FIGURING THE FEMALE SPECTATOR

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This dissertation uses the drama of Shakespeare and Webster to gain insight into the dialogue surrounding female spectatorship in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Female spectators as portrayed in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Hamlet*, and *The Duchess of Malfi* are silent and impassive in the face of the spectacles they witness, but for these three figures, silence does not mean marginalization, and impassivity does not mean passivity. Audiences would have witnessed the figures in this dissertation shaping the meanings of those silences to their own advantages.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Molly Katz graduated with a B.A. in Classics-English and History-Political Science in 2011. In 2013, she received an M.A. in English Literature from Cornell University.

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INTRODUCTION

The plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries can tell us more about spectatorship than we have so far allowed them to, especially with respect to the figure of the female spectator. From Queen Gertrude, watching conscience-catching "Murder of Gonzago" to the Princess of France and her retinue, invited to join in the comically flirtatious "Masque of Muscovites," to the Duchess of Malfi, enduring the dark and torturous "Masque of Madmen," the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are loaded with enormously varied scenes of female spectatorship. In fact, the three scenes I have just named, though vastly different, are scenes I have chosen out of many others for possessing a single commonality: in these scenes of spectatorship, the women are nearly silent during these spectacles.

Within early modern discourse, ideas surrounding female speech and silence were especially fraught and varied. This complex thinking regarding silence extends to the realm of spectatorship. The most famous fictional female spectators are voluble, garrulous women--Beaumont and Fletcher's Nell, in *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Jonson's Gossips *in Staple of News*, Heywood's guilty housewife in his (non-dramatic).*Apology for Actors*. But this is just half the story. The scenes of spectatorship I focus on in this dissertation show women responding impassively, and often silently. Through these silences, these female spectators re-position male power discourses in ways that favor them. These women are not simply silent--they also shape what speaking or remaining silent means.

The Women and the Plays

The three plays I have chosen are all very different, centering on different conflicts, and with vastly different contexts (within and without the plays).for these women's silence. *Love's Labour's Lost* is an early Shakespeare comedy, written some time in the mid-1590s. It focuses on a thwarted or—perhaps merely deferred—courtship dance that takes place between four women and four men. The Princess of France, though her visit is planned, disrupts the men's plans to live in reclusive, abstemious study and see no women. They have forgotten about her, at their peril. The men give up their oaths and begin to try to woo the women. They are rebuffed and, in the end, sent off to labor for a year to try to better themselves and win their loves in a more lasting way.

The Princess's first words are of correction. She speaks immediately against "the painted flourish" of a man's praise. From her first scene in the play, she is all about turning, twisting, revolving relations of power, with remarks like: "but now to task the tasker." Even in her flattery ("you are not ignorant").she shows her power to judge. This will be the Princess's character throughout the play. I will show how her silent spectatorship plays into this aspect of her character, allowing her to assert her will.

Hamlet, coming perhaps five years later, is a play of another kind entirely. The events of this revenge tragedy are set in motion as much by Gertrude as by Claudius. It is her marriage to Claudius, her way of *seeing* the late King's brother more even than Claudius's murder of Hamlet's father, that puts everyone in the play in the positions they are in, that sets the chessboard. This choice is one Hamlet struggles to understand. Gertrude, like the other two characters I focus on in this dissertation, is

simultaneously incredibly memorable and incredibly elusive. Hamlet makes sure that our image of Gertrude will involve her body. His language is vivid and visceral, painting her as heavy and insensate, yet also simultaneously lustful. Hamlet is the one to create this image, but throughout the play, Gertrude twists and turns it, using her reputation to further her own ends in this play where the act of spectatorship gets absolutely relentless attention.

Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* comes still later, circa 1612. It was performed first at Blackfriars, a private theater, and then at the Globe. It is as different from *Hamlet* as *Hamlet* is from *Love's Labour's Lost.* Though Hamlet is also a tragedy, and places Gertrude in the claustrophobic, "rotten" "prison" of Elsinor castle, and though Gertrude does at times have to fear male violence if her reactions do not please, *The Duchess of Malfi* takes these themes to such new heights as to give them an almost entirely different focus. The Duchess, though warm, sexy, and frank in her private sphere, is forced to try to retain both her impassivity and her sense of self as she endure a series of grotesque trials. Almost entire play can be viewed as the Duchess's attempts to negotiate being forced to observe a cavalcade of horrors, some of which are explicitly theatrical.

These characters disrupt male power discourses by shaping what the men's ambitions appear to be and to mean. Jane Hwang Degenhardt argues that Heywood's Bess in *The Fair Maid of the West* "purifies the pursuit of gold by merging its material accumulation with an economy of moral value" (152). I see similar renegotiations happening in these scenes of female spectatorship. Unlike Heywood's Bess, however, the female spectators in my dissertation do more than just shift the meaning of their

own actions. The Princess and her companions make the King and his companions appear to be frivolous corrupters, in need of correction. They paint and mold the men's courtship masque into one that it is virtuous to resist. Gertrude shifts the meaning of the Player Queen's long declaration to her husband, making speech appear suspect and silence more trustworthy, making the play appear to be, rather than Hamlet's intended "mirror up to nature," a foil to her own behavior. The Duchess, when subjected to a torturous masque of madmen, suggests that rather than a device to send her deeper into despair, it is the sort of curative drama that drives out potential madness with madness.

Treating Theater as Theater

My approach to these plays is often textual, close reading the words on the page. And yet I do not lose sight of the element of performance.[1] The specific

[1] My project builds on a long tradition of scholarship on audience/spectatorship, which has for decades worked to tease out the reciprocal ways in which plays shape and influence the audience, and the ways that the audience shapes and influences the theater. As Nova Myhill and Jennifer Low have noted, scholars in the New Historicist tradition have focused more on what plays do for or to an audience, rather than the reverse. Alan Dessen and Jeremy Lopez exemplify this trend. Lopez, for instance, considers what the early modern stage's flirtations with failure (from risky jokes to easily misinterpretable representations) did to audiences, how these strategies recruited and seduced playgoers, who "enjoyed maintaining an ironic distance from the action or words on stage, and also losing that distance, and then being made aware of moments when they had lost it" (34). Lopez asserts that "above all they enjoyed-and playwrights enjoyed them-responding, visibly, audibly, and physically" (34). My focus on silent, impassive spectators in the plays of Shakespeare and Webster challenges this narrative from both sides, complicating both the idea that the playtexts always imply a pleasure in visible, audible, physical response, and that this was always how audiences wanted to react. There has been significant focus, both presently and in past decades, on what was encouraged and cultivated in audiences, what kind of behaviors they were "allowed" to exhibit. A recent example of this trend would be Paul Menzer's "Crowd Control." Paul Yachnin, in *Stage-wrights* (1997), influentially and controversially argues that the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries deliberately advanced the idea that it was up to the *audience* to decide what a play meant, rather than taking political responsibility. There has also been much work on "audience competencies"—there the work of Keir Elam and William West has been particularly influential.
A growing trend has been to examine what audiences do for the theater—to look at affect as something they generate and contribute to the theater, making it "work", participating disruptively or "correctly" and the consequences of such things, how narratives of their responses can be used to vilify or valorize the theater. Fewer studies within this trend have focused on how audience members might have *used*

conditions of the theater matter to the questions I am interested in. For one thing, they are important in understanding what the scenes I focus on do *not* do. None of the episodes I'm looking at show directly what it meant to be a woman in the audience of a public or private theater in Elizabethan/Jacobean England. The types of theater that these women watch, the plays within the plays, are not the plays occurring in the Globe, The Fortune, or Blackfriars. This is quite obvious. The "Masque of Muscovites" and the "Masque of Madmen" are two very different types of masque, reflecting the evolution of this term and this form in the twenty to twenty-five years between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Clearly, neither strongly resembles the kind of play that could be put on at the Globe, or even a private theater like Blackfriars. They also, however, do not represent a courtly masque from either the 1590s (*Love's Labour's Lost*).or the 1610s (*Malfi*). It matters that they are performed for a different audience, with a radically different purpose. A masque in front of the court is completely different than a courtly masque set on the public stage. I believe these plays-within-plays *do* address questions that applied to and grew out of the conditions of public theaters like the Globe.

For instance, the plays of the public theater made powerful attempts to engage female audiences, as Stephen Orgel has famously argued in *Impersonations*. The focus I observe in *Love's Labour's Lost, Hamlet,* and *The Duchess of Malfi* on the way plays-within-plays act on the female body is in conversation with this social reality. More specific details, too, pertain. The women of *Love's Labour's Lost* wear masks while participating in the Masque of Muscovites. Women also wore masks to theaters

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their role as a spectator to their own ends, and none focus on the kind of silent, impassive spectatorship I examine

like the Globe. Although not a representation of the exact act of wearing a mask to the Globe, a resonance certainly remains. And although Prince Hamlet's "Murder of Gonzago" is quite different from anything one might see at the Globe, Shakespeare seems to take as his source for this scene Heywood's account of a woman at the public theater who cried out with guilt upon seeing a murder that reminded her of her own crime against her husband. There is also the fact that women were hyper visible, an intense object of interest and in some ways the exemplary spectator, in the public theaters. In *The Schoole of Abuse*, Gosson provides insight into the way in which the bodies of early modern women drew the attention of playgoers:

> In our assemblies at playes in London, you shall see suche heauing, and shoouing, suche ytching and shouldring, too sitte by women; Suche care for their garments, that they bee not trode on: Such eyes to their lappes, that no chippes light in them: Such pillowes to ther backes, that they take no hurte: Such masking in their eares, I knowe not what: Such giuing the Pippins to passe the time: Suche playing at foot Saunt without Cardes: Such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home, when the sportes are ended, that it is a right Comedie, to marke their behauiour, to watche their conceites, as the Catte for the Mouse, and as good as a course at the game it selfe, to dogge them a little, or followe aloofe by the print of their feete, and so discouer by slotte where the Deare taketh soyle…. (1579)

Gosson is obsessed with the physicality of these women—with their laps, and with their backs, which require pillows. Even Gosson's identification of this spectacle as a "comedie," emphasizes their physicality. The word "comedie" heavily evoked the

body, in the period. Erika Lin notes that, “although modern readers may associate “Comedies” with certain kinds of dramatic narratives, early modern spectators knew this genre as one that offered physical entertainments. Comedies were showpieces for clowns, performers famous for their displays of bodily feats” (111). Gosson’s description, then, from the details he uses to the terms he chooses, highlights the bodies of the women rather than their reactions (which are also bodily, but in quite a different way). Gosson suggest that women are not only spectators, they are also spectacle, not only looking but being looked at – even when they are NOT overreacting to the play, as they do not seem to be in this passage.

I believe we can and should use these plays within plays to reflect back on Shakespeare’s theater. I see the scenes of spectatorship in this dissertation as part of a conversation about female spectatorship that shaped and was shaped by women’s presence in commercial theaters as audience members.

The boy actor’s body, of course, also complicates what is happening. I acknowledge that when I refer to “the figure of the female spectator” in these scenes, I am talking about scenes that men acted. There were no women on the stage, and this matters. When we are considering the ways in which these plays show what feats women might be capable of as spectators, we must remember that there is the possibility that women were not allowed to portray these characters because their bodies were not thought to be capable of such things. As Anthony Dawson eloquently states, there were specific ideas regarding the capabilities attributed to and the demands placed on the male actor’s body: “The actor must feel, but he must also practice his art, ply on his body as on a pipe.” Thomas Wright, in Passions of the

Minde (1604), writes that the orator ought to, "looke upon other men appasionat," but then "leave the excesse and exorbitant levitie or other defects, and keepe the manner corrected with prudent mediocritie." As Dawson notes, Wright here is actually praising orators while denigrating actors, but the fact remains that the capabilities that Wright identifies of the body are wholly masculine. Although there is no early modern text that explicitly, definitively states that women were not allowed on stage because they were not believed to be capable of regulating their bodies in this manner, it is certainly a possibility.

But Dawson also allows us to see how complex the signifiers could become, for early modern audiences. Dawson cites an early commentary on *Othello* to prove his point:

> From Oxford in 1610 comes another early, an equally germane, instance of Shakespearean dramatic criticism: 'Desdemona, killed in front of us by her husband, although she acted her part excellently throughout, in her death moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, with her face alone she implored the pity of the audience.'…the writer, Henry Jackson, is clearly responding to the person of Desdemona—it is she who moves the audience—ignoring, for example, the actual sex of the actor; while at the same time praising him for the physical details of his impersonation (such as facial expression).and their power to generate passion. Note too that the actor's vitality is invoked even though the represented character is dead. This kind of response may help to qualify the sort of reading to be found in a lot of materialist criticism, where, for example, Desdemona and her 'desire' are

> frequently objectified and her agency ignored or denied. Jackson, by contrast, sees Desdemona as an advocate, not a mere exemplum—he conceives of the actor's work in rhetorical terms. Moreover, the fact that he sympathizes with the female Desdemona as she lies dead and also admires the boy actor's skill suggests that for him the character/actor 'Desdemona' is not a mere object or site of cultural differentiation. On the contrary, Desdemona's person, because it is also the boy actor's, will always remain a performing body.

Her body *being* the body of an actor allows it to behave as it does, and the commentary does refer to it in ways that make clear that it is a performing body--but the gender of this character, for this writer, is female. Following the language of this 1619 account, at times I will refer to the Princess, Gertrude and the Duchess as though they are real. I argue for this on two grounds: one, that this is in keeping with how audiences of the period talked about these characters, and two, that we have had years and years of talking about Hamlet, Lear, and Othello as though they are real men. Feminist criticism has begun to draw significant attention to characters like Gertrude at nearly the same time that we have become increasingly strict about refusing to refer to characters as though they are real, insisting on thinking of them as textual and performance artefacts. I think that is a shame. It prevents the incredible actions of these characters from entering into our imaginations in the way they could and should. And since part of my project is to put the focus on the ways female spectators in these plays are portrayed in ways that give them incredible influence (and to explore the ways in which this might have impressed audiences, male and female, at the time).I

want to allow us to feel the power of those actions by narrating them as though women were actually doing them.

