realized by circumstantialization in the last line of the sonnet (2008, 33). In Sonnet 86 the primary pattern of representation is inclusion through activation and exclusion through suppression. Astrophel, as the initiator of the actions, is represented as an active, dynamic force in the poem. In contrast, Stella is mostly silent. Only in one instance in line 9, she is represented as Behavior in the Behavioral Process of treating. In the rest of the sonnet, however, she is backgrounded, and it can only be inferred that she is Astrophel’s addressee. Representation through impersonalization in the sonnet is realized through somatization and abstraction. Line four, as mentioned above, contains two instances of somatization in which Astrophel is represented through parts of his body, i.e. “heart” and “eye”. The other cases of somatization are in lines 9 and 13 in which there are references to Stella’s eyes and hand: “Oh ease your hand, treat not so hard your slave:/.../Then those blest eyes, where all my hopes do dwell.” Stella is also impersonalized through abstraction in the sonnet. Leeuwen argues that abstraction “occurs when social actors are represented using a quality assigned to them by and in the representation” (2008: 46). Stella’s representation in the first line of the sonnet is compatible with this definition “Alas, whence came this change of looks?” If the “change of looks” is a quality through which Astrophel comprehends Stella’s emotions. Astrophel is predominantly included in the representation through activation. In addition, except for two cases in line 4, he is mostly personalized. Stella, in contrast, is mainly excluded through backgrounding, and, throughout the sonnet, she is objectified by somatization. In Sonnet 89, except for one instance of representation through activation in the last line, Astrophel is predominantly excluded through backgrounding. According to Leeuwen, this occurs when social actors are not mentioned concerning a given action, but they are mentioned somewhere else in the text (2008: 29). This is the case in lines 1, 5, and 6 in which only through inference Astrophel can be identified as the agent of the

actions. Leeuwen, in addition, maintains that “backgrounding can result from simple ellipses in nonfinite clauses with -ing and -ed participles, in infinitival clauses with to, and in paratactic clauses. In all of these cases, the excluded social actor is included elsewhere in the same clause or clause complex” (ibid). In the sonnet, the nonfinite participle clauses “suffering” and “languished” background Astrophel as the Senser who has initiated the actions. Stella, the second central social actor, is represented twice in the sonnet through activation and backgrounding. In the first case in line 3, she is the participant in the social action. In the second case, she is represented in line four as the Actor in the Material process of “Leaving my hemisphere, leave me in the night.” In this line, there is no direct reference to the Actor, who has performed the Process of leaving; however, it can be inferred that it has been done by the beloved. This is, therefore, an instance of exclusion through backgrounding. Stella is also impersonalized through somatization in the poem. In somatization, the social actor is represented by a reference to a body part rather than through her unique identity (Leeuwen, 2008: 47). This is the case with line 3 of the sonnet in which Stella is represented through a reference to her eyes. Stella seems to be the central authority in the sonnet. The analysis of her representation in the sonnet, however, provided an opposite image. Except for one case, she is predominately backgrounded and therefore unvoiced in the text. In addition, objectivation through somatization further pushes her to the margin of the representation. A combination of these modes of representation disempowers and marginalizes Stella. In Sonnet 90, Astrophel, to borrow Leeuwen’s term, is mainly presented as the “agent” in social actions (2008, 23). In lines 5, 7, 9, and 11 in which Astrophel is included through activation. Stella appears twice in the text, and, in both cases, she is included through activation. In the first line, she is the initiator of the action and is presented through participation. Similarly, in line three she is the Senser of the Mental process of thinking. Stella appears through somatization in line three through reference to parts of her body i.e. eyes and lips. In addition, Astrophel is represented through a reference to his hand in the last line of the text. In a dominant pattern, Astrophel is represented in the sonnet through inclusion and participation. He delegitimizes the social actions that are not centered on or recognize his love for Stella. The beloved, for whom all other social practices are forsaken, however, is impersonalized and unvoiced in the sonnet. In sum, out of eight poems analyzed here, in sonnets 3, 18, 86, and 89, Stella is either passivated or backgrounded. In addition, in the majority of the sonnets, she is impersonalized through somatization and abstraction. This is the case with sonnets 3, 18, 86, 89, 90. A combination of these modes of representation pushes Stella to the margins of the power relations.

