



Article Info/Makale Bilgisi

Received/Geliş: 26.10.2016 ✓ Accepted/Kabul: 09.11.2016

DOI: 10.5505/pausbed.2017.19327

EXCEPTIONAL FEMININITIES AS HISTORICAL ROLE MODELS IN CICELY
HAMILTON'S A PAGEANT OF GREAT WOMEN

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Abstract

This paper aims to shed light on the concept of exceptional femininities in the script and performance of Cicely Hamilton's political play *A Pageant of Great Women*, which she wrote in 1909. The word "femininities" is used in the article to refer to women of the period and their distinguishing feminine qualities which emphasise their unique identities as notable figures. The article claims that her play was not only an imitation of Edwardian social drama with a political message. Instead, it suggests that she exploited a large variety of sources in the construction of her female characters. The play showcases rich costumes, a large stage and a very large cast, and its first production was performed by famous Edwardian actresses who represent the exceptional qualities of femininity they promoted on the stage. However, it also reveals confusion about the ordinary and the exceptional and to what extent ordinary women could be attracted to the playwright's arguments through her representation of exceptionality. Hamilton's relying solely on the exceptional, hence the minority, for mass appeal, suggests an elitist strategy. It is elitist due to its exclusive idealisation of exceptionality, but her strategy has limitations in elucidating the scope and the range of exceptionality and how it could be applied to the ordinary. This paper examines the tension between the represented and the object of representation in the construction and production of the play and attempts to show how this tension is partly resolved through the playwright's unique solution.

Key Words: *Cicely Hamilton, Edwardian drama, Exceptional femininity, Role models.*

CICELY HAMILTON'IN A PAGEANT OF GREAT WOMEN ESERİNDE TARİHSEL ROL
MODEL OLARAK OLAĞANÜSTÜ KADINLIKLAR

Özet

Bu makale, Cicely Hamilton'ın 1909 yılında yazdığı siyasi oyunu *A Pageant of Great Women (Önemli Kadınların Geçit Töreni)* eserinin metin ve performansında temsil edilen olağanüstü kadınlık kavramına ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalede kullanılan "kadınlıklar" sözcüğü, ünlü kişiler olan bu kadınların kendilerine özgü kimliklerini vurgulayarak, hem dönemin kadınlarına hem de onlara özgü kadınlık özelliklerine atıfta bulunmak için kullanılmıştır. Bu yazı ayrıca, oyunun, sadece siyasi mesaj veren Edward dönemi sosyal oyunlarının bir taklidi olmadığını savunmaktadır. Bunun yerine, yazarın kadın karakterlerin yaratılmasında çok çeşitli kaynaklardan yararlandığını göz önüne sermektedir. Oyun, zengin kostümleri, büyük bir sahne ve çok büyük oyuncu kadrosu ile kendini göstermektedir ve ilk sahne performansı, olağanüstü kadının niteliklerini sahnede temsil eden Edward döneminin ünlü aktrisleri tarafından