I believe people experience these stories in this way, even as other awarenesses are layered on top of and complexly intertwined with that experience, and I want to access that. That said, though I agree with Stephen Orgel's argument that the plays of the early modern period are "cultural fantasies" (11),.rather than male fantasies, I believe it is necessary to look at these plays in a granular way. There are scenes, moments, actions, that would strike men and women differently—not every scene is a shared fantasy. Each part of a play will play differently, and the total experience is this messy weaving together of all the parts. They are written by men, acted by men—and for male audiences as much as they are for female audiences. And yet they are in conversation in incredibly complex ways with the lived experience of real women—they shape what it means to be a living, breathing female spectator in real ways. I want to allow this tension to live and breathe in my analysis.

In "The 'Play-Boy,' the Female Performer, and the Art of Portraying a Lady," Roberta Barker asks:

> How might the boy players of the early modern English public stage and the aristocratic female performers of the early modern English court masques have considered, and perhaps even affected, one another's arts? The boys could conceivably have looked critically upon the ladies' performances; after all, George Sandys famously responded to a visit to the Sicilian theater in 1610 by remarking that there "the parts of women are acted by women, and too naturally passionated" (245–46). Sandys's words have often been taken as

> reflecting a belief among certain sectors of the early modern population that women should not act women's parts because they lacked the mastery necessary to portray the passions onstage in an aesthetically pleasing—as opposed to an unpleasantly "natural"—manner… However, we know that the performances of noble women in Stuart court revels were carefully calculated to achieve specific artistic, social, and political goals. Neither an aristocratic lady dancing in a masque nor a boy performing the role of such a lady on the public stage could have afforded to lose sight of the codes of elegant feminine behavior. Is it possible, then, that women's and boys' performances of elite femininity employed similar theatrical tactics in order to avoid any sense of a déclassé femininity "too naturally passionated"?" (1)

Barker here raises a crucial point: we should not be too quick to assume that the impassivity that female spectators like the Duchess cultivate was out of bounds for real women, and we should be open to the real possibility (though it is one I do not have much solid evidence for).that women and the boy actors who played them influenced *each other.*

I also, however, believe that women's *exclusion* from the stage is deeply important to what they signify as spectators. I cannot overstate the extent to which Dympna Callaghan's work has informed my thinking. Callaghan's writing against "the fetishistic insistence on presence in Shakespeare" (9).first got me thinking about the ways in which it might matter that women were, specifically, *only* in audience at this time. *In Shakespeare Without Women*, Callaghan makes the claim that, "in a theatre where (some).men act and women (over)react, women become both hypervisible and

exemplary spectators—THE audience—as men do not by virtue of being represented onstage as well as in the auditorium. This produces a heavily gender-coded dichotomy between performance and perception" (144).With this argument, Callaghan makes a crucial intervention in the conversation about what it meant for women to be absent from the Elizabethan/Jacobean public stage. Where most scholarship on the all -male stage assesses how audiences responded to this convention, Callaghan instead explores how an all-male stage influenced the way early modern playgoers and playmakers understood and figured the audience. With this shift in focus, Callaghan has opened up a rich seam of inquiry, one I pursue further.

Callaghan also implies that such a dichotomy, initially created by excluding women from the stage, is reinforced and reiterated through fictional and fictionalized narratives of individual women spectators. In Callaghan's account, men like Thomas Heywood tell stories of individual women in particular in order to ratify the power of the early modern theater to move its audience. When Callaghan refers to women as "exemplary spectators," she means that the reactions attributed to these women illustrate both the ideal behavior of the spectator and the ideal work of the theater. For instance, Callaghan notes that Thomas Fuller, in *The History of the Worthies of England* describes William Alabaster as:

> A most rare Poet as any our Age or Nation hath produced: witnesse his tragedy of Roxana admirably acted in that Colledge, and so pathetically; that a Gentlewoman present thereat (Reader I had it from an Author whose credit it is a sin with me to suspect), at the hearing of the last words thereof, sequar,

> sequar, so hideously pronounced, fell distracted and never after fully recovered her senses (Fuller 1662: I. ii 3v).

According to Callaghan, this passage allows Fuller to detail what he thinks a fine piece of drama should do (i.e., be acted pathetically and hideously pronounced).and what its effect on an audience ought to be (i.e., provoke an extreme reaction, that is both bodily and verbal). As I have noted, dramatic portraits of women spectators, however, do not always confirm or conform to the narrative that Callaghan has identified, which casts women not only as perceivers but as hyper-reactive perceivers.

Cultural Scripts Surrounding Silent Women

Gina Bloom asks a pointed question: "to what extent can we assume that receptive, engaged playgoers were, for early moderns, the sole theatrical ideal?" (154).My dissertation builds on Bloom's insight with a detailed study of alternatives to this hyper-reactive model.

One of my aims is to consider what silence and impassivity mean for The Princess, Gertrude, and the Duchess, and in doing so to continue to push back against "silence" as a synonym for weakness. Phyllis Rackin precipitated a shift in feminist scholarship of the early modern period in arguing forcefully that narratives of men requiring women to be "chaste, silent and obedient" come more from modern scholarship than from the period itself: "I and perhaps others have been seduced by the mere effort of research into thinking these prescriptions were culturally operative in a way that they cannot have been in many women's daily lives…It may be that we have been writing the history that our culture seems to have required of us" (5).My work shows male playwrights not only putting forward a narrative that complicates this

meaning of silence as inevitably paired with obedience, but also showing these women pushing back, as Rackin herself does, against a certain reception of their silences and impassive responses.

Christina Luckyj has produced the definitive work to date on early modern silence. She begins her project with a quote from Richard Brathwait's English Gentlewoman (1631): "Silence in a Woman is a moving Rhetoricke, winning most, when in words it wooeth least'(90)" (1).She suggests that this phrase encapsulates her view of gendered silence in the period, not because it suggests an oppressive standard for women but because, " ...if Brathwait's prescriptive formula for women is meant to hold them in the place, it rapidly becomes a 'moving; rhetoric, though not precisely in the sense that he intended. Even as Brathwait attempts to stabilise woman with the trope of silence, the complex, polyphonous history of silence (on which he draws).works to destabilize her" (1).Although many early modern writers believed that speech was best for men, and silence for women, the complexity of the discourse made this simplistic view difficult to maintain. Male silence had its own complex tradition, from subversive, rebellious silence, to stoic silence, to controlled, rhetorical silence. Silence could be a medical condition. It could also be ungodly, demonic, or bestial. It was often difficult to defend male silence without drawing in discourse surrounding the virtues of female silence. It was a slippery, confounding subject. Even determining when someone was being silent was itself unclear. As Luckyj notes, "Plutarch uses silence as a figure for plain and direct speech itself" (23).Since silence extends to include calmness and stillness, it is possible to convey the impression of silence while still engaging in some speech. In this dissertation, when I refer to silent

female spectators, I am not referring to women who never speak at all, but rather women whose dominant mode seems to be impassivity.

As Reina Green notes, the ideal feminine silence was not a complete absence of speech. Rather, a woman should speak only enough to convey that she had heard her husband, understood, and would obey. Total silence had the potential to leave men guessing. One of the contributions of this dissertation, however, is to show that total silence has its own dangers for women, and minimal speech has the capacity to serve women's own ends and to be disruptive in its own right, as well. What any silence, whether total or partial, means is incredibly contingent and specific.

I am not just considering speech, but also bodily reactions, and the absence thereof. Alison Hobgood's excellent work in *Passionate Playgoing* outlines the affective work done involuntarily in service of the theater. Hobgood contends that plays relied on and cultivated contagious affective responses, such as fear, in order to generate their effects. In this way audiences helped make the plays, contributing their affects collectively. Such a process broke down boundaries between people, as affects passed between them, breaching the borders of their bodies. All three plays I examine deal with cultural questions regarding what Michael Schoenfeldt terms "the unbearable permeability of bodies and minds" (107): just how porous, how vulnerable are our bodies? Must we always feel when we are asked to feel? How inevitable is emotional contagion, must we always "catch feelings" (to use a modern phrase)? Each of the episodes I focus on suggests that inevitable, "unbearable" permeability was not the only narrative on the Elizabethan/Jacobean stage. *In Love's Labour's Lost*, the Princess and her retinue keep their reactions private, hidden behind masks. In *Hamlet*,

what could have been rendered as "contagious guilt" does not pass to Gertrude during the play within a play. In the *Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess's response to this wrenching horror show of madmen remains inscrutable—her own private secret. In arguing for the women's ability to turn these scenes of spectatorship to their advantage, it is also important to note that the "contagion" of affect does conscript them into projects they do not wish to participate in, it does not erode their individuality. I therefore see the characters in my dissertation challenging the narrative of inevitable affective contagion that Hobgood puts forward. However, in all of the cases where characters challenge this narrative, the narrative *is* present for them to push against. Gertrude's non-responsiveness in the play-within-a-play scene is so dramatic precisely *because* such a narrative exists. My project also builds on her work in another way, taking up one of the "alternate directions" Hobgood outlines in her introduction: "given the manifold nuances of the early modern humoral body, various chapters could have addressed how playgoers' specifically gendered or racialized bodies and individual somatic dispositions influenced emotional encounters" (17).This is, indeed, an approach I take.

The field of affect theory has made me aware that some feelings are more fully processed, more definite, than others. From my readings of Eric Shouse, Mellissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, I understand affect to be what comes before emotion, a change in our bodies and minds that we have not yet interpreted and made into an emotion. Out of sensitivity to this distinction between affect and emotion, I have differentiated between "reaction" and "response" when talking about spectatorship. These two terms map roughly onto affect and emotion, respectively. Response, I use

when the women in question are able to delay and mediate their verbal or bodily work, keeping us at a remove from the most immediate results of whatever action has occurred. Reaction, on the other hand, is immediate.

The story of Patient Griselda is a crucial piece of contextual evidence in unpacking the ways in which female impassivity both fascinated and distressed early modern writers. The story first appeared in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, then in the *Canterbury Tales*, and from then on again and again in countless other sources from the middle ages through the early modern period. In 1599, Dekker wrote the play *Patient Grissil*. Jonson's *Epicene* also seems to draw on this tale, as Morose's desire to choose an obedient wife, and to test her, leads him to make an example of himself. Patient Griselda is a story of a peasant woman who marries a nobleman. He is concerned that, due to her low birth, she will prove to be a disobedient wife, despite her apparent virtue. He therefore imposes a series of cruel tests, reminiscent of those Job faced. He tells her that her daughter has died. He banishes her. He tells her he is going to annul their vows and marry a younger, better born woman (the woman proves to be her daughter, and this is a ruse). She bears all the trials, never protesting.

The story of Patient Griselda was clearly fascinating and irresistible for medieval and early modern audiences, and yet equally clearly the sadism of the tale was something that the writers who told and retold the story could not quite justify, morally. Felicity Dunworth notes, "In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer's Clerk chooses to re-tell the tale as a parable and distances himself from a too literal appreciation of the narrative by emphasizing the general moral point which he insists lies at the heart of his version" (332):

> This story is seyd, nat for that wyves shoulde
> Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
> For it were inportable though they woulde;
> But that for every wight, in his degree,
> Sholde be constant in adversitee
> As was Grisilde (7)

The story of patient Griselda exemplifies the fascination with female stoicism and silence in the face of men's attempts to draw incriminating reactions from them. What is interesting is that, as Dunworth notes, in an attempt to reckon with this fascination, writers shift the focus onto "all people," attempting to disguise, with slight embarrassment, the source of the fascination. As I have already noted, masculine and feminine tropes of silence often bleed into each other. Griselda provides one fascinating insight one reason this slide might occur. It can be a shield, in addition to an accident of proximity.

Given that silence is an inevitable counterpoint to sound, occurring constantly under an incredibly range of circumstances, and given that in any given interaction, the parties involved generally observe each other, it could seem that my project on silent female spectatorship has no bounds, that even if we were to limit the focus to staged drama, it would encompass just about every Elizabethan and Jacobean play that is still extant. "Spectatorship" could be just another lens of looking at nearly all female silences. I have, however, restricted myself to plays in which there is a staged spectacle, a play-within-a-play of some kind. That does not mean, however, that I am looking only at women's spectatorship as it pertains to a staged performance. I am

concerned with how these meta-theatrical episodes shape the way these women exist within the broader social milieus they inhabit. Therefore, although I look at Gertrude's response to "The Murder of Gonzago," I also look at the way her behavior there continues to reverberate through the play as she encounters Hamlet in her closet. This scene is a sort of "closet drama" in its own right, but I would not read it as such if there was not a play within a play to call our attention specifically to Gertrude as a spectator. Not coincidentally, the decisions these women make as spectators drive and shape the action throughout.

To clarify what I mean, I will elaborate on a few texts that I have chosen not to focus on, and why. *King Lear*: Cordelia's silence is a driving engine of the story of Lear, but that silence is not intimately tied to watching, to responding, to reacting. One does not get the sense that the important challenge for Cordelia is determining how she will react to Lear's performance in the first scene, but rather lies in addressing how she will respond to his request. *Othello*: Desdemona's sympathetic hearing of Othello serves as the starting point of their story, but this quickly ceases to be the engine of the plot. Furthermore, she is not engaged, throughout the play, in managing what her hearing of Othello seems to mean. The characters I have chosen to focus on are all shown constantly engaging in that work.

In a dissertation focused on silent women on stage, why is Ben Jonson's *Epicene* not front and center? Answering this question will, I hope, further reveal my methods and my focus. Subtitled "The Silent Woman," *Epicene* tells the story of a man named Morose who, on a much more literal level than most boors, cannot abide any noise but his own voice. He marries a woman hoping she will be nearly totally

silent. Immediately after their marriage she begins to talk incessantly. In the end, his nephew reveals, for a price, that Morose can annul his marriage because he has married a boy who has been pretending to be a woman (at the nephew's request). Given the fact that it foregrounds male impersonation, *Epicene* might seem to be an ideal vehicle to explore how the male actor's body complicates the ways in which these plays assert capabilities for silent female spectators. But although characters speak at length about women's silence, the play itself does not even purport to show a woman's silence for more than one scene. "She" turns to raucous speech almost immediately. Further, Epicene's loud non-compliance with her husband does not challenge any cultural scripts. As the boy behaves precisely as a woman is expected to, all of the ideas around women seem stable, unchallenged. She is not expected to be able to keep silent, and she does not keep silent. The disruptive potential in Epicene lies in the fact that the commonplaces about women's silence are all spoken by jackasses, and in the end the reason for her conforming to the stereotype is not that she is a "classic woman," but that she is not a woman at all. While subversive in this respect, the play does not show anything about how silence might be *used* by a woman, and it is not a play concerned with female spectatorship in the ways the plays in this dissertation are. *Epicene* does not call us to ask: could a woman do such a thing? Could she use her body, her space, her position as a spectacle to create these effects? The three plays in this dissertation do ask this question.