The sonnets 2, 4, 19, 25, 33, 66, 72, and 88 from Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* are analyzed through Leeuwen's framework. In Sonnet 2, lines 2 and 4, the references to 'heart' and 'bale', which are attributed to the lover, are instances of somatization. Moreover, in line 10, the beloved is represented through a reference to her feet. This is also a case of objectivation through somatization. Finally, the phrase “fairest proud” is an instance of impersonalization through abstraction, which, according to Leeuwen, “occurs when social actors are represented through a quality assigned to

them by and in the representation” (2008, 46). In Sonnet 4, although there is no reference to the lover and beloved in human form in this sonnet, the social actors are divided along gender lines. The female social actor, however, is described as “fair,” indicating her physical attractiveness and connoting passivity. “New year,” “fresh love,” and “spring,” as masculine social actors, are represented predominantly as the initiators of the actions. The “new year” is represented through activation and through participation concerning the action of “looking out” (Behavior in the Behavioral Process). In addition, “fresh love” is represented through two modes. The female poetic personae, the “Earth” and “fair flower,” are included in the sonnet through passivation. In the third line of the sestet, “Earth,” to couch it in Leeuwen’s words, is a “phenomenon in a mental process” of warning; similarly, the “fair flower,” is passivated concerning the social action of “preparing” (2008, 33). In Sonnet 19, the beloved, as the female social actor, is both activated and passivated in the sestet. In lines 11 and 13, she is the Behavior of the Behavioral process of disobeying and the Actor of the material process of turning. The prepositional phrase in line 10 is an instance of the passivation of the female actor through possessiveness. Finally, in the final line of the text, the female social actor is passivated through subjection in the clause “let her a rebel be.” The male social actors represented predominantly through activation and association, are legitimized as the dominant authorities in the sonnet. In Sonnet 25, in lines 7, 10, and 14, the lover is represented as the Goal of the verbs “torment”, “show,” and Recipient of “turn” respectively. These are instances of passivation, in which “the social actor is the goal in a material process, a phenomenon in a mental process, or carrier in an effective attributive process” (Halliday, 1985, 43). The male lover is finally activated in two instances in lines 10 and 11 of the text. Except in line 9 in which the female social actor is the Actor of the Material process of “hide,” she is predominantly represented through passivation and subjection. Passivation, according to Leeuwen, can “be realized by “possessiveness,” usually in the form of a prepositional phrase with of postmodifying a nominalization or process noun” (2008, 34). There are three instances of this mode of representation in lines 2, 6, and 8 in which the prepositional phrases “of her misery”, and “of your pride” background the female social actor. In addition, in line 8, the female social actor is the object concerning the verb “prove,” and, therefore, in Leeuwen’s words, is “treated as objects in the representation” through subjection (2008, 33). Impersonalization of the female social actor is another notable pattern of representation in the text. In Leeuwen’s model, impersonalization is subdivided into two subcategories: abstraction and objectivation. Abstraction, according to Leeuwen “occurs when social actors are represented using a quality assigned to them by and in the representation” (2008: 46). This is the case with the representation of the beloved in lines 2, 6, and 10 in which she is represented through the qualities of misery, pride, and grace, respectively. The female actor is also objectified through somatization in line 9 in which she is represented through reference to a part of her body, i.e. “hardened breast.” In Sonnet 33, female social actor, Elizabeth Boyle, appears in the text through impersonalization. In this regard, Leeuwen argues that the “social actors can be impersonalized ... by abstract nouns or by concrete nouns