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gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ancak, oyun sıradan ile olağanüstü arasındaki ortaya çıkan karmaşayı ortaya koymakta ve de sıradan kadınların, yazarın argümanlarına olağanüstü kadınların temsili yoluyla ne ölçüde çekilebileceğini sorgulamaktadır. Hamilton'ın kitlelere ulaşmak için, olağanüstüye dolayısıyla azınlığa bel bağlaması, elitist bir strateji olarak görünmektedir. Yazarın stratejisi, olağanüstülükleri özel olarak yüceltmesinden dolayı elitisttir ama stratejinin kapsamı ve bu olağanüstülüklerin yelpazesi ile nasıl sıradan insanlara uygulanabilir olduğu konusunda sınırlamalar gözükmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu makale, temsil edilen ile temsilin nesnesi arasında, oyunun metni ve sahnelenmesinde ortaya çıkan gerginliği incelemekte ve bu gerginliğin yazar tarafından kısmen de olsa nasıl çözüldüğünü göstermeye çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cicely Hamilton, Edward döneminde drama, olağanüstü kadınlık, rol modelleri.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cicely Hamilton's *A Pageant of Great Women* (1909) is a unique example of a suffrage pageant play, in which Hamilton experiments with the theatrical representation of female exceptionalism. The play was first produced by Edith Craig at the Scala Theatre on 10 November 1909 with a large number of eminent actresses and other female artists as a part of the cast. (Whitelaw, 1991: 86). Although it was a play, and not a procession or a street pageant, it had the capacity to attract enough people to fill the (now Royal) Albert Hall (Cockin, 1998: 97-98). It is a theatrical version of the increasingly popular pageants of the Edwardian suffrage movement that were repeatedly performed in the streets of London between 1906 and 1915 and, like them, it exemplifies and celebrates the richness of female attainments (Tickner, 1987: 55-151). As a strategy, it presents new ideal feminine qualities represented by famous women of the age to the ordinary women of middle and working classes who were not regarded as recognised citizens unlike their male counterparts in the public life and literary works produced by men. The notion of exceptional femininity is a central theme that is represented in and presented by the play. The play creates a spectacle of women, targeting a large heterogeneous group of the audience, mainly from various suffrage societies; however, this spectacular play excludes ordinary women from its representations. The Edwardian suffrage movement, as a mass movement, had to appeal to a large section of Edwardian society in order to draw the much-needed support for its campaign. The spectacle of women, created by suffrage theatricality on and off stage, was to establish an atmosphere of attraction, celebration and belonging. Nevertheless, Hamilton's relying solely on the exceptional, hence the minority, for mass appeal, suggests an elitist strategy. It is elitist due to its exclusive idealisation of exceptionalism, but her strategy has limitations in elucidating the scope and the range of exceptionalism and how it could be applied to the ordinary. This paper will examine the tension between the represented and the object of representation in the construction and production of the play and will attempt to show how this tension is partly resolved through the playwright's unique solution.

The popularity of the play shows that Hamilton and Craig were successful in their experimentation with a blend of civic pageantry and theatrical allegory in a contemporary context. Civic pageantry, the origins of which go back to medieval times, was "devised specifically to welcome distinguished and powerful visitors into the city" (Wickham, 1992: 94). Due to its size and number of participants, pageants transformed their settings, city landmarks, gates and market-crosses into temporary stages. These performances generally fulfilled different functions such as celebration, legitimisation

or glorification of its subjects. Deborah Sugg Ryan claims that the Edwardian pageantry was a result of “a taste in events combining chivalry, patriotism and imperialism and Pre-Raphaelite’s or Arts and Crafts movements’ interest in reviving pre-industrial traditions” (Ryan, 2007: 64). The episodic nature of pageants and the long duration of their performances meant the emphasis was on visual spectacle and temporality rather than narrative effects (Ryan, 2007: 67). Given the virtually overlapping strategies of presentation, it is also possible to assert that Hamilton created her own interpretation of the stage bordering on the tableaux vivants of the Edwardian era. Tableaux vivants’ transgressive presentation of working-class women is translated into another transgressive strategy in the play through Hamilton’s mostly famous and middle-class cast, which highlights the grandeur of the pageant and the photographic quality of characters.

2. A PAGEANT OF GREAT WOMEN: FEMALE EXCEPTIONALITY REDEFINED

The play has a short one-act structure and is constructed in the form of a dramatic allegory. It presents a conventional story of triumph of the moral over the immoral or the right over the wrong. It opens with a scene in which two characters, Woman and Prejudice, argue heatedly about women’s worthiness. These two allegorical characters specifically symbolise women in general who were devoid of political rights and the prejudiced public opinion against their rightful struggle for greater equality in the Edwardian age. Prejudice, the villain, is affiliated with masculine authority and the script says that he “only saw women as a sex”, “praised a simper far above a thought” and “prized a dimple far beyond a brain” (Hamilton, 1910: 25). He describes Woman as “a very child in the ways of the world” who utters “stammering foolishness” (Hamilton, 1910: 23). After the initial confrontation between these two characters, Woman sets out to introduce examples of famous women from the pages of history and narrates how they have become agents of progress. Seeing this large number of women, Justice acknowledges their justifications and pronounces: “I give thee judgement – and judge you worthy to attain thy freedom”, but also warns that Woman wants to take “an untried path” and she “hast very much to learn” (Hamilton, 1910: 49). The play closes with Woman’s words: “I laugh ... feeling the riot and rush of crowding hopes ... knowing this – ‘This good to be alive when morning dawns” (Hamilton, 1910: 49). The denouement draws a picture of optimism with the “crowding hopes” at a “morning dawn”. Woman happily foresees that the realm of independent femininity is certain to expand for the better and she sounds assured on women’s potential and future gains on gender equality.