Video Et Taceo

Why join McGavin and Walker in using spectator, rather than Myhill and Low in using audience? I have chosen this term for several reasons. For one, audience

implies a crowd, where I am generally looking at individuals. That is straightforward enough. But I have another reason, as well. In using the term “spectator,” I link these women to Queen Elizabeth, whose motto was Video et Taceo, or “I see yet say nothing.” As this anecdote, presented by Mary Thomas Crane in her 1988 essay on the subject shows, Elizabeth herself had a great deal to negotiate as an impassive female spectator:

> When Elizabeth passed through the streets of London on the way to her coronation, her subjects did not hesitate to give her an abundance of advice. At various points along her path, the citizens of London had placed "pageaunts," each concerned with a particular aspect of good government, offering sententious advice in the form of poems recited by children and in sayings inscribed on the structure itself. An unidentified witness tells us how in each pageant, in addition to the spoken advice, "there were placed in every voide rome of the Pageant, both in Englishe and Latin, such sentences as advaunced the seate of governaunce upholden by Vertue." Elizabeth seems to have accepted this torrent of sententious counsel quite graciously. Our witness tells how ‘ere the Quenes Majestie came wythin hearing of thys Pageaunt, she sent certaine, as also at all the other Pageauntes, to require the People to be silent. For her Majestie was disposed to heare all that shoulde be sayde unto her" (Nichols, 1:44). She is repeatedly described as listening attentively, asking for further explanation, and replying with thanks and promises to heed the proffered advice. She knew that as a young woman, undertaking to rule England when the right of women to succeed to the throne was questioned and

> criticized on all sides, she should expect to be told what to do.' Clearly, at the beginning of her reign even her lowliest subjects believed that she needed advice and that they had the right, even the duty, to offer it (5).

In all of the work that has been done to look at early modern political pageantry and its relationship to theater, very little has considered the ways in which such pageantry cast Queen Elizabeth as a spectator. As this anecdote shows, her work negotiating her role as spectator was always work to assert her power, as well. Elizabeth does not say *nothing*, but she does offer little--only enough to satisfy decorum, not enough, truly, to ratify the spectacle. It is telling that it is through this very account that Crane derives the idea that this counsel was "sententious." This is a far cry from the apocryphal story that Elizabeth loved Falstaff so much that she commissioned *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Elizabeth here seems to be reserving judgment, taking the information in, but not giving out what she truly believes.

This motto has not received enough scholarly attention, and it has particularly been neglected as a means to understanding the way in which silence could be wielded as an instrument of state power. While groundbreaking, Crane to my mind does not give sufficient attention to the ominous, threatening dimension of "I say nothing" as a phrase. For Crane, "The first half of her motto, 'Video,' implies silent judgment, the informed consideration of a person who must, and can, advise herself..'Taceo,' however, implies that as queen, she will maintain the silence thought suitable for a woman in an age when women were relentlessly advised to remain 'chaste, silent, and obedient.' As a whole, the motto displays the delicate balancing act between assertion and abnegation of authority upon which Elizabeth relied" (4).I see this very

differently--"I say nothing" seems to me to imply a merciful, yet threatening restraint, while "I see" suggests to me a panoptic gaze, rather than merely a considering one. The motto seems to me to imply, "I see all," but choose to keep to myself the import of that sight.

The Scrutiny of Female Response in Domestic Settings

Dorothy Osborne married sir William Temple in 1656, after a long, secretive courtship. Her family disapproved of the match, as did Temple's as both families were looking for a more financially profitable match. Osborne, like the Duchess, experienced trials and tribulations as a result of a brother who was deeply unhappy with her romantic choices. The way in which Osborne describes this interaction immediately calls to mind the Duchess's response to the masque in the Duchess of Malfi:

> My B[rother] fetch[ed] up all that lay upon his stommack, all the People that I have Ever in my life refused were broght againe upon the Stage, like Richard the 3ds Ghosts to reproach mee withal, and all the kindenesse his discovery's could make I had for you was Layed to my Charge, my best quality's (if I had any that are good).served but for agravations of my fault, and I was allowed to have witt and understanding and discretion in other things, that it might appear I had none in this. Well, 'twas a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with it after a while. In short, we came so near an absolute falling out, that 'twas time to give over, and we said so much then that we have hardly spoken a word together since. But 'tis wonderful to see what curtseys and legs pass between us; and as

> before we were thought the kindest brother and sister, we are certainly now the most complimental couple in England.

Osborne's brother casts Osborne in the role of female spectator in order to scrutinize and bully her. While Osborne locates as a scene like that in Richard III, I see it as very like the Masque of Madmen. She is being subjected to a spectacle as a form of abuse. This parallel shows extent to which the scrutiny of women in the capacity of female spectator extended to the domestic sphere of real women of the period, and casts interactions like Gertrude and Hamlet's in her closet, which seem to reverberate with theatrical energy, in a new light.

Charles Whitney reads Dorothy Osborne's letters as evidence that she was careful to emphasize "plainness" in an attempt to "separate [her] uses of theatrical material to advance [her] interests from an association with the dangers of self-staging" (204). Osborne's writing shows that she is not simply concerned with avoiding self-staging, but is aware of being cast in the role of female spectator *as a means* of making a spectacle of her. This occurs not in the theater, but in her own domestic space.

The Chapters

Chapter One focuses on the Princess of France and her retinue, in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. Although what initially drew me to this play was the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, the Princess's spectatorship in that scene is a minor point in the chapter. My main focus is on the Masque of Muscovites. The men intend this Masque to be an interactive dance, but the women refuse to participate. Not only that, but they don masks in order to impersonate one another and conceal any reactions

they might have to the men's spectacle. Since women also frequently wore masks to the theater during Shakespeare and Webster's time, I consider in depth what the mask means for impassive female spectatorship.

Chapter Two begins by reconsidering the language of one of Hamlet's misogynistic tirades against Gertrude. He suggests that her senses seem "apoplex'd." I argue that this idea recognizes the way in which Gertrude is able to resist attempts at surveillance and to instead be the one in control of the flow of information in Denmark.

Chapter Three focuses on the Duchess's efforts to remain both "still" and "alive." The Duchess's struggles to manage the reception of her responses are the most freighted with threat and fright. I contend that these efforts form the center of the play. That part of what the Duchess of Malfi accomplishes is to position "apprehension," a kind of active spectatorship, as the central work of the play, and to chart in exhaustive detail the complex work of the Duchess to manage both her responses and the reception of those responses. The stakes of a positive reception of her reactions are high--she faces male violence, not just in general, but as a consequence specifically of revealing her reactions.

CHAPTER 1

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST: THE FAIREST DAMES THAT EVER TURN'D THEIR BACKS TO MORTAL VIEWS!

Love's Labour's Lost has very little plot. What plot there is revolves around a group of royal men (the King of Navarre, Berowne, Dumain and Longaville).who take a series of comically rigorous oaths, which include a binding promise to see no women (hastily cast aside), and a group of royal women (The Princess of France, Rosaline, Maria, and Katharine).who have come to conduct a delicate bit of political business with the King. This aspect of the women's work has been a focus of scholarly attention. Kristian Smidt[1] has teased out the exact nature of the political negotiation they carefully finesse. These women, however, also do work--for the men, for themselves, and for a culture caught up in trying to understand itself--as spectators of the men's revels.

Being a female spectator in *Love's Labour's Lost* means being seen by the men--it is not a matter of privately observing, subjecting the men to *their* gaze. The men watch their female audience intently, and with a purpose. They are looking to how the women receive their performances in order to see how their courtship is faring. As it turns out, the belief on the part of the men that the success or failure of their spectacle will indicate the success or failure of their courtship is mostly correct;

[1] See Hardison Londre's "FAQ" (p. 6) in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*.

the women do reject the men's suits in part because their entertainments have appeared to light, too frivolous, and too unworthy (although they also heavily imply that it is because the men broke their oaths to remain celibate and studious, and therefore cannot be trusted). The women's response becomes the measure of the men's failure.

The women's responses also, however, reflect on the women themselves. Their behavior in such situations affects their position in the social world of the play, and in the eyes of audiences. Unsurprisingly, then, the women of *Love's Labour's Lost* actively work to mitigate negative consequences of their actions as spectators and turn their choices to their advantage. When I talk about the work of the women as female spectators being done "for themselves" I do not mean that it is done "for them" as if these individuals existed outside of their social world, free of all of its demands and pressures. Much of what these women do is avoid negative responses from others. But the women of *Love's Labour's Lost* are also able to do more than simply avoid negative consequences--they are able to shape the action of the play to their own ends.

The play makes clear what potential pitfalls the women risk with their choice of response, and how they manage them. The women face appearing unchaste and cruel if they fail to control the narrative surrounding their responses as spectators. Controlling this narrative means choosing carefully how they will respond, and also carefully managing how that response is received. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the women are able to *make* their responses function as a commentary on the men's behavior, rather than a reflection on their own virtue. This aspect of how their response functions is not a given at all. The women are managing not only their

responses, but also the *reception* of their responses in order to make their silence work for them. Ultimately, the women's silence--the mode of engagement they choose--allows them to act as a group in order to thwart the men--making them indistinguishable from each other at a key moment. It also allows them to extend that group where it serves their purposes. Developing a distinct mode of engagement, a distinct pattern of silence and refusal, allows them to "outsource" the interactions they have with the men to others, namely the "speechless sick" in the hospital. This action, too, helps them manage the reception of their responses.

The most important event in the play for my reading might seem to be merely a detail: the moment in which the women don masks in order to impersonate each other during the Masque of Muscovites. Yet this choice reveals a key tool of early modern female spectatorship[2]. The mask provides a space to shelter behind, which in turn allows for the female spectator's body to remain vulnerable without that vulnerability compromising the purposes of the women. They are able to carefully control the degree of flirtation they allow. Wearing masks, the women find a way to remain cool without appearing cruelly cold. They allow their judgement of the men to remain suspended, deferred. This is their aim, and it is the mask that allows them to achieve it.

What these masks signify in *Love's Labour's Lost* is not at all a given. The women must carefully negotiate and shape the meaning of the masks, in order to allow

[2] In using the term "spectator" to describe the women's role in the play, I do not want to imply that the women are not also participants in these revels. The Mask of Muscovites is highly interactive, to the point where defining it as a spectacle put before female spectators becomes a point worthy of discussion. Still, the men come before the women with a prologue and in costume, and the women refuse to dance. These things together put a strong emphasis on the spectator role for the women.

them to function in these ways. Putting the mask into historical context reveals this plainly.

Women frequently wore masks to the theater for the duration of the 17th century. This information puts this mask wearing scene in *Love's Labour's Lost* in close conversation with the material reality of the early modern theater scene. This chapter uses a discussion of historical use of masks in the theater as a lens through which to read the behavior of the women in *Love's Labour's Lost*, but it also uses *Love's Labour's Lost* to push back against current narratives about why women wore masks in the early modern period, and what this accomplished. *Love's Labour's Lost* reveals a rich vein to be explored with regard to masks as a tool for female spectatorship. Influential early modern scholarship has considered developments of audience competencies in detail[3], looking, for example, at cultivated traditions of staged confusion regarding real and "acted" death. Studies of early modern audience work have not given much attention to material tools of spectatorship, particularly gender specific ones, and, most particularly of all, the mask. The fact that scholarship has neglected this angle can be related back to the neglect of attention to female spectatorship in general, and more specifically the neglect of the silent and impassive, or would-be silent and impassive female spectator.

In general, the common occurrence of women wearing masks to the theater and the public park has been severely neglected as a cultural phenomenon, and virtually no work has been done to look at how the plays of the late 16th and early 17th century

[3] Keir Elam's *The Semiotics of Theater and Drama* is the seminal work on this subject. See also William West's "But This Will be a Mere Confusion" and Nova Myhill's "Spectators and Spectacle in Caroline Private Theaters."

negotiated the uses of and significations of the mask as a tool of the female spectator. It is striking that masks have not been considered as a tool of spectatorship despite the fact that, as Laura Rosenthal notes, “while various garments have become synecdoches for women at various times, “mask” calls attention to women specifically as spectators by naming them after an accessory that covers the area around their eyes but not the eyes themselves” (206). Two major projects, Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization* and Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter's *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England*, focus on the period immediately before and immediately after the blossoming of the public theaters in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Yet as Gurr notes, according to contemporary accounts, women, playgoing and otherwise, frequently wore masks. In a satirical couplet in Letting of Humours Blood (1600), Rowlands describes the dress of a woman thus: “a Busk, a Mask, a Fanne, a monstrous ruff/a Bolster for their Buttockes and Such Stuff” (15). Gurr, supporting his assertion that women attended the theater with masks and fans, writes: “Jonson in 1609 wrote of the indoor playhouse 'Lady, or Pusill, that weares maske or fan, / Velvet, or Taffeta cap' (2.90). The woodcuts attached to broadsheet ballads of the time show the fans and the bolster, and Hollar's engravings made in the 1630s show masked ladies” (49).

Christoph Heyl provides the only sustained analysis of this trend to date, and even he is focused more on the latter half of the 17th century, particularly when it comes to drama. Though valuable, the events of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* complicate his reading, and suggest the importance of attending to early 17th century thinking about masks. According to Heyl, due to the custom of wearing masks: “relatively

unrestrained...forms of interaction could be possible" (114). I agree with this assessment, and appreciate the important work Heyl does to draw out the social liberties the mask may have licensed via the appearance of anonymity. However, *Love's Labour's Lost* shows that the mask also made *restrained* forms of interaction possible. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the mask gives the women of *Love's Labour's Lost* a space to react, and a way to *respond* rather than react. It gives control over the body without requiring physical restraint. This is a use for and aspect of the mask that Heyl does not consider. Heyl writes of the mask that:

> Its message was both 'I can't be seen, I am — at least notionally — not here at all,' and 'look at me, I am wearing a mask, maybe I am about to abandon the role I normally play.' One of the mask's paradoxical attractions was that it could both endanger and protect one's respectability. On the one hand, wearing a mask, one might allow oneself to do things which would otherwise be unthinkable. On the other hand, however, one assumed a different persona (the Latin word persona literally means mask), i.e.,, the mask at least notionally protected the identity and thus the integrity of its wearer (117).