whose meanings do not include the semantic feature ‘human.’” (2008, 46). Leeuwen, furthermore, defines abstraction, a subdivision of impersonation, as the cases in which “social actors are represented through a quality assigned to them by and in the representation” (ibid). This is the case with the reference to the beloved as “another wit.” In addition, she is also impersonalized and objectified through somatization in the last line of the text utilizing the reference to her body part, i.e. “breast.” Both female social actors (Queen and Boyle) are represented as lacking power in the sonnet. Queen Elizabeth in the octave appears through determination and personalization; however, when it comes to her representation vis-à-vis Spenser, the male social actor, she is passivated. In addition, Queen Elizabeth is stripped of her feminine features in the sonnet. In other words, rather than being represented as a female figure with a distinct personality, she is represented as masculine or, at best a gender-neutral social actor. In Sonnet 66, the lover is also impersonalized in the sonnet through abstraction. According to Leeuwen, these are the cases “when social actors are represented through a quality assigned to them by and in the representation” (2008: 46). In lines 8, and 12, he is referred to as belonging to a baser rank in the clauses “lowly state” and “my darkness” (Larsen: 197). In these lines, the lover is also represented by the quality assigned to him and, therefore, impersonalized through abstraction. This is also the case with the clause “my reflex” in the last line of the text in which a quality of the lover is used to represent him. The female social actor is mainly represented through activation. This is realized through the personal pronoun “ye” in lines 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10 in which the beloved is represented as an active, dynamic force in the social practice (2008, 33). The female persona, despite being presented through activation, remains incapable of action in the poem. She is a function for justification of the male lover’s choices and attitudes. The pattern of empowering the male persona and disempowering the female social actor follows Rick’s assessment of characterization in Amoretti, stating that the poet in the sonnet merely “pretended to be writing to and about a given lady., however, each was writing about himself; or perhaps more accurately, each was writing about his attitude to love” (1972:84). In Sonnet 72, although the pattern of backgrounding and impersonalization is roughly equal for both of the social actors, the female persona is represented as less powerful in the sonnet. Primarily, her exclusion from the social action is more radical than the lover, who is presented as an active persona in the metaphorical flight towards heaven and return to the earth. Disempowering the female persona is also evident in the pattern of overdetermination: while the lover is put in the position of Christ, the female social actor does not transcend beyond the abstract (and therefore impersonalized) concept of “heaven’s bliss.” In Sonnet 88, the male social actor is the most powerful voice in the sonnet. He is represented, to borrow Leeuwen’s term, as “the agent” in the sonnet (2008, 23). In the octave, he is the Carrier, Behavior, and sensor of “lack,” “wander,” and “see” in lines 1, 3, and 5, respectively. This is also the case in lines 11, 13, and 14 in the sestet in which he is represented through activation (Actor) concerning the verbs “do,” “fill,” and “starve.” Unlike the representation of the male social actor through inclusion, the beloved never directly appears in the sonnet. This is an instance of exclusion through



backgrounding. The female social actor is also impersonalized in the text through abstraction, which, as mentioned above, is the representation of the social actor through a quality (*ibid*). This is the case with the representation of the lady by reference to the “heavenly ray” in line 7 of the sonnet. Consequently, “heavenly ray” and the other words that are semantically related to it including “light” and “brightness” are the qualities by which the female social actor is impersonalized. Therefore, although the argument in the sonnet is centered on the expression of love towards the female personae, her backgrounding dispossesses her of any authority. In addition, even in the cases that she surfaces in the discourse, she is more of an abstract (and thus impersonalized) entity rather than a fully characterized social actor. She serves as the thing, rather than a person, which makes the poet experience the emotions about which he writes (Rick, 1996, 3).

## 6. Conclusion

The sonnet sequences analyzed in the present study are concerned with the theme of love; however, they are divergent in their development. Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* begins with the imploration of the lover to win the hand of a married woman and ends with a final meditation on Astrophel's loneliness because he failed to win the beloved. *Amoretti*, written by Spenser to glorify Elizabeth Boyle to whom he is already married, develops based on an opposite pattern. The tone of the first two-thirds of the sequence is negative as the beloved, who seems to be proud and cruel, rejects the lover-poet. In the final sonnets, however, he is married and finds the woman as a source of pleasure and hope.

The male lover is primarily represented through activation. The male social actors are active dynamic forces in the selected sonnets. In *Astrophel and Stella*, Astrophel is presented as the initiator of the actions in sonnets 3, 10, 18, 65, 74, 86, and 90. In addition, in Sonnet 88, although Astrophel is mainly backgrounded in the poem, he is represented in the last line through activation. The above-mentioned pattern of representation of the male persona through activation is also evident in *Amoretti*. Thus, the select sonnets in *Amoretti* can be categorized into three groups. In the first group, (sonnets 2, 33, and 88) the lover is the initiator of the actions whose purpose is to convince the silent beloved. In Sonnet 66, he is also represented through activation and defends the beloved's decision to grant his request. In the third group (sonnets 4, 19, 25, and 72), however, both the lover and the beloved are backgrounded in the discourse.