The chosen women are distinguished and mostly elite specimens of their sex. The examples of exceptionality are presented in the play, in categories based on the common virtues and merits of accomplished women. As *The Daily Mirror* presented on the cover page of its issue dated 13 November 1909, female characters were staged under the titles of The Learned Women, The Artists, The Saintly Women, The Heroic Women, The Rulers and The Warriors (Hamilton, 1910: 16). In a way, they are inspirational individuals who exemplify the potential for self-progress and achievements in women. These famous women are borrowed from the pages of history and are those who have repeatedly appeared in the suffrage street pageants and spectacles.

This type of classification and promotion of popular personalities as eminent individuals and geniuses was not a new approach for Edwardian suffragists nor, in this case, was it for Hamilton. Its origins date back to the early Victorian period. Edwardian suffragists were appropriating a masculine tradition of heroism, evident in Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1840). Carlyle identifies six ideal types of heroes: "heroes of the divine, prophetic, poetic, priestly, literary and kingly orders" (qtd. in Marshall, 1997: 8). He defines the Great Men as "the leaders of men, the modellers, patterns, or creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain" (qtd. in Gray, 1906: 1). Though Carlyle's notion of men's greatness as the only guiding factor for human achievement is contradictory and exaggerated, it reveals a fundamental strategy of placing celebrated and gifted individuals as role models for the masses. A similar strategy is shared by Edwardian suffragists, who desired to demonstrate the diversity of female accomplishments and, at the same time, the existence of common potential among them. Hamilton's dramatic pageant, hence, exemplifies exceptionality in the carefully selected women to suggest that it is a tangibly evident, widespread and universal quality, available to those who recognise their own potential.

An important element of female exceptionality in the play is the significance of talent and its public recognition. The Learned Women have potential for self-progress and their publicly accepted status is evidence of their success. Prejudice reproaches Woman, saying, "Yet she cries for freedom!" (Hamilton, 1910: 25). He questions the legitimacy of her claim to equality without first earning it in the eye of public. In turn, Hamilton chooses to construct the worthiness in middle- and upper-class femininity as role models for the rest, namely the ordinary women, the majority of whom have not "fought their achievement and to fame" (Hamilton, 1910: 27). In the play, this potential is epitomised in The Learned Women such as St. Teresa, Manon Roland, Jane Austen and Marie Curie. They set great examples for the ordinary woman. St Teresa is defined as "the only woman upon whom the title of Doctor of the Church has ever been confirmed" (Hamilton, 1910: 53). She is certainly an inspiration for others by having earned a recognised title from the church, a patriarchal institution, a realm in which women were underrepresented. Jane Austen, equally, as an eminent English author, is a romantic artist and stands for the existence of middle-class female genius. Lisa Tickner notes that "suffragists were interested in the woman artist because she was a type of the skilled and independent woman, with attributes of autonomy, creativity and professional competence" (Tickner, 1987: 14).

Female artists are unique examples of creative genius in women. They are accessible, visionary and highly valued members of their sex, so they maintain a crucial link between the elitist paradigms of exceptionality and the prospects for the ordinary woman. A similar association can be maintained with a female graduate who is promoted as one of the middle-class characters in the ranks of The Learned Women. It is noteworthy that the graduate embodies a dual identity. On the one hand, she is regarded as exceptional as she possesses an institutional, hence publicly recognised, title; on the other hand, she is an anonymous woman, "the girl graduate of a modern day" (Hamilton, 1910: 29), who has fought to obtain this privilege. The author, in this way, defines education and artistic endeavour as viable paths to the recognition of women's public status. Graduate and a more inclusive group, The Learned Women,

have the freedoms traditionally denied to women: “free thought”, “free act” and “free word” (Hamilton, 1910: 29). Accordingly, these are two categories of Hamilton’s modern femininity that develops the potential for self-expression, creativity and advancement.