Love's Labour's Lost provides a different perspective on Heyl's dichotomy. The mask, rather than simply enabling otherwise unthinkable behavior, and licensing all and sundry behaviors, allows the women of *Love's Labour's Lost* to orchestrate a restrained, undemonstrative, almost silent response that aligns closely with period ideas of chaste resistance to bad counsel and corrupting spectacle. They do this by carefully mitigating these other potential meanings of the mask, shaping it as a tool to their own ends.

In order to delve more deeply into the function of the mask from the perspective of spectatorship, and how the women shape this function by managing their own reception, let me set the scene in *Love's Labour's Lost*: the men decide to woo the women, but the women decide with equal resolution not to be wooed by the men. In fact, the Princess declares that she will face death first before dancing with the men in their "Masque of Muscovites": "no, to the death, we will not move a foot." (5.2.146).The women put on masks, and trade the favors they have been given so that the men will court the wrong women. When Moth, Armado's witty page, comes to deliver an introductory speech, the women put him out of his part by turning away from him. Repeatedly, he stumbles over his words. The fact that the women have their backs to him has such a powerful effect on him that he repeatedly alters his script to account for it. He begins, "A holy parcel of the fairest dames," but before he can go on, the women turn their backs to him. He then says, "that ever turn'd their--backs--to mortal views!" (5.2.160).Berowne, enraged, cuts in to correct him, saying, "Their eyes, villain, their eyes!" (5.2.163).Moth continues, but does not get far, before he again changes a line to reflect that the women are not facing the men: "Out of your favours, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe/Not to behold--" (Berowne again corrects him, saying, "Once to behold, rogue" (5.2.168). He attempts bravely to continue, but finally must admit to Berowne, "They do not mark me, and that brings me out" (5.2.173). What follows is an elaborate trade of banter, in which the men pretend to be Muscovites. Boyet shuttles messages between them until finally declaring that the princess "hears" (5.2.193). Perhaps she does, but her "hearing" is quite unsympathetic. At this point, the second phase of the courtship dance begins. The men entreat to see

the women's faces, and the women refuse. They entreat the women to hear their music and join their dance, and the women teasingly refuse again. Rosaline, in the guise of the princess, first prohibits all music and dance, then allows the music, but refuses the dance. Ferdinand enjoins: "The music plays; vouchsafe some motion to it." Rosaline replies: "Our ears vouchsafe it" (5.2.217).This is not satisfactory for Ferdinand, who responds, "But your legs should do it" (5.2.218). The women, however, despite offering their hands, offer them only as a parting gesture.

The Masque of Muscovites is interactive theater that calls for various bodily responses, from joining hands, to dancing, to showing one's response on one's face, to, perhaps, reacting with desire and lust. The demands on the women's bodies are extreme, and the stakes are high: the men are attempting to involve the women's bodies in their play as a means of involving their passions and desires, as a means of wooing and winning them. The men state their purpose plainly:

> We will with some strange pastime solace them,
> Such as the shortness of the time can shape
> For revels, dances, masks and merry hours
> Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers (4.3.342-6).

Their plan is to pave their way romantically by changing the mood of the women.

In the Stratford Shakespeare Festival's 2015 production of the play, the men wore tall hats, long capes, and striking masks. They moved with exaggerated gestures and were comic, yet imposing figures. As a member of the audience, the intensity of the comic physicality had a powerful effect on me, and I, unlike the women in the play, was not being asked to dance and physically involve myself in the spectacle.

And yet the women resist. What enables this resistance, explicitly, is the masks they wear. The princess decrees: “The gallants shall be task'd/For, ladies, we shall every one be mask'd” (5.2.126). According to William Carrol, “early modern masks covered the entire face, and were held in place by a ‘tongue,’ an interior projection held in the mouth” (149). This complete covering represents a substantial protection for women from displaying their reactions when it does not suit their purposes to do so, and it seems it would also make speech impossible. This mask is a protection that makes use of space, shaping it to the women’s advantage.

For a spectator who wishes to resist exhibiting an immediate reaction, one of the challenges of being engaged in a spectacle like the Masque of Muscovites would be the male performers’ use of space. The spectacle is very close, very immediate. Proximity is inextricably part of the erotic seduction, and a means of heightening the intensity of the tete-a-tete. There would seem to be nowhere to go, no time for the women to stop and consider, no way for them to distance themselves from the immediate, in-your-face behavior of the men.

The mask takes away this advantage from the men. It is a way of removing one’s self without adding physical distance, without putting up walls or closing doors. Behind the mask, an incredible range of reaction is possible. Even as one might go into another room to cry, or laugh, one can retreat behind a mask. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand makes the idea of the mask as a private space plain: “A visor and a mask are whispering-rooms/That were never built for goodness” (1.1.335). The women in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* also use their masks as rooms, residing inside a space that is private and theirs. They cannot be seen, except for their eyes. No flush can be

detected, all minute movements of the cheeks and forehead are hidden. Of course, eyes may be expressive, but without the immediately surrounding area exposed, the task of reading the eyes becomes far more difficult. A test by Simon Baron Cohen[4], meant to differentiate skill in reading emotional states, asks individuals to judge the emotion based on a cross section of the face that includes the eyes. This cross section, which is meant to be small enough to cause difficulty to some people, shows significantly more of the face than a vizard mask would have revealed.

This action, however, does not just take away the advantage of space that the men ought to have possessed. It gives the women a new, different advantage of their own. The women now see more than the men, and also understand *what is happening on the stage* better than the men. The men's vision is now confused, not only because they cannot see the women's reactions, but also because they now cannot recognize the women themselves. What the women have done is, per Erika Lin, put themselves in a position of greater theatrical privilege than the men.[5]

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[4] See Baron-Cohen, 35.

[5] One of the most influential recent readings of *Love's Labour's Lost* has been Erika Lin's, One of the key points is that the power dynamics of space are incredible complex in the scene in which the men discover each other's oath breaking. Berowne is looking down from a height upon the other men, able to see them while they cannot see him. Who can see whom, and who is in a position of power over the others is explicitly linked. The men should be able to see each other, but they cannot because space and vision is serving an allegorical function. One of the important points Lin makes is that spatial areas of power and control are not clearly demarcated on the stage. "Theatrical privilege" eddies and flows, and is located in what type of knowledge and understanding the characters possess--particularly what level of meta-theatrical awareness the characters possess, rather than where on the stage they actually stand (85). The masks the women wear represent a way for the women to see more than they are being seen. Erika Lin also usefully reminds us: "Modern theories of 'the gaze' contend that the object of the gaze is disempowered; the privileged subject is the one who is doing the watching. In the Renaissance theatre, however, being the object of observation was, in fact, a powerful position. During spectacles and pageants, monarchs consolidated their authority by exposing themselves to the gaze of their subjects. Status-conscious gallants sought out the envious glances of those too poor to afford their finery. In early modern England being the subject of the gaze was not necessarily better than being its object. Merely being watched or heard does not situate one in the *locus*; rather, being watched or heard *unawares* does." (87)

The masks the women wear change the way the men view the women's bodies, shifting the focus away from their natural endowments and towards the new, artificial body the mask helps create. When Katherine draws attention to Longaville's silence by asking "what, was your vizard made without a tongue?" Longaville replies that she is asking because: "you have a double tongue within your mask, and would afford my speechless vizard half" (5.2.247) (i.e., would give him one of the two tongues of her mask). The mask she wears makes Longaville's statement possible. The mask creates a conversation in which they are talking about Katherine's body without talking about her body. The mask gives her body a "doubleness" that does not come from internal self-regulation or control of her physical tongue. In addition to implying metaphorical duplicity, "double tongue" could refer to a "double tongued mask," *or* it could refer to two tongues: one the tongue of the mask, and the other that she was born with. But it is the mask itself that enables the figure of the "double tongue"--it is a prosthetic doubleness, something that comes from wearing the mask. Longaville is asking for one of Katherine's tongues, but this request becomes far less intimate and sexual than it would otherwise--the double entendre remains, but the mask provides a sheltering abstraction.

Masking one's face is not just masking one's skin, it is masking one's bodily composition. In early modern English, "complexion" can mean the coloring and looks of the face, it can mean inward constitution of the body, and it can mean temperament. Michael Schoenfeldt, too, in *Bodies and Selves* notes this difference in meaning from the contemporary use of the word (7). To draw focus away from bodily reaction is also

to draw focus away from what kind of woman one is. There is a loss of identity involved that comes specifically from a loss of a reading of a specific bodily reaction[6].

Since the 19th century, the moral conduct of the men and women in *Love's Labour's Lost* has been a matter of debate. Some see Berowne and the men as morally frivolous, and in need of correction, and the women as the moral center of the play. Others see the women as cruel, cold, and inimical to joy (Hardison-Laundre, 20). Rather than adding my own judgment to the chorus, I observe that the women attempt to intervene in this debate themselves, shaping the reception of their behavior as spectators, and working to avoid these charges of coldness in clever ways.

Terry Castle, in her work on 18th century masques, notes the "physical detachment" (39)--the control of space that I argue is so clearly evident in *Love's Labour's Lost*--as a quality the mask enables. Her work also helps make plain that there are other possible negative connotations for the mask that the Princess's retinue

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[6] It is important to note that this loss of identity has its limits. Only women of certain identities were licensed to wear masks. Therefore, even as the nature of the body is obscured, it is also the nature of the body that enables this obscurement.
Whether we think, with Moth, that women "of the most immaculate white and red" are the least susceptible to letting their bodies speak their shame or fear, or the most (more on this later), there is the fact that only in some circumstances would women have been expected to wear masks. Love's Labour's Lost shows one such circumstance. Although the women put on masks to thwart the men, the men themselves are wearing masks, and this behavior can plausibly *appear* to be an answer to the men's behavior, a courtly riposte that speaks that same language. The court masque that became so popular under King James was another circumstance in which women might wear masks, as was the public theater. It seems that all of these circumstances--even that of the public theater--were available to high born women only. Prostitutes often wore masks, but other than this it seems that in general descriptions of mask wearing are not associated with working class women.
Laura Rosenthal notes that "when prologues to Restoration plays comment on the "masks" in the audience, sometimes they mean prostitutes, and sometimes they mean the high-born women, like Elizabeth Pepys, who fashionably covered their faces at the theater. Usually, however, they simply mean "women": appearing at the theater in a mask became so widespread a custom that the device that covered the face and the identity became a synecdoche for the whole person." (206) It seems important to consider, however, that even in such an environment (over half a century removed from the conditions under which *Love's Labour's Lost* was written), not all women of all classes and circumstances would likely have been socially licensed to participate in this fashion.

carefully controls and defuses. Castle notes that in the 18th century, “conventional wisdom held that someone donning a mask, especially a woman, experienced an abrupt loss of sexual inhibition. Anonymity, actual or stylized, relaxed the safeguards of virtue” (39). She notes that a 1718 critic of masquing wrote: “The mask secures the Ladies from Detraction, and encourages a Liberty, the Guilt of which their Blushes would betray when barefac’d, till by Degrees they are innur’d to that which is out of their Vertue to restrain" (39). Castle comments that:

> however invidiously put, there is a grain of truth here. Masks are an example of what one modern behavioral scientist has called the “involvement shield”-a portable bodily accessory that, by obstructing visual contact, promotes an unusual sense of freedom in the person wearing or using it. Anything that partially hides the face, writes Erving Goffman-whether mask, fan, newspaper, sunglasses-may act as a shield “behind which individuals safely do the kind of things that ordinarily result in negative sanctions.” Castle notes that the physical detachment that the mask allows implies “a moral detachment also (40).

According to Castle, the mask is not *simply* a means of removing attention from one’s natural body, but also an object with its own complex frisson:

> the mask never entirely loses its ancient noumena. Whether reduced to boudoir toy or fashionable accessory, private erotic fetish or collective accoutrement (as at the masquerade), the mask, in Bakhtin’s words, never becomes “just an object among other objects.” On occasion it still can be seen...even today-as “a particle of some other world (185).

Moth, Armado's witty page, introduces an argument that strongly resembles that of the 1718 critic Castle quotes. He playfully argues to his master that a classically beautiful face might serve as its own natural mask for a woman, preventing men from seeing the fear and shame that might appear upon it.

If she be made of white and red,
Her faults will ne'er be known,
For blushing cheeks by faults are bred
And fears by pale white shown:
Then if she fear, or be to blame,
By this you shall not know,
For still her cheeks possess the same
Which native she doth owe.
A dangerous rhyme, master, against the reason of
white and red (1.2.81-90).

It would seem that Moth's "dangerous rhyme" might reveal some of the negative effects for the women wearing real, physical masks, which would seem even surer to keep a woman's faults and fears hidden. Crucially, however, Moth's poem does not refer to the Princess and her retinue, and this is the only time anyone in the play makes the argument that masks enable shameful behavior. Moth delivers this sally in response to Armado's praise of Jacquenetta. No one ever makes this argument about the Princess of France and her ladies, which suggests that the women are able to control the reception of their response in such a way as to prevent such charges being leveled against them. The play shows that this idea clearly does exist in that particular

literary-historical moment for the women, but that the women manage to keep anyone from attaching this implication to them. How do they do this?

One way is by making clear that the purpose of the mask is to repel the men, rather than to license scandalous behavior. The fact that the women turn their backs is important here. This behavior, as well as the women's verbal dismissals of the men, suggest that the mask is part of a campaign to thwart the men. Moth's struggle to express his intended ideas when faced with the women's backs shows how influential and defining this gesture is. It simply cannot be ignored. It not only reshapes the language and the action of the play, but results in a new language to describe the women. Moth's hapless address to the women defines them, joining the four women together and casting them together in novel, surprising terms--their own terms, even as the words are not theirs: they are "the fairest dames that ever turn'd their--backs--to mortal views" (5.2.160).

It is also important that the men do not know, at this point, though the audience does, that one of the purposes of the masks is to obscure the identity of the women and allow them to take each other's places. The women quickly make clear through their turned backs and cool reception that the mask is *not* something they have put on in order to license more scandalous, relenting behavior, and it does not seem to be obscuring one's identity, but merely one's face and the reactions, the receptivity, that the face might betray.

Also, as I have already noted, although the women's decision to wear masks is their own, and disrupts, rather than implicating them in, the spectacle that the men present, their masks are a clear answer to the men's masks. The men's behavior

licenses and makes space for the women's mask-wearing, even as that mask-wearing disrupts the efforts of the men. The social structures embedded in the play condition what the women may do as spectators, even as they negotiate within that framework. The women shift the game slightly--they are not merely playing on the terms of the men. Nowhere do the men propose to deceive the women--it is rather a "revelrous" disguise. There is an imbalance in purpose and intention--one group is acting, the other deceiving. And yet the women's behavior is accommodated within the framework of the scene.