In the majority of the sonnets analyzed in the present study, the social actors are involved in two social practices. This pattern of overdetermination, ultimately, aims at legitimizing the lovers' desire and, simultaneously, delegitimizing the beloved's rejection or reluctance. In Sonnet 3 of *Astrophel and Stella*, Astrophel is involved in two actions: writing poetry that describes Stella and other resources for literary creation. He rejects the social practice of intellectuals and the imitators of Pindar who invoke the muses and search for elaborate rhetorical forms and exotic similes to enrich their poetry. Similarly, in Sonnet 18 he participates in two opposite social practices: one is based on reason, and the other is based on the passion for Stella.

Finally, Astrophel leaves the first social practice for the second one. The pattern of overdetermination mentioned above, although through anachronism, is also evident in sonnets 65, 74, and 90 of Astrophel and Stella. In these poems, Astrophel is involved in two social practices: one mythological and the other actual and involving Stella. In Sonnet 65, Astrophel hosts Cupid, the god of love in Greek mythology. In Sonnet 74, Astrophel refers to the mythological elements that are supposedly sources of happiness. In Sonnet 90, Astrophel alludes to the laurel tree, from which the laureate's wreath, a symbol of poetic creation, are made. In all of the social actions mentioned here, the mythological social practices are forsaken to legitimize Astrophel's love for Stella.

The abovementioned pattern is also evident in sonnets 2, 25, 33, and 72 from Amoretti. In Sonnet 2, the lover is involved in two social actions: the biological process of inception, breeding, and raising the "unquiet thought" and a romantic social practice of expressing his desire for the beloved. These social practices are finally juxtaposed with one another, and the lover implies that it is natural for the beloved to accept his offer. In Sonnet 25, there are also two social practices: one is romantic and aimed at convincing the reluctant beloved to yield to the request of the lover; the other, creates a religious context in which Christ reproves the apostles for their "hardened breast" in accepting his rising from the dead. In Sonnet 33 of Amoretti, both the lover and the beloved are involved in two social practices, which, ultimately, result in deeming the beloved's acceptance of the lover's offer as a moral obligation. In the sonnet, Spenser states he has not been able to complete Faëry Queen because he has put all of his efforts in writing Amoretti, the sonnet sequence, which is written to convince the beloved to accept his amorous offer. Thus, the beloved is involved in two social practices. First, she is represented as the actor in a romantic social practice, which involves the lover. Second, Spenser is implying that if the beloved consents to fulfill his desire, he will be able to complete Faëry Queen, a work in which he praises the Queen of England. Thus, by accepting Spenser's offer, Boyle is doing her responsibility as a subject of the Queen of England. In Sonnet 72, the social actors are also involved in two social practices: one romantic and the other religious. Through the creation of a parallel between these two social practices, the beloved is morally obligated to accept the lover's offer of intimacy. The first social practice in the sonnet is the biblical account of Christ's ascent into heaven. In addition, the second social practice is the secular account of a lover's ascent into heaven and forsaking its glory because of the beloved. In the religious practice, Christ forsakes the earth for "the purest sky"; in the second social practice, however, the female actor on the earth becomes a surrogate for the heavenly bliss. Similar to the sonnets mentioned above, representation through determination legitimizes the lover's romantic desire.

The pattern of overdetermination, therefore, is the central mode through which social actors are represented in the selected sonnets in both Astrophel and Stella and Amoretti. In the majority of the poems, the lovers actively seek to fulfill their desire. To do so, they participate in a second social practice with a religious, mythological,

political, natural, or social nature. The lovers, ultimately, disavow the second social practice to legitimize the aim of the first, which is winning over the beloved.