The author’s presentation of queens as paragons of exceptional femininity is, though, a more problematic and complicated choice. The selected monarchs are Elizabeth I, Victoria, Zenobia, Philippa of Hainault, Deborah, Isabella of Spain, Maria Theresa, Catherina II of Russia and the Empress of China Tsze-Hsi-An. Besides Elizabeth and Victoria who are well-known and highly esteemed queens of England, all these featured female monarchs are from different countries. The universality and constancy of female achievement seem to be intended in these selections. However, more remarkably, the titles of these women put them in the role of exemplary femininities. Their titles signify the cultural acceptance and official recognition. Despite that, their status is problematic since it is acquired through inheritance or marriage (ironically enough) rather than hard work, so what the queens represent complicates the very purpose of the play. Whilst prominent women such as queens empower the play’s statement that women have achieved success and fame throughout the centuries and, hence, deserve the acknowledgement of their public rights, the way in which these women earn their ranks obfuscates the boundaries of female exceptionality and its implications for the ordinary woman.

The language used to describe these women denotes reconciliation between femininity and authority. Regarding Maria Theresa and Catherine the Great, Woman asks, “Who stood more high than they, who rules more kingly?”, whereas there was no one “in the Flowery land that dared to its cunning Empress to outface” (Hamilton, 1910: 38), referring to China’s Tsze-Hsi-An. However, Prejudice asserts that “’Tis man’s to reign, ’tis woman’s to obey. The steady outlook, the wide thought are man’s. So Nature has ordained – she cannot rule” (Hamilton, 1910: 37). The queens’ existence, accordingly, undermines Prejudice’s claim and validates the compatibility of femininity with authority. They represent authority, esteem and femininity. This bond is certainly strengthened by the selection of queens such as British monarch Elizabeth I, Palmyra’s Zenobia, “a courageous and accomplished woman; defeated by the Emperor Aurelian” (Hamilton, 1910: 63), and Catherine II, “Empress of Russia in her own right – the right of the strongest” (Hamilton, 1910: 63).

Elizabeth has a special status among the others. In the Daily Mirror’s records of the play’s first performance, Jannette Steer as Queen Elizabeth is shown standing in the centre of the stage accompanied by the other queens. She stands by the princess Victoria in an elevated and dignified stature and queenly costume, and has her hand on young Victoria’s shoulder. She bears the emblems of her royal position with her crown, ornate dress and jewellery. Elizabeth’s portrayal as the paradigm of queenly greatness produces two different subtexts. In the script, she is the one whom Prejudice “had not dared to speak to her face” (Hamilton, 1910: 37). She stands for an authoritative ruler and an alternative to male rule. She fulfils an important function of the queens, who are chosen to personify female dominance over a realm of masculine authority. Conversely, her stance conveys an alternative meaning, which is embedded in her femininity and maternal posture. In her life, Elizabeth I remained unmarried and was

England's virgin queen. According to Margaret Homans, "Elizabeth needed to remain unmarried in her 'body natural' in order to remain autonomous as Queen, and so used the spiritual marriage of her 'body politic' to her kingdom" (Homans, 1998: 4). Elizabeth's unmarried state thus resulted in a mythical public persona. Hamilton's portrayal of Elizabeth is conceivably derived from her symbolic state as a virgin goddess and the maternal ruler of a nation. Elizabeth on stage emanates pride and greatness as though a motherly figure to Victoria, and her textual character helps argue against the disassociations between a female ruler and a masculine role.

A particularly distinct approach is employed in the construction of Queen Victoria in the play. Woman describes her as a young girl who is on a par with Elizabeth:

And see, the little maid of eighteen years
Who, on a summer morning, woke to find
Herself a queen, to reign where Bess had reigned.
You shall not put her, nor shall you put Bess,
Below the wisest of our line of kings. (Hamilton, 1910: 37)