The masks may indeed be enabling the women to hide their lust from view, but that is not the narrative they engage. Rather, they evoke a different trope, one of the virtuously resistant hearer. As Gina Bloom notes, this was an established means for women to push back and form a narrative that serves their ends, a narrative that threads itself through many early modern plays. This occurs in Pericles, when Marina blocks her ears from hearing any of the sinful talk of the brothel that might corrupt her: "Before Marina can preach divinity, she employs her ears, eluding the seductive and sinful life of a prostitute by practicing aural defense" (135). For Bloom, Marina "appropriates the disruptive deafness" that protestant preachers like Taylor advised against, but in the service of virtue. Bloom notes that "This defensive victory launches Marina as a political force."(135).In Cymbeline, too, Bloom finds willful deafness exercised in the service of preserving virtue. This time, Imogen is following, rather than misappropriating the teachings of preacher Robert Wilkinson:

> Wilkinson advises the very tactics that Innogen practices: [H]eare not what the world saith, not what the flesh saith, not what the divell saith, but what the

> spirit saith, thus if both speak at once we should listen to the spirit, and turn the deafe side to the divell." Wilkinson suggests that it is possible to maintain an open channel of communication with the voice of the spirit even while engaging one's aural defenses against the devil. Innogen seems to practice this simultaneous receptivity and defense, for despite being a captive audience to the serenade, she remains unmoved by it. Cloten indirectly recalls the fortress imagery often associated with this kind of defensive hearing when he reluctantly reports to Cymbeline that he has "assailed her [Innogen] with musics, but she vouchsafes no notice (140).

As Bloom implies, vouchsafes is a rich word, and I will, later in this chapter, discuss the ways in which it implies delay and modulation.

The women of *Love's Labour's Lost* do allow for an idea of a little bit of lust behind their masks, however. The intricate, courtly ripostes, including the taking of hands only to part, teases at the idea of interest. Rather than this undermining the women's work, however, it simply serves a different purpose: they relent just enough to prevent themselves from appearing too cruel.

The women also use other occasions, such as the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, to diffuse the tension their mask wearing causes. The Pageant of the Nine Worthies is both bad and undemanding theater, and the stakes for the women are much lower. They do not need to utterly scorn the spectacle, here, as it is not a direct suit, but rather merely an entertainment associated with the men's court. They seize this opportunity to manage the reception of their earlier coldness, and temper it. Here the women express their mirth gently, though perhaps a bit condescendingly. "If your

ladyship would say, 'Thanks, Pompey,' I had done," (5.2.547) the hapless Costard entreats. "Great thanks, great Pompey,"(5.2.548) the Princess replies, on cue. Her simple, laconic phrase brims with gentle, almost indulgent mirth. This trace of indulgent mirth is important--the women are able to use this lower stakes situation to mitigate their earlier behavior. Here, where the stakes are lower, they can show more and have it mean less, and thus mitigate the appearance of cruelty.

Still, despite this careful work, the women's choice to remain impassive comes to a crisis in the final scene of the play. At the close of the play, news of the death of the Princess's father interrupts the Pageant of the Nine Worthies. The women resolve to leave for France. The men implore with increasing desperation and distress that the women wed them before departing, but the women refuse. Rosaline makes light of Berowne's distress in terms that recall their mask trick and the men's defeat in the guise of muscovites: "Help, hold his brows! he'll swoon! Why look you pale? Sea-sick, I think, coming from Muscovy" (5.2.393).

Berowne's response, while also a little playful, and while also recalling the earlier masquing, levels a very real accusation of cruelty at Rosaline:

> thus pour the stars down plagues for perjury
> Can any face of brass hold longer out?
> Here stand I lady, dart thy skill at me;
> Bruise me with scorn, confound me with a flout;
> Thrust thy sharp wit quite through my ignorance;
> Cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit;
> And I will wish thee never more to dance,

Nor never more in Russian habit wait" (5.2.94-102).

The phrase: "can any face of brass hold longer out?" suggests that Rosaline's expression is unreactive, unyielding, not showing the emotions Berowne wishes. The phrase directly recalls Katherine's earlier choice to wear a mask while he mistakenly wooed her.

Here, they can no longer temper or equivocate, and yet they still wish to remain unmoved. Their response now is to manipulate space not with the mask, but by placing a vast distance between themselves and the men. Katharine says: "Not so, my lord; a twelvemonth and a day/I'll mark no words that smooth-faced wooers say:/Come when the king doth to my lady come;/Then, if I have much love, I'll give you some" (5.2.795-800). This twelvemonth and a day during which she'll "mark no words that smooth faced lovers say" will not contain any words from Dumain, whether he were to have a beard or not, since she is instructing him to come only when the King does. All of the women "mark no words" from the men because they hear no words. The success or failure of the attempt has nothing to do with their ability to manage their passions via regulation of body and mind, and nothing to do with their own coldness or lack thereof.

Rosaline sends Berowne away for a year to jest in front of an even less receptive audience than she has been: the dying residents of hospital. Her initial command emphasizes response and reception, and how difficult that will be for Berowne:

Visit the speechless sick and still converse

With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,

With all the fierce endeavor of your wit

To enforce the pained impotent to smile (5.2.819-823).

This is the dynamic that she has staged throughout the play, but taken to an extreme.

Berowne responds: “To move wild laughter in the throat of death?/It cannot be; it is impossible: Mirth cannot move a soul in agony” (5.2.824-5). Berowne’s reply shows key difference here. The state of the “speechless sick” is of having an unmoveable body (“mirth cannot move a soul in agony), and this is not true of the women.

When Rosaline responds again to drive her point home, she makes several key points about the power of the audience:

Why, that's the way to choke a gibing spirit,

Whose influence is begot of that loose grace

Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools:

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear

Of him that hears it, never in the tongue

Of him that makes it: then, if sickly ears,

Deaf'd with the clamours of their own dear groans,

Will hear your idle scorns, continue then,

And I will have you and that fault withal;

But if they will not, throw away that spirit,

And I shall find you empty of that fault,

Right joyful of your reformation (5.2.829-837).

What is crucial here is the power Rosaline gives to the audience: “A jest's prosperity lies in the ear/Of him that hears it, never in the tongue/Of him that makes it.” Reaction and response is everything when it comes to the meaning of the theater.

I use the words reaction and response together deliberately here. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* at this moment is ambiguous about whether the “ear that hears it” does so reactively, instantaneously, or responsively, with choice, with deliberation. However, given the context, it seems she is talking about an audience that does not have control over its responses--the speechless sick are *compelled* to react unreceptively.

The verb “vouschafe” recurs in this scene, having appeared in the Masque of Muscovites as well, in relation to the women’s behavior towards the men. This is telling. Vouchsafe generally has a strong implication of deliberate, even condescending choice. The OED gives among its many definitions, “to receive (a thing) graciously or condescendingly; to deign to accept.” The verb also implies consideration and therefore delay implied by this verb. It is not about instant reaction, but rather about considered response. Despite hoping to excite a strong bodily reaction in the women, despite wishing their “legs to do it,” the men seem to understand that this is an encounter that the women possess this kind of control over.

Rosaline’s remark that she will be “Right joyful of [Berowne’s] reformation” if he “throws away that spirit” is crucial to her management of the reception of this all important response. Rosaline continues to place herself in the position of being an arbiter of virtue and rightness. Her “not hearing” Berowne is not a matter of cruelty, it is a matter of justice.

Let us now return to what the silence of the women allows them to do, collectively. The currently popular "contagious affect" model[7], which suggests alliances through the porosity and vulnerability of bodies, *does* work for the behavior of the men of *Love's Labour's Lost*, but it does not work for the women. The women of *Love's Labour's Lost* make more intentional, complex, difficult alliances and affiliations. These alliances develop not through contagion but through a conscious choice of positioning and rhetoric. Unlike the work the audience does in feeling contagious shame or fear, the work the women do as an audience has complicated moral stakes.

In the play, the four men and the four women become two very distinct groups, where "the men" and "the women" are as much distinct entities as "Berowne" and "Rosaline." The men" and "the women" fall into these distinct groups through two different processes: the men, through shared shame, the women, through shared silence.

The men in *Love's Labours Lost* experience a fellowship forged through a shared bodily reaction, along the lines Hobgood details (although she does not address *Love's Labour's Lost* directly): "Sweet fellowship in shame!" (4.3.41).Ferdinand cries, in reaction to Longaville's entrance bearing a woefully poor love poem. Shame is visceral and uncontrollable: it can cause the face to flush, the palms to sweat, and the stomach to twist, and it unites Berowne, Dumain, Longaville and the King with each other and with the "lesser" male residents of the King's court who furnish the play with its subplots and the Pageant of the Nine Worthies: Armado, Holofernes, Sir

[7] See Hobgood, especially pp.11-13.

Nathaniel, Dull, and Moth.

The word “shame” appears 13 times in relation to the men. It appears as they determine the consequences for failing to live up to their vow to devote themselves to strict study: “he shall endure such public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise,” (1.1.135)“How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!” (1.1.122)“he that breaks them in the least degree/Stands in attainder of eternal shame” (1.1.162); In reference to their courtship with the women: “She hath but one for herself; to desire that were a shame,” (2.1.206).“And they, well mock'd, depart away with shame” (5.2.165).“O, you have lived in desolation here, unseen, unvisited, much to our shame” (5.2.391); and in the course of the Pageant of the Nine Worthies and Moth’s introduction to the Masque of Muscovites: “A conqueror, and afeard to speak! run away for shame, Alisander,” (5.2.647).“The more shame for you, Judas,” (5.2.670) and “Ah, you whoreson loggerhead! you were born to do me shame” (4.3.201). Linking the men so consistently with shame binds them and defines them as a group, in part because they seem to be engaged in the intimate, identity challenging process of transmitting affect, and in part because shame as a shared characteristic becomes a way of thematically grouping these characters. The King does not want his subjects to “approach” at all, let alone to present a pageant to his and the Princess’s subjects. “They will shame us,” (5.2.562) he replies, fearing not the players’ satirical prowess, but rather their incompetence. He fears their incompetence will reflect upon the men and that their shame will contaminate him. The sense of shared shame via the Pageant seems to come from affective contagion but also from the King’s belief that the players stand in for him; the king seems to feel the players in the pageant are an

extension of him (indeed, he does provide the Pageant's prologue), represent him, and therefore bring him shame when they shame themselves.

In contrast, the word "shame" does not appear in relation to the women even once. What links the women together, what not only associates them but also allies them with each other, is that when confronted with the spectacle of the men, they withhold their speech and control their outward signs of response and participation.

The key episode in establishing the women's "fellowship in silence" is the men's Masque of Muscovites and their response to it. This fellowship is not one built upon shared bodily reaction, but rather on a deliberately coordinated likeness in *response.* It is chosen, and the women are able to influence what this response means, how people both inside and outside the play respond. The mask is the main thing that enables this difference.

Elspeth Probyn observes that "etymologically shame comes from the Goth word Scham, which refers to covering the face. The crucial element that turns sham into shame is the level of interest and desire involved" (72). The "sham" of the Masque of Muscovites becomes the shame of the King. The "sham" of the women, on the other hand, does not, and in fact does the opposite, sheltering the women from shame. I would argue that in part this is due to the level of interest and desire involved, but *primarily* it is due to the level of interest and desire displayed.

But this fellowship in silence is not limited to the four women. Rosaline makes the residents of the hospital her agents, she allows them to continue her work in a way she could not herself. Despite not herself being able to perform in quite such a way,

there is the sense that these silent sick and dying people can stand in for her in their silence. In this way, the fellowship in silence instrumentalizes sick and dying bodies.

This alliance connects disparate groups deliberately. Yet it is only voluntary on the part of the women. From a moral standpoint, this is questionable, but the lens here is a bit presentist. Ideas of "agency" along these lines do not always seem to govern morality in early modern culture and drama. Still, I do see some value in giving more moral weight and influence to the women's actions in the play beyond their treatment of the men in a game of love. This is where the play opens out beyond the hermetic setting of the play, and here the women are engaged in a serious choice about how to treat people, one that seems, from a modern perspective, quite morally complicated. And it is a complication, an ambiguity, that comes directly from their work *as* spectators.

What *kind* of place was the hospital that Berowne is to visit? Like the masks, this is a rare window into a cultural pressure point in early modern England, and one that concerned the theater. While it is unclear whether Shakespeare would have been imagining an English or a French hospital, if we assume he was imagining an English hospital, he was imagining the kind of place that, according to Jackson was fast disappearing. Few "hospitals" "survived the suppression of monastic institutions" (49). According to Jackson, at the time of Shakespeare's writing of *Love's Labour's Lost,* there were Five Royal Hospitals: "Each institution served a specific 'deserving' charitable group. St. Bart's and St. Thomas's, two of the largest medieval hospitals, served the sick poor" (49).

At the time of writing, assuming that Shakespeare's imagination was most intimately shaped by the conflicts over how to structure charity in his own city, it is worth noting that according to Jackson, "in the struggle to reorganize charity and social welfare underway at the turn of the century, we begin to see that the London hospitals stood apart and often opposed to the newly forming national policy governed by Tudor JPs, commissions, and church courts" (53). The "groaning wretches" would almost certainly have been poor, and in need of charity.

We can see *Love's Labour's Lost* as in part participating in this uncertainty about how to do charity: what can be gained by it? And who it is for? According to Paul Slack, "regulation of manners which is such a striking feature of parliamentary activity between 1580 and 1660…" coincided with a reimagining of what charity should look like, as religious charities faded away: "there was increasing use of the paradigm of the body politic, not to bind together a varied social whole, but to show the damage which untreated disease, disorder or decay in any one member might do to the rest: the diseased members should be cut off." (24)

Therefore it is particularly interesting that a play so focused on courtly society and manners should end up extending its action to a hospital. Was Shakespeare, perhaps, thinking about the ways in which the mannered jests of the play might be setting its characters at a dangerous distance from the poor? Might Rosaline's injunction to Berowne be an attempt to correct such a trend? Jackson notes that, "unable to deliver the persuasive argument that one could move upward to God through good works as the Catholic conception of *caritas* had, Protestant theologians struggled to articulate their justification for charity in a form that would still encourage

giving" (43). Perhaps we might read the ending of *Love's Labour's Lost* as an attempt to encourage charity and encourage connection with people in danger of dropping out of the range of empathy.

However, there is also a sense in which the ending of the play emphasizes distance, rather than encouraging connection: although Berowne's jests may not in any way stand in for the spectacle on the public stage, this moment introduces the idea that there are people radically outside the reach of the theater, who cannot be touched by it, even as it seeks ways for the noble subjects of its drama to make connections with the "speechless sick."

In this moment Shakespeare admits to the limitations of the theater in more serious terms than were typical in plays of the period. As Lopez notes, Middleton begins *No Wit, No Help like a Woman's*, with the following prologue, which might seem to express such limits:

> How is't possible to suffice
> So many ears, so many eyes?
> Some in wit, and some in shows
> Take delight, and some in clothes;
> Some for mirth they chiefly come,
> Some for passion, for both some;
> Some for lascivious meetings, that's their arrant;
> Some to detract, and ignorance their warrant.
> How is't possible to please
> Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?

Lopez pushes back against interpretations of these lines that view them as a concession to the theater's inability to touch all audiences:

> But such an interpretation of this and other, similar prologues ignores the fact that this kind of self-reflexivity is a tool for unifying the spectators; for making each person see him or herself good-naturedly as part of an unruly bunch, and also as someone above the "ignorant" who "detract." It seems to me that if Middleton had really been worried about the diversity of tastes in his audience ruining his play, he would not have risked taunting this audience quite so casually, or in such bad poetry (18).

Lopez's compelling point shows that this moment in *Love's Labour's Lost* is remarkable in that it earnestly identifies an unreachable audience. And it occurs specifically through the work of an unmoved female spectator. She is not positioning *herself* outside the reach of all theater, but it is her silence, her refusal of Berowne's jests, that makes this line of thinking possible, that leads her to seek out bodies that cannot be involved in the economy of the theater at all.

CHAPTER 2

GERTRUDE APOPLEX'D

"Frailty, thy name is woman" (1.2.146), Hamlet says. But as Richard Levin has observed, Hamlet's interpretations of Gertrude are contradictory and self-interested (310). Out of the complex mess of Hamlet's accusatory descriptions of Gertrude, I want to draw out a different thread, one that has been almost entirely neglected. Hamlet casts Gertrude's body as one that is not responsive; his descriptions of Gertrude in the closet scene give an impression of Gertrude as insensate. Her senses seem "apoplex'd," he says. This idea of Gertrude as insensate, though it occurs at the height of Hamlet's misogyny, holds the key to the ways in which Gertrude's actions as a female spectator disrupt the play. I take Hamlet's angry words and re-appropriate them as a reading of Gertrude's behavior at key moments in the play. Gertrude's body seems effortlessly insensible at junctures where to be insensible is to be resistant to the designs of others. This is most notable during Hamlet's staging of "the Murder of Gonzago." Through her bodily un-reactivity, as well as through her own interpretations of what she sees, which occlude her responses and reactions, she disrupts the attempts of others to control the action of the play through surveillance, and seizes this control for herself instead. Her ability to embody Queen Elizabeth's motto, "Video et Taceo," her power to "see and say nothing", allows her to become an arbiter of state justice at key junctures, particularly when she asserts Hamlet's madness to Claudius and when she asserts Ophelia's accidental death.

Gertrude plays the role of female spectator often, sometimes choosing this role, sometimes adopting it due to Hamlet's contrivances. Gertrude speaks her most famous line, "the lady protests too much," (3.2.211) as a spectator, and in general Gertrude performs many of her most important actions in this role: When Hamlet asks Gertrude to look upon the two portraits, one of her living husband, and one of her dead husband (3.4.53); when Gertrude witnesses the death of Ophelia (4.7.164); and when Gertrude, in her final moments, "carouses" to Hamlet's fortune in his fencing match (5.2.165). Gertrude's manner of spectating is actively disruptive to others' efforts at surveillance. The most important unifying feature of Gertrude's spectatorship is that information and affect that passes into Gertrude's mind and or body does not pass through her. This means that she is able to keep vital knowledge out of the royal system of power and punishment. This does not break the gears of the system, but it means that Gertrude shapes how power is exercised as she withholds what she knows.

In "Space and Scrutiny in Hamlet," Robert Wood notes that: "The only event between the ghost's visit and Hamlet's exile which is not ultimately concerned with scrutinizing either Hamlet or Claudius is that in which Polonius instructs Reynaldo on how to obtain information about Laertes at a distance" (27). Gertrude contributes to the constant effort to observe Hamlet that Wood rightly identifies, observing Hamlet intensely (particularly in the closet scene, as I will discuss). But this scrutiny serves her own ends, rather than aiding Claudius's efforts at surveillance. I am defining surveillance fairly narrowly. The OED defines surveillance as, a "watch or guard kept over a person, etc., esp. over a suspected person, a prisoner, or the like; often, spying, supervision; less commonly, supervision for the purpose of direction or control,

superintendence." Wood and Patricia Parker have noted in *Hamlet* emerging practices of this sort of surveillance, and it is a thread that contemporary directors have drawn out as well. The broadcast version of Gregory Doran's Hamlet for the RSC, starring David Tennant, makes surveillance its focus, showing us security cameras at every turn, and largely shooting the film so the audience of the film feels they are looking through a surveillance camera (though before uttering the phrase "now I am alone," Hamlet damages the cameras, and we continue to watch, but from a different vantage point). The key feature of surveillance in Hamlet, for my purposes, is that it is about discipline and control; it is not only about finding out threatening, disruptive behavior, but about using this knowledge in order to exercise royal power over the individuals "in the crosshairs." Examples involve Claudius and Polonius listening in on Hamlet when Hamlet speaks the "to be or not to be" speech and meets with Ophelia, and Hamlet's "mousetrap" (a name for "The Murder of Gozago" that shows its intended purpose). Polonius and Claudius eavesdrop not only in the hopes of understanding Hamlet's behavior, but also in the hopes of understanding how damaging such behavior will be to the state of Denmark. Hamlet, with the help of Horatio, observes Claudius's reactions to the Murder of Gonzago in order to determine his guilt. Gertrude's own surveillance via her spectatorship, although not divorced from the emergent system of state discipline, keeps silent where it would be unmerciful, and prizes loyalty and personal kindness in a way the surveillance of other characters does not.

Gertrude thwarts Hamlet and Claudius in their rival efforts at surveillance through her spectatorship in two key ways: via her body itself, with its insensible

properties, and through her more active choices in her manner of reporting. Gertrude, as a spectator, is not demonstrative, and that is key to her control of information. She is not perpetually silent, however, and that is also key to her methods, as well. As A.L. Montgomery notes, one of her key roles in the play is as a commentator: "Gertrude displays her interpretive powers in a variety of situations, ranging from fairly straightforward assessments of events around her to more complex, plot-driving projects" (106). I am going to resist praising Gertrude primarily as a moral agent, which would mean privileging the second way over the first. In this, I take a different tack than Montgomery, who writes:

> A wealth of evidence that Gertrude is far more than a one-dimensional, 'reactive' (R. Levin 113) female construct appears during her and Hamlet's famous confrontation in her bedroom in Act 3, Scene 4. To be sure, Gertrude begins the scene acting largely under the agency of men. She enters with and taking directions from Polonius (3.4.1 10), who is himself acting upon Claudius's request to determine the truth of Hamlet's mental state (3.1.175-87). Before the scene ends, however, Gertrude shows herself as anything but 'a decoy' (Jardine 'What Happens?' 317) (102).

With these words, Montgomery creates a paradigm where the most important question in evaluating Gertrude's behavior is who steers the ship, who dictates the action. For Montgomery, "reaction" is viewed negatively, as a trivial behavior. The problem, for me, in such a view becomes apparent as Montgomery continues, "Gertrude's response to Hamlet's accusation further supports this view of her as a distinct, fully accountable moral self: 'Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such black and

grained spots / As will not leave their tinct' (3.4.79-81)" (102). The problem is that viewing Gertrude as a fully accountable moral self is inextricable from disciplining and shaming her in this scene.[1] Making Gertrude the morally accountable agent is a double-edged sword and tempts one to judge Gertrude as well as giving her credit. It is therefore logic I seek to avoid when reading her role in Hamlet. Montgomery sees an increasing trajectory of "moral agency" that culminates triumphantly with her death scene. With my focus on Gertrude's work as a spectator, I see Gertrude's reflections on her own moral or immoral actions to be among the least relevant actions in the play. I instead find Gertrude's moments of apparent "insensibility" to be among the most important. That is not to say that Gertrude is not reflective or aware of her insensibility, however, as this chapter will show.

Gertrude speaks the lines, "the lady protests too much," (3.2.211) in response to Hamlet's question, "how like you this play, madam?" (3.2.210). Her response may be interpreted several different ways. She may mean that she finds the Player Queen's discourse dissatisfying aesthetically--after all, the question was not what she thought of the Queen's behavior in the play, but rather what she thought of the play itself. And

[1] Although I tend to see Gertrude's "thou turnst my eyes into my very soul" as the moment in which she breaks her silence at last, film interpretations of this scene have not always agreed. Typically, up until this point where Gertrude at last speaks, she is at such a fever pitch of emotion that, although not uttering full words, she is hardly silent. In Mel Gibson's *Hamlet*, particularly, she is vocal, if not verbal in her distress, and even speaks Hamlet's name repeatedly as he rails against her. As she speaks, she appears to be mastering herself, overcoming the overwhelming tide of fear, shame and grief that has swept over her. Although Gibson's Hamlet is the starkest example of this choice, Christopher Plummer's, Laurence Olivier's, and David Tennant's Hamlet's have all also played out the scene in this way. In Gibson's Hamlet she sounds almost wondering--it's a quiet moment amidst a highly physical scene where Gertrude is screaming, terrified, trying to fend Hamlet off. Director John Barton, in "Playing Shakespeare" notes that at times speech can be used as a way of controlling grief, pushing something almost beyond containment into a verbal vessel, and that actors can think of characters reaching for elevated language because those are the words their grief needs. This seems to be the consensus stage direction around Gertrude's words at this point. In speaking, rather than in remaining silent, she begins to take back control of the conversation from Hamlet.

in fact, whether or not the Player Queen's behavior is suspicious, the Player Queen speaks a total of sixteen lines on theme of her loyalty to her first husband in not remarrying. In general, the style of "The Murder of Gonzago" is circuitous and long-winded: the Player King speaks a tortured thirty lines to his queen.

She may also be making a prediction. According to this reading, she is not answering the question asked, but rather telling Hamlet what she is thinking: that the Player Queen's lengthy protests damage her credibility and that that character will prove to be disloyal.

One point about Gertrude's remark that could be missed due to the line's great familiarity is that Gertrude's point that the lady protests too much goes against the grain. Hamlet says, "If she should break it now!" (3.2.205) and the Player King echoes immediately, "'tis deeply sworn" (3.2.206). Gertrude is the *only* character to advance the idea that the Player Queen's long speech, rather than committing her more and more deeply to the oaths she is about to break, is actually diminishing her credibility. Hamlet thinks the Queen has set herself up where in breaking her vow she is dramatically thwarting expectations, where Gertrude suggests the opposite. She does so not through "projecting" her own guilt onto the Player Queen, but through interpreting the text itself. Gertrude is making an intervention in the reception of the "Murder of Gonzago" that has influenced most 21st-century viewers of Hamlet so strongly that it has become nearly invisible.

Gertrude's line of reasoning is not unprecedented in early modern writing. The idea that one can "protest too much" appears elsewhere in Shakespeare, for instance in *King Lear*, when Cordelia's silence is more trustworthy than her sisters effusive,

courtly declarations of love to their father. But this idea, it seems, is not a commonplace, and we cannot assume that the players or Hamlet had considered that the speech might signal untrustworthiness.

Another thing to consider, in comparing this scene to the first act of *Lear*, is that in King Lear, part of the problem with the declarations of Regan and Goneril is that, as Cordelia observes, they imply that they love their father in ways that contradict their other social obligations: "Why have my sisters husbands, if they say/ They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,/That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry/Half my love with him, half my care and duty" (1.1.115). Gertrude's remark might also hold a kernel of suggestion that fidelity after death might itself be "too much," and not just the protests she makes. She might be implying that the content of the Player Queen's speech is inappropriate, in addition to being suspiciously copious and effusive. In any case, it is a strong defense of Gertrude's own more taciturn behavior.

Gertrude is the only character who contests Hamlet's reading of the play. Sae Kitamura has noted that Ophelia is a knowledgeable audience member, understanding how the parts of the play function, even as she asks Hamlet "what means this, my lord?" she already knows the answer, correctly asserting that "this show imports the argument of the play." Her question, "will he tell us what this show meant?" shows an understanding of the play's form, rather than confusion. But Gertrude does more than simply making sure she understands how each part of the play is meant to signify: she asserts her own reading of the play, one that is explicitly *opposite* to Hamlet's, and

equally, if not more "correct." Gertrude is not merely a spectacle, she is a reader of women, here and in her commentary on Ophelia's death.

Gertrude does not at any point in the play appear to respond to it with guilt, and in fact seems to defend her own silence. The contrast between her own terse remark and the Player Queen could not be more marked.[2] Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* has commonly been taken to be a source for this episode in Hamlet. Yet Heywood tells the story of a woman moved to cry out her guilt at a play.[3] In *Hamlet*, it is not Gertrude whose conscience is caught by the play, but Claudius. Throughout this scene, including the moment when Claudius cries out to halt the play and bring light, she remains nearly silent.

Alison Hobgood's reading of this moment raises important questions about how receptive Gertrude actually is to the play's conscience catching:

> Scoffing at Rosencrantz's urgent message from Gertrude that "Hamlet's behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration, Hamlet openly ridicules his mother's suggestion that he is the reason for her vexed emotional state. "O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother" (300), he skeptically

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[2] Hamlet's play, and the events in it, are intended as pointed critique of both Gertrude and Claudius. How much is Gertrude responding to this tension? How much is her answer laden with the pressure of Hamlet's expectations that she will betray guilt or anxiety? Gertrude gives no sign. What is also unclear is the extent to which we can take Gertrude's rebuke of the Player Queen as a defense of her own conduct. Gertrude does "protest" far less than the Player Queen, but we have not seen Gertrude's behavior before the first scene of play. Hamlet does tell us that Gertrude "hung on" King Hamlet. Did she protest in a similar vein? Or did she do the opposite? The King died suddenly--perhaps the situation is not an exact mirror. This is Gertrude's secret to keep, and she never lets the audience in it.