The relationship between the representation of female social actors in the sonnets and their status in the Elizabethan era is the third issue in this research. The beloved, who is seemingly the main impetus and driving force in the sonnets, is unvoiced and disempowered through backgrounding, passivation, and impersonalization. It should be noted that the beloveds, as objects of desire for whom Astrophel and the lover in Amoretti are willing to disavow eternal fame, religious grandiosity, and social acceptance, are merely seemingly the central persona in the selected sonnets. The analysis of the representation of the female social actor in the present study, however, proved to the contrary. In the sonnets from Astrophel and Stella, the representation of the beloved through backgrounding and passivation is the dominant pattern. As it was observed, in four out of eight sonnets (3, 18, 86, and 89) the beloved is either passivated or backgrounded. In addition, in sonnets 3, 18, 86, 89, and 90, she is impersonalized through somatization and abstraction. A combination of these modes of representation leaves Stella unvoiced, and disempowered, and pushes her to the margins of the power structure.

Similar to the pattern mentioned above, the beloved in Amoretti is devoid of any voice or authority. In the majority of the sonnets (seven out of eight cases), the female social actor is either backgrounded, passivized, or impersonalized. In Sonnets 72 and 88, the beloved is backgrounded, and in Sonnets 4, 19, 25, and 66 she is passivized. In addition, in sonnets 2, 9, 33, 66, 72, and 88 she is impersonalized through either somatization or abstraction. Therefore, in the selected sonnets, the female social actor is either silent or is not represented as a fully characterized persona. Even in the cases in which the pattern of impersonalization is disrupted, the beloved's active participation and her full personalization in the social practice are recognized as long as she conforms to the demands of the lover. This accounts for Sonnet 19 in which she is represented through activation. Here, as she does not conform to the lover's demand, her participation as an active participant in the social action is condemned as rebellious and, therefore, delegitimized.

The analysis of the representation of the social actors in the chosen sonnets makes it possible to reconstruct the discourses of the Elizabethan age on which these sonnets draw. This standpoint follows Leeuwen's stance that "As discourses are social cognitions, socially specific ways of knowing social practices, they can be, and are, used as resources for representing social practices in text. This means that it is possible to reconstruct discourses from the texts that draw on them" (2008, 7).

Finally, the common pattern of representation mentioned above indicates that, in all of the sonnets, while the male personae are the center of the power structure, the female, devoid of any power, should be sought on the margins of the discourse.

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بازنمایی گفتمانی کنشگران اجتماعی در غزل‌های عاشقانه اسپنسر و سیدنی از منظر رویکرد جامعه‌شناختی -

معنایی ون‌لیوون (۱۹۹۶)

#### چکیده

رسانس به‌عنوان عصری پربار که در آن ادبیات و خصوصاً شعر شکوفا گردید، تا کنون موضوع مطالعات بسیاری بوده است. این دوره، که در بریتانیا دوره الیزابت نیز نامیده می‌شود، عصر طلایی غزل سرایانی نامی همچون سر فیلیپ سیدنی (۱۵۸۶-۱۵۵۴) و ادموند اسپنسر (۱۵۹۹-۱۵۵۲) است. جستار پیش‌رو، به تحلیل ۱۶ غزل از غزلیات سیدنی و اسپنسر بر اساس نظریه جامعه‌شناختی-معنایی ون‌لیوون (۱۹۹۶) پرداخته است و رویکرد ایدئولوژیک این دو شاعر در بازنمایی کنش‌گران اجتماعی از خلال تعامل آن‌ها با ساختار قدرت مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. همچنین، یافته‌ها نشان داد که الگویی یکسان در بازنمایی شخصیت‌ها در این غزلیات وجود دارد؛ به گونه‌ای که شخصیت مردان صدای مسلط در متنها هستند، اما شخصیت زنان به حاشیه رانده می‌شوند. این الگو بیانگر بستری ایدئولوژیک در متون مورد بررسی است. نتایج نشان داد که این الگو بازنمای ساختار قدرت در دوره الیزابت است که بر اساس آن کنشگران اجتماعی بر اساس مرزبندی‌های جنسیتی طبقه‌بندی می‌شوند. کلیدواژه‌ها: تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی، کنش‌گران اجتماعی، ون‌لیوون، شعر، اسپنسر، سیدنی