The metaphor "little maid" implies an inexperienced and young girl perplexed in the face of an unanticipated change in her social and public roles as the new ruler of a masculine domain. Victoria plays a significant and privileged role in representing her sex at the highest station of politics and, as the Queen's "long and successful reign proved that women had a peculiar fitness for governing" (Rappaport, 2003: 59). The image of Victoria as a respectable and admired woman is allusive, though. Hamilton accentuates the young heir's accomplishment to turn her into a prominent source of inspiration for other women. The princess' progression into queenhood "on a summer morning" is romanticised to indicate that Victoria has gained public approval and, hence, eminence all by herself. Consequently, she is equally worthy of a rank of her male equivalents, the kings. This inclusion of eminence in exceptionality reminds the reader of Thomas Carlyle's criteria of ideal types who came from the elite members of the society. There is also a fundamental paradox in Hamilton's image of self-made Victoria and the actual princess who obtains this privileged role by accident of birth rather than through her innate potential. The paradox starts with both Victoria's physical presentation on stage and the actual queen. The queens, apart from Victoria, in the play and on stage are presented lavishly adorned in their gowns and crowns with details such as gloves, sleeves, neck and wrist ruffs, diamonds and various other accoutrements. Highlighting their stations, they all stand upright in a proud manner, which implies the criticality of these women's public image and exhibits the associations of their sphere, such as prosperity, allure and influence. On the contrary, the young Victoria stands at the centre of the scene in a white nightgown, representing domesticity and ordinariness as opposed to her exceptional status. A contradiction arises in the author's portrayal of Victoria and the popular images of the Queen that became the basis for middle-class domesticity, which acts against the play's critical goal of presenting Victoria as solid evidence for female potential. Here, Hamilton expresses her criticism about the contradictions of Victoria's feminine role as a woman and her powerful image as a monarch by portraying her in domestic attire on the stage and also referring to her as someone who should not be esteemed less worthy than "the wisest of our line of kings" (Hamilton, 1910: 37). In real life, Victoria, as the queen, relentlessly

cultivated her image as the epitome of conservative middle-class women. Her portraits and popular images established her as an obedient wife and dutiful mother in her marriage with Prince Albert. (Homans, 1998: 15). In "To the Queen's Private Apartments: Royal Family Portraiture and the Construction of Victoria's Sovereign Obedience", Homans also shows that there were deliberately produced royal portraits by both the monarchy itself and the media to cement Victoria's obedient and homely roles. Some of these drawings and photographs exemplify "the typical Victorian marital portraits", in which "the husband stands while the wife sits, she leans ... against the back of his chair" (Homans, 1998: 15). These images signify Victoria's bodily weakness and deference as well as Albert's more authoritative role and bodily strength (Homans, 1998: 15).

Similarly suggestive, her family portraits function as a means of domestication of her public persona through the presence of her children. These portraits also give an insight into her unmistakable stance against the increasing self-sufficiency of politicised Victorian women. In one of her letters, she states that she was

the most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of 'Women's rights' ... Feminists ought to get a good whipping. Were woman to 'unsex' themselves by claiming equality with men, they would become the most hateful, heathen and disgusting of beings and would surely perish without male protection. (qtd. in Grayling, 2014: 194)

Victoria's labelling of the feminist struggle as "mad" or "wicked" shows her strong denunciation of any efforts to destabilise her self-built images of middle-class domesticity. Although she was in a privileged position unlike any woman of the era, "she was a great hindrance to the movement, for she constantly reiterated her own opposition to women's rights and her journals and letters resounded with such regularly made protestations of her sex's inferiority and intellectual inadequacy" (Rappaport, 2003: 426). Victoria's assertion that women would become "unsexed" if they were to challenge male protection signifies the queen's conservatism and accords with her determination to cultivate the image of the submissive wife. The power of spectacle created by Victoria – in Homans' words, the "royal spectacle" – on stage is significant, as she is, at the time of the play's writing, the most recent queen (Homans, 1998: 4). Victoria, among all her peers, had a deep impact on the Victorian and Edwardian subconscious through the circulation of her images in popular culture. Rappaport notes that "Victoria's mere presence on the throne was itself sufficient to encourage many of her female subjects to call for improved civil and political rights for women" (Rappaport, 2003: 426). Hamilton's selection of queens, in this sense, is clearly justifiable. Nevertheless, this choice, particularly in the case of Victoria, conflicts with her primary goal and results in a constant tension between the promotion of exceptionality and its implications on the ordinary masses.

The remaking of popular cultural figures as exemplary exceptional women continues in *The Heroines*, *The Warriors* and *The Saintly Women*. Margaret Marshment calls these fictional female characters, who have been constantly portrayed in contemporary popular culture, "substantial women" and she argues that these women have "positive qualities culturally defined across gender boundaries" and the positive masculine attributes, such as "intelligence, courage, strength, independence,

resourcefulness, perseverance, wit”, are possessed by these women “in abundance” (Marshment, 1988: 33).