[3] Heywood writes: "There was a town's woman, till then of good repute, who, finding her conscience at this time extremely troubled, suddenly shriek'd, and cry'd out, O my husband! my husband! I see the ghost of my husband, fiercely threatening and menacing me. At which shrill, unexpected outcry, the people about her being amazed, they inquired the reason of it; when presently, without any further urging, she told them, that, not seven years before, to be possessed of such a gentleman, (whom she named), she had poisoned her husband, whose fearful image personated itself in shape of that ghost.' (G2)

> cajoles in the face of what he deems to be Gertrude's excuse-making. Incredulous that his actions, and not the play itself, might have moved the queen's passions so substantially as to warrant "affliction," Hamlet mocks what he deems a transparent suggestion that she is "astonished"—stupefied and impossibly void of emotion—as well as the notion that his bizarre antics, not the Mousetrap's "catching" powers are responsible for her distemper. (21-22)

In contrast to Hobgood, I would like to allow more space for the possibility of Gertrude's insensibility to this contagion of guilt, and the power it would give her. Hobgood is using this scene to further her argument that early modern playmakers relied upon a theory of emotional contagion, and relied upon the inexorable spread of emotions from one member of audience to another. I would argue that Gertrude does not seem to "catch" the conscience, despite what Hamlet says. We are hearing only second hand that Gertrude is upset, and we do not know the cause.

The word "astonish" also complicates the picture. The word implies stupefaction, dumb gaping, a kind of emptiness provoked by an excess of stimulus, and with it Hamlet finds a way of talking about Gertrude that can simultaneously attribute excessive affect or blankness. This remark, which Hobgood wants to see as a comment on Gertrude's responsiveness to the play, does not fully support the idea, but suggests both this idea and its opposite in a typically Hamletian fashion. With the word "astonish," Hamlet begins to build a portrait of Gertrude's unresponsiveness that shows some of the ways in which she is challenging ideas of how she "should" behave as a female spectator. He continues to develop these ideas of her as disruptively

unresponsive during his confrontation with her in her closet. I read Hamlet's behavior in the closet scene as in part a backlash, a whirling anger precipitated by an anxiety that Gertrude has indeed not felt the moving power of the play as Claudius has, despite seeing a mirror of her guilt.

Hamlet enters Gertrude's closet and immediately makes a series of sarcastic rejoinders. When Gertrude's response to this is to ask, "Have you forgot me?" (3.4.21).Hamlet's reply is "No, by the rood, not so:/You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;/And--would it were not so!--you are my mother" (3.4.25-27). Hamlet's answer, here, shifts the meaning of Gertrude's words and responds to a meaning she did not intend. Gertrude does believe Hamlet is mad—perhaps mad enough to forget who his mother was--but given that Hamlet has already addressed Gertrude as "mother" upon entering, it seems that Gertrude means "have you forgotten to mind me, to respect me," rather than "have you forgotten who I am." Hamlet's answer continues to disrespect her, even as he says "nay." Gertrude's answer to this is to say: **"**Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak"(3.4.30). This "nay" responds to no question--perhaps she has begun to speak, but then thought better of it. Or perhaps the "nay" is an expression of distress, meaning something like "alas." Since Gertrude clearly *can* speak, the meaning of this statement is a bit obscure. The Arden Shakespeare glosses this as: "'If you won't respect me I'll have to confront you with others who can speak more forcefully.' Presumably she means the King" (336). It is unclear why and on what grounds she is establishing the King's greater ability to speak with force, however. This statement could be taken as an admission of weakness, a statement that she feels truly incapable. It could also be a calculated

declaration of her “inability”--which is not really an inability, but merely a desire, in order to take herself out of this scene without having to face it any further. What does seem clear is that she is attempting to remove herself from this situation and to continue in silence. According to either interpretation, this statement makes clear that Gertrude’s frequently minimal dialogue in the play is something she herself is aware of, and uses.[4]

Hamlet is convinced that Claudius is self evidently "a mildewed ear,"[5] (3.4.64) while his father possessed "the front of Jove himself" (3.4.56). If that is the case, how could Gertrude behave as though she perceives the situation to be otherwise? Hamlet’s language here takes further what he only hinted at with his use of the word “astonish.” Here, he suggests that her “sense” is “apoplex’d”:

> You cannot call it love; for at your age
> The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
> And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
> Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
> Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
> Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,
> Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd

[4] In thinking about the pressures on Gertrude and her circumstancs it is worth considering that that no stage direction tells us what Hamlet does physically here, but the words: “Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;/You go not till I set you up a glass/Where you may see the inmost part of you” do not seem in themselves threatening enough to prompt her to cry out for help as she does: “What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?/Help, help, ho!” This to me does suggest violence. Gertrude finds herself in a space of physical danger, and Hamlet is able not only to put her at a disadvantage through direct disputation but through his greater physical strength, his sword, and his familiarity with and access to culturally masculine violence. Her actions in this play occur under circumstances in which a scene like this is possible.

[5] A strange choice of words, given that Claudius has given no sign of listening particularly often to Gertrude, but perhaps there is something in this. The metaphor comes from “ears of corn,” but the word’s strange proximity to Hamlet Sr, means of death makes this puzzling.

But it reserved some quantity of choice,

To serve in such a difference (3.4.70-79).

The structure of the verse places emphasis on this word. It is enjambed, beginning a line, rather than ending it. A caesura follows, making it feel as though Hamlet pauses, reaches for this emphatic description of Gertrude's senses as paralyzed, and then rests on it for a moment as he finds *himself* almost paralyzed with anger. This language has almost as much force behind it as his declaration that "frailty, thy name is woman!" and it is in some way not in disagreement with such a statement. And yet it is a much richer, more complex idea of Gertrude's body and its potentialities, and deserves much more attention than it has received.

After claiming that Gertrude's senses must be apoplex'd, Hamlet further elaborates, talking about each of the senses that must not be engaged. Nothing, says Hamlet, not the least part of any sense, could be working if Gertrude is doing as she is doing: Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight, Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all, Or but a sickly part of one true sense/Could not so mope" (3.4.80-83). The portrait of Gertrude that Hamlet paints is almost of an automaton.

It is telling that he refers to "a sickly part of one true sense", and chooses the verb "mope," suggesting disease and despond as possibilities for Gertrude's condition. Contemporary uses of "apoplex" as a term, both in medical discourse and in drama, show that "moping" and sickliness" continue to apply when he lands on apoplexy.

In several sources, apoplexy is a self-caused condition, and one reflective of shameful drunkenness. It is a disease with some stigma. An example comes from C. B.

Stapylton's heroic poem modeled on Herodian's *Imperial History of Twenty Roman Caesars*:

> The chiefe conspirers fall into debate
>
> What way was best to save their Triple necks;
>
> And cause they would avoyd the peoples hate,
>
> They gave it out he died of Apoplex;
>
> For he so oft did sleep with drunken pate,
>
> They well might creed no Treason did him vex:
>
> Thus Tyrant dead that peace might take effect,
>
> They first conclude some grave man to elect (47).

Another example of this same usage occurs later in the same text, as well:

> Our Prince while're is dead of Apoplex,
>
> Doe what we could to keep him safe and quiet;
>
> The drunken fits his braines did so much vex,
>
> His night disports and gormandizing diet;
>
> All which together did him so perplex,
>
> They Death procur'd by vaine excesse and Riot:
>
> In stead of whom, wee and the Romans bring,
>
> A man approv'd most fit to be your King (49).

The link between apoplexy and dissolution/drunkenness appears in other sources as well. Thomas Taylor, in *The Second Part of the Theatre of the Gods Judgements*, writes of the Roman Lucullus:

> Lucullus...having given himselfe wholly to a sensuall life, his high-feeding, and deep quaffing brought him to such a weaknesse, that hee grew apoplex'd in all his senses; and as one insufficient to governe either himselfe or his estate, hee was committed to the keeping of M. Lucullus his neare Kinseman, dying soon after (253).

Apoplexy could also be used to describe a semi-voluntary muteness, and this muteness had a connotation of moral weakness, as in William Lower's tragedy, *The Phaenix in her Flames*:

> What Apoplex was that
> Ty'd all this while my tongue from breaking forth
> Into wilde exclamations? O my heart!
> My better part, Lucinda prisoner! (D)

But the network of associations surrounding apoplexy are richer than that. They do not stop at the stigma of a drink inducd paralysis. The remedies for apoplexy bring it up against other maladies in a way that shows the gendered resonances of the term. In *The Queen's Closet Opened,* readers are told that the virtues of Conserve of the Flower of Lavander are that "the Brain, the Stomach, Liver, Spleen, and Womb it maketh warm, and is good in the Suffocation of the Womb, hardness of the Spleen, and for the Apoplex" (237). While apoplexy is not a strictly female disease, it is here grouped medically with the suffocation of the womb, which is a female malady, and one especially associated both with silence and with raucous, excessive noise. Luckyj notes, regarding suffocation of the womb:

> Edward Jorden's treatise entitled *A Bride Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603)… describes the symptoms of female hysteria as 'suffocation in the throate, croaking of Frogges, hissing of Snakes, crowing of Cockes, barking of Dogges, garring of Crowes, frenzies, convulsions, hickockes, laughing, singing, weeping, crying' (2r). The suffocation allegedly caused by the rising of the womb could and apparently did also lead to speech-lessness; he later explains that 'the voice is taken away, because the matter of it which is breath, is either not sufficiently made, or is carried another way, or not competently impelled to the organs of voyce' (8r). Denied the faculty of speech, hysterical women emitted bestial noises, or remained mute. Since the cause of hysteria was thought to be the womb's retention of superfluities (such as blood and 'sperma').normally shed by sexual intercourse and regular menstruation, such involuntary silence was associated with unmanageable

> female sexuality, and could be accompanied by all the symptoms of desire (such as quick, uneven pulse and swooning (9r).

Gertrude's choice of husband prompts Hamlet to evoke this discourse of diseased, involuntary silence--a silence which is also tied to speech. The strength of his criticism makes it clear that these extreme medical readings are not out of bound.

Apoplexy is also tied to witchcraft, making this reference even more loaded. It is something witches can induce in others, as Thomas Heywood writes, in *The General History of Women Containing the Lives of the Most Holy and Prophane*:

> further, that their exorcismes have extended to Herbs, Flowers, Fruits, and Grain, to infect men with Diseases, and cattel with Murren, to delude the Eies and weaken the Sences, bewitch the Limbs, bind the Hands, gyve the Feet, and benumb the other Members,apoplex all the vitall Spirits… (563)

This list of progressively worsening sense weakness does recall Hamlet's attempted diagnosis of Gertrud. But apoplexy is not just something witches induce in others, as a kind of curse. It is a tool witches were thought to be able to use themselves. Also according to Heywood, "Extasists" are women who have found a way to be simultaneously insensible and omniscient:

> Having annointed her body with a certain unguent, from the crown to the heel naked, fell into a sodain apoplex, appearing to them as dead, deprived of all sence or motion: but after five hours returning to her selfe, as if she awaked out of a dream, she related many things done neer and far off in that interim; of which sending to know the truth, they found her to erre in nothing: This was confirmed to Codinus by an Earl of great honour, who was then present when

> this thing was done, Olaus Magnus in his History, saith, That those things are common in the Northern parts of the world, and that the friends of those Extasis diligently keep and safeguard their bodies whilst their spirits are abroad, either to carry rings, tokens, or letters, to their friends, though never so far off, and bring them answers back again, with infallible tokens of their being there (584).

As I will go on to discuss, Gertrude, too, finds a way to make use of her "apoplexy," though not in this literal way. She, too, uses it to concentrate information within herself, though rather than it being a means of *obtaining* information, it is a way of hoarding it. Apoplexy is highly suspect, and again connected with transgressive femininity, but it is not wholly about insensibility. Knowledge, too, is part of the condition of apoplexy.

Thomas Adams, in *The Diseases of the Soule* (1616). Discusses "apoplexie" together with another similar disease called "securitie." The discussion of security and its cure evokes Hamlet and Gertrude's interactions in the closet scene to such an extent that it seems almost impossible that the two texts are not drawing on the same cultural scripts surrounding this term. Adams writes:

> The Apoplexie is a disease, wherin the fountain & originall of all the sinewes being affected, euery part of the body loseth both mouing & sense; all voluntary functions hindred, as the wheels of a clocke when the poyse is down. To this I liken Securitie, which though it be not sudden to the soule, as the other is to the body; yet is almost as deadly. There may be some difference in the strength of opposition, or length of obsession; all similitudes run not like

> Coaches on foure wheeles: they agree in this, they both lie fast a sleepe; the eyes of the ones body, of the others reason shut, and they are both wtihin two grones of death (58).

According to Adams:

> The cause of the Apoplexie is a flegmaticke humour, cold, grosse, and tough, which abundantly fils the ventricles of the braine. The cause of Securitie, is a dusking and clouding of the vnderstanding with the blacke humours, and darke mists of selfe-ignorance; a want of calling himselfe to a reckoning, till he be non-suted (58).

Fascinatingly, when describing the signs and symptoms of the diseases, Adams notes that "policy may vse him as a blocke, cannot as an engine" (58). This "block like nature" and its potential disruptive force is precisely what I believe *Hamlet* explores. I will go on to discuss what, precisely, Gertrude blocks.

Apoplexy for Adams seems to be cured through a physical procedure; security, through a moral one, a "ringing of bells" (metaphorical, rather than actual).to call the sick person back to their awareness of humanity and its sufferings. Adams' description of the cure for security is fascinating in its resonances with *Hamlet*: "Securitie, if it sleepes not to death, must be rung awake…first, Conscience" (60). However, "when this bell strikes, hee drownes the noyse of it with good fellowship" (60). This reference to the effect of good fellowship on maintaining this apoplexed-like state is interesting in that it recalls the "custom more honored in the breach than in the

observance" that Hamlet has spoken of earlier in the play, of raucous carousing.[6] The second bell is preaching. Hamlet's speech to Gertrude in the closet scene has often been compared to a sermon, so this, too, has resonance with this scene. The death of "others round about him" can also serve as a waking bell. It is striking that Polonius has just died at the moment Hamlet begins to berate Gertrude and to try to get her to "wake up." This account of the "bells" casts that event in a new light. He ends with a final foreboding warning, which also resonates with Gertrude's death: "If neither the Peale nor the Goade can waken him, God will shoote an Ordinance against him, Death. And if yet he dies sleeping, the Archangels Trumpe shall not faile to rowse him. Awake then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall giue thee light" (60). In medicalizing Gertrude's condition in this way, Hamlet casts himself as the doctor, and Gertrude as the patient. She must be cured, and he must ring the bells. Hamlet, however, is not fully in control with the network of associations surrounding this term.

Hamlet's idea of Gertrude as apoplex'd, although it tangled with a deep, angry misogyny, and although it casts her in the lot of a drunk, a witch, and a sinner, also establishes Gertrude's affinities with perhaps the most resistant "type" of spectator according to both pro and anti-theatrical material: the working-class man.

Levin clearly articulates an argument about Claudius's complex affinities with lower class men: "Claudius is not a "base groome," of course, and belongs to the same class (and race) as Gertrude and her husband, but in the Ghost's account he possesses,

[6] "This heavy-headed revel east and west/Makes us/traduced and tax'd of other nations:/They clepe us drunkards" (1.4.15-17)

and tempts her with, a base, groomlike erotic power" (308). In *Pois'ned Ale: Gertrude's Power Position in Hamlet*, Erin Elizabeth Lehmann considers Gertrude's resonances with female printers and brewsters.[7] No one has yet considered, however, how Gertrude might be aligned with lower class male playgoers.

Hamlet's discussion of Gertrude's malfunctioning senses, and his use of the words "astonish" and "apoplex'd" aligns Gertrude with lower class male playgoers through its resemblance to the word "gape" and all the disruptive actions associated with gaping as a spectator. Gape is a word that, according to Charles Whitney, collapses a surfeit of affect and affect's absence, and also according to Whitney, it is the primary word used to describe the response of the "common understander" to early modern theater:

> Even the printer Richard Jones sounds ambivalent: his 1590 epistle announces the deletion of 'fond and frivolous Jestures,' 'deformities' that 'have bene of some vaine, conceited fondlings greatly gaped at.' (p.3). 'Gaped at' suggest a mouth distended in dumb amazement or excited bawling, but 'gape' here also takes on the connotation of 'desire,' as in 'gape for,' or 'gape after' (21).

Ben Jonson uses "gapers" to similar effect in *Discoveries*:

> The true Artificier will not run away from nature, as hee were afraid of her; or depart from life, and the likeness of Truth; but speake to the capacity of his hearers. And though his language differ from the vulgar somewhat; it shall not fly from all humanity, with the Tamerlanes, and Tamer-Chams, of the late

[7] See especially pp. 1-20

> Age, which had nothing in them but the scenicall strutting, and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the ignorant gapers (41)

The gapers are loud and raucous, but they are also "dumb" and silent at key moments. Gertrude would never engage in the kind of speech or even the gestural language of the "common gaper," but her silence is a site of greater slippage.

Luckyj, brilliantly tracing the multiple significations of silence, and also their slippages, notes that:

> Implicit in many of the humanist paeans to speech is a view of silence as antisocial bestial disorder from which men must be roused. Thomas Wilson, for example, evokes a postlapsarian world, "destitute of Gods grace…in which al thinges waxed savage…None almoste considered the everlivynge God, but all lived moste communely after their own luste" These fallen men lived in brutish silence until "these appoynted of God called them together by utteraunce of speache" (18) (37).

This is a point of slippage for Gertrude's silence. It is "bestial," as "fallen man" is bestial, and this is far removed from ideas of a lady with her cultivated silence. Hamlet's language about the "beast that wants discourse of reason" strongly evokes Wilson's language regarding pre-lapsarian man.

Luckyj further explains that: "Despite a firmly entrenched double standard, the 'inscrutable' silence in which many early modern men apparently took refuge bore a strong and sometimes unsettling resemblance not to masculine action but to self-enclosed, impenetrable and potentially 'passive' female silence" (47). Slippage cuts

both ways, making male silence "feminine, and "feminine silence" potentially masculine.

Callaghan helpfully outlines the cultural script that the word "astonish" challenges, when she notes that:

> Women and lower-class men are defined in relation to each other and are granted particular contrasting affects—hypersensibility and hyposensibility respectively—that remove them from the privileged category of upper-class male response. The barrenness of plebeian men contrasts the excessive production of sexualized affect associated with the female spectator. Indeed, it is in definitive contrast to women that the blunted sensibilities, uncouth behavior, and allegedly diminished intellectual capacities of plebeian spectators serve to insulate them from rather than expose them to mimetic power (144).

Let us note the langauge that Callaghan uses: "blunted sensibilities" "diminished intellectual capacities" and even "barrenness" and compare that to Hamlet's language when he berates Gertrude. The "sickly part of one true sense" that "could not so mope," and even his assertion that "the heyday in the blood is tame" recalls the lower class male spectator's "barrenness."

Callaghan has noted the cultural pressure on women, in particular, to point the way to decorous playgoing, and *also* to vindicate the theater through their sensitive responses to the moral correctives in the plays (i.e., crying out in guilt like Heywood's housewife). When these roles for women break down, respect for the theater is threatened in two ways: 1) what playmakers can expect from their audiences with

respect to decorum gets corroded, as the "exemplary" figures blur into the most unaccommodating figures and 2) playmakers can command less respect from skeptics of the morality of the theater, as a key prop in their argument is teetering. Within the world of the play, of course, Gertrude's resistance is not only a blow to the theater, but also a blow to Hamlet's attempts at surveillance--to his attempt to find a means by which he can understand the true actions of Gertrude and Claudius.

Rosencrantz also uses the word "amazement" to describe Gertrude's reaction--it is the word that provokes Hamlet's "Oh wonderful son" remark ("Then thus she says; your behavior hath struck her/into amazement and admiration" (3.3.17). Whitney argues that "Gaped at' suggest a mouth distended in dumb amazement, which makes the word yet another word in this nexus connecting Gertrude with male "gapers." However, when the Ghost talks of Gertrude's amazement in the closet scene, the use of the word instead seems to be an attempt to soften the radical potential of these other descriptions of Gertrude. The Ghost reproaches Hamlet: "But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:/O, step between her and her fighting soul:/Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:/Speak to her, Hamlet" (3.4.112).

I read the Ghost's words as working to contain the subversive power of Gertrude's amazement.[8] As he urges more gentleness towards his former wife, the Ghost also attributes her "amazement" to her "fighting soul," which makes her internal state something more comfortable, less disruptive. This sense of greater interior legibility that he asserts for Gertrude seems generous, a de-escalation of violence, but

[8] For the Ghost's potential unreliability, and the question of whether the Ghost's information should be given more weight than that of other characters, see Levin.

it comes through de-radicalizing Gertrude's body and its potentials and diminishing its appearance as something both incomprehensible and "paralyzed."

It is after the Ghost's intervention that Hamlet re-imagines Gertrude's unresponsiveness in a more positive light, painting her to be unmoved, but in a way that suggests serenity and health, and in fact makes her an index for health: "My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,/And makes as healthful music: it is not madness/That I have utter'd." 3.4.110-114).This idea of Gertrude preserves some sense of Gertrude as a woman who is not easily moved, but it is less strange, less dramatic, and less threatening to the social order. A "temperate pulse" could still accelerate, given the right impetus, whereas "apoplex'd" senses are untouchable. Still, given all of the dramatic events that have occurred, including Gertrude witnessing Hamlet seeing a ghost (which surely was almost as intense an experience as seeing a ghost itself might be), to suggest a temperate pulse in the midst of all of this chaos *is* to attribute some strangeness to Gertrude's reaction. Radical ideas of her therefore do persists in Hamlet's thought even as his rage lessens and even as he tempers his language. What is most important to me, however, is not what Hamlet thinks of Gertrude at any given time, but the way these remarks about her can serve as a lens to view Gertrude as a disruptive force throughout the play.

I have argued for the ways in which Gertrude's own behavior at the play and Hamlet's initial descriptions of it, before they are tempered, cross gender and class lines. This is not to say, however, that Gertrude's interruptions to surveillance occur only to the extent that she behaves like a working class man. In fact, the subversive potential of her body comes directly out of discourses about the female body. Patricia

Parker, in one of the best pieces concerning Gertrude to date, does careful work with the wordplay that shows that Hamlet reflects early modern thinking in which “woman, and the mother in particular, represents a "matter,"...that comes between” (81).and that this matter is “related to the resonances of ‘secretes’ in the play, as well as of the contemporary world of agents and intermediaries, go-betweens and spies” (80). Parker notes revealing word choices in surprising places, for instance: “ Hamlet swears his mother, in her "closet," to secrecy against her husband, in lines that underscore the link between a female "matter" and a "close" or secret matter not to be revealed or ‘ravelled out’” (80). She further notes that, “when Claudius presses her to disclose what has transpired in that private place (‘There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves, / You must translate’), the terms of his questioning echo Hamlet's invocation in the Mousetrap Scene of the translator or ‘interpreter’ (3.2.246) the figure who goes between (inter-pres) in a different sense” (80). Most importantly, she shows how Gertrude’s matter is portrayed as something that comes between the characters in the play: “This female "matter" also, however, comes "between." Hamlet's "Now, mother, what's the matter?" comes just after Polonius counsels this mother to remind her son that she has "stood between/ Much heat and him" (3.4.3-7)” (80).

Crucially, she brings into play the early modern theory that “the ‘matter’ of woman…’comes between’- as lapsus, error, detour, frailty- the generative reproduction of a paternal original in a son who might be a faithful copy or representative, perfect instrument of a father's will” (81). She links this with the transmission of information, as well:

> Angell Day's faithful "secretorie" as the bearer, conveyer, or translator of messages is also to be the perfect copyist (‘His pen in this action is not his owne’), "utterlie to relinquish anie affectation to his own doings" or admixture of his own will, avoiding "all maner of delaies" in the interest of "speedie conveyance" or "dispatch"’ (130). Ultimately, what she shows is that The baser "matter" or mother who in this sense comes "between" opens by contrast a space of "error" or "increase" not just between father and son but between a paternal script, commandment, or commission and its fulfillment” (78).

Thus Parker hints at a central argument of this chapter: that the phrase, “stood between much heat and him” reveals a crucial quality of the matter of Gertrude’s body. It is heavy and impenetrable,and quenching. But it it not just that--as it is in the mousetrap scene. It is also shielding, of herself and others.

Gertrude interferes with efforts of surveillance that are leveled against both Hamlet and Ophelia, coming between Claudius and these two younger people at crucial moments. The extent to which the attributes of her body enable this blocking is unclear, although Gertrude herself at least plays with the idea that this is the case, as she vows to keep Hamlet’s secret. Gertrude asserts Hamlet’s madness to Claudius, and in the process keeps her entire conversation with her son a secret. Gertrude participates in an intense scrutiny that is the precursor to surveillance; it is what she does with this scrutiny that distinguishes her from her husband.

In the closet scene, Hamlet has been forcing Gertrude into an intense self-observation (“such spots”), but at the moment when Hamlet sees the Ghost of his father, the paradigm shifts, the position of judge and suspect shifts, and Gertrude

becomes not the observer of her own faults, but of Hamlet's potential madness.[9] Per Wood, as Hamlet has observed the Ghost, Gertrude "has observed Hamlet minutely: Alas, how is't with you, That you do bend your eye on vacancy, And with th'incorporal air do hold discourse? Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep, And as the sleeping soldiers in th'alarm Your bedded hair, like life in excrements, Start up and stand an end" (3.4.116-22). Crucially, madness is another focal point for surveillance for the modern state. But rather than bringing the information Gertrude has gained to light regarding Hamlet's actual sanity, Gertrude tells him: "Be thou assured, if words be

[9] Why Gertrude does not see the Ghost is a mystery. Alan Dessen gives substantial time to this. Usefully, he brings in other texts, both medieval and early modern, in which a character does not see. "Not seeing" can be a sign of greater morality, or lesser: "Generations of readers and playgoers have then asked the obvious question: why does Gertrude not see and hear the Ghost? … A good example of this device is to be found in Heywood's 2 Edward IV, a play roughly contemporary with Henry V and Julius Caesar. Here a clergyman, Doctor Shaw, the man responsible for the interpretation of the prophecy that led to the death of Clarence, is on stage with the ghost of Friar Anselm, who has returned to curse Shaw for falsely interpreting that prophecy. When a messenger arrives to summon Shaw to Richard Ill, the Doctor, in great distress, says he cannot come, but suggests instead: 'I pray thee, take that Friar; / For he can do it better far than I.' The messenger responds: 'A friar, M. Doctor, I see none,' setting up Shaw's comment: `No: thy untainted soul / Cannot discern the horrors that I do' (I, 164). In contrast to the two scenes from the moral plays, 'seeing' here is associated with guilty knowledge and 'not-seeing' with innocence. Regardless, a larger metaphoric point is made in striking theatrical fashion, without figures named Christianity or God's Judgment. Again, what an on-stage figure sees or fails to see provides a telling comment upon his spiritual condition, his values, his fate — a highly visible summary of his state of mind or soul. The messenger's failure to see a ghostly friar visible to the audience clearly singles out Doctor Shaw as a guilty, tainted figure" (120) Dessen ultimately concludes that Gertrude's failure to see is not meant to refled on *her*, but rather on Hamlet's own moral blindness. I find this only partially convincing.

I can also find no answer in early modern lore or science as to why Gertrude, as a woman, might not see the ghost. Although in Nashe's Terrors of the Night, which terrors appear to whom can depend on bodily composition, there is no indication that there is something particular in Gertrude's composition that prevents her from seeing the Ghost. Women were in general often linked to supernatural phenomena through ballads and "old wives tales" like those Hermione and Mamillius discuss in A Winter's Tale. It seems that rather than looking to cultural narratives about women and ghosts for an answer, we are left to look at what this achieves dramatically in *Hamlet* in particular. It does seem that for both Hamlet and Gertrude to see the ghost would change the story in several ways: 1) it would take the focus away from Hamlet's lonely revenge journey and involve Gertrude in it directly. 2) Much of this scene is about Hamlet's persuasion of Gertrude--to involve a direct appearance of the Ghost in Gertrude's alterations would weaken the sense that this is about Hamlet's confrontation with Gertrude and its effects on her. Some scholars have noted that it implies in the Ghost a gentleness towards Gertrude and a desire to spare her the pain of seeing him. From a perspective that treats the characters as living and real, this makes sense as well. None of these aspects of