Hamilton’s Joan of Arc, whose legend was also the source for George Bernard Shaw’s late play *Saint Joan* (1923), was an iconic example of such kind of woman, whose story was revived and reconstructed in turn-of-the-century popular British literature. In *The Pageant*, she embodies a masculine warrior posing in armour with a sword, which suggests her heroic and intimidating character. Karyn Z. Sproles describes that, in its historical context, “Joan’s dress, like her behaviour, challenged the male-dominated power structure of army, church, and state” and “Joan usurped male power when she dressed for battle” (Sproles, 1996: 158). She rejects the life of an ordinary village girl and breaks with the traditional female norm by inventing a dramatic character and constructing a new identity on qualities such as bravery and freedom.

Similarly, Hamilton herself appeared as Christian Davis, a female soldier, in the Scala production of her play in 1909. In a stark contrast to what the Queens embody on stage, the cross-dressed female fighters such as Joan of Arc or Christian Davis connote ambiguous messages about the function of masculine bodies among other women. The photo shows a self-assured and almost pompous image if her body language through her dark uniform, crossed arms and stern look is simply read. But, perhaps more than her looks, the connotations of gender ambiguity she conveys complicate her intent to portray a cohesive message on the attainability of female exceptionality. In her autobiography, Hamilton records that

A curious characteristic of the militant suffrage movement was the importance it attached to dress and appearance, and its insistence on the feminine note in the [WSPU] the coat-and-skirt effect was not favoured; all suggestion of the masculine was carefully avoided This taboo of the severer forms of garment was due, in part, to dislike of the legendary idea of the suffragette, as masculine in manner and appearance –many of the militants were extraordinarily touchy on that point. (Whitelaw, 1991: 74)

Accordingly, what was the reason for Hamilton to play a woman in a masculine role? The theatrically devised disguise and cross-dressing aim to pervert the traditional representation of women as fragile and needing protection. However, the image of a masculine female in disguise also counters the traditional duality of the gender performance. Hamilton’s conscious decision to play a man seems to be a feminist choice as well as a suffragist one. The theatricality of her role enables her to freely construct a masculine woman to indicate the fluidity of identity on stage. The fixed gender roles can easily be contested through the act of remaking by performance, and her act is clearly performative. Whilst she portrays an exceptional woman, her cross-dressing transforms her into an exceptional woman among all other characters as she actively resists the restrictions forced on her during the performance. Hamilton seems to be rejecting the taboo of women’s obligation to stay in the lines drawn out of her control by an ideology that does not recognise her as a legitimate member of public life. Thus, the theatricality of her role legitimises her presentation of alternative images of exceptional womanhood. She also reinstates the place of women in performance, who were barred from theatres until the end of the Renaissance when female roles

were exclusively played by men, and the genre of civic pageantry was not an exception to this exclusion.

3. CONCLUSION

Hamilton, in *A Pageant of Great Women* particularly, puts popular and highly respected actresses on show and devises a performance to promote exceptional women and their various achievements throughout history. As a presentational strategy, the play achieved huge success by staging well-known and exemplary femininities. Nevertheless, the author's selection of characters who are overt opponents of women's enfranchisement contradicts the original purpose of the play as an artistic piece of political propaganda. This contradiction is especially obvious in the characters such as Queen Victoria, who fiercely opposed contemporary feminism and promoted her image as the epitome of "respectable" middle-class femininity through her images and writings during her reign. Yet, the play's significance was its success in imitating the strategies from popular forms of tableaux vivants and historical pageants and presenting a large number of eminent women, such as actresses, writers and public speakers, to the public as supporters of women's demands. Hamilton clearly conveys her message that women's demands cannot be ignored thanks to the presence and contribution of the exceptional women.

The promotion and recognition of women's individual progress and self-sufficiency are critical in Hamilton's play. What Hamilton criticises are the restrictions imposed on ordinary women that limit their ability to stand up for themselves. Hamilton's representational strategies do not suggest a completely straightforward solution to this. In *A Pageant of Great Women*, an alternative solution is devised. On the one hand, the representation of famous women creates a number of oppositional and sometimes contradictory images of femininity, which interact with the already circulating images of these women. Also, the richness and plurality of characters meant a whole new idea of exceptional women guiding the ordinary women, which, though it seemed to be elitist, still worked to unify women around the performance. This is also in line with the Edwardian feminists' goal of attracting masses to their political movement to persuade the majority of women for their cause through theatrical performances and their representational possibilities.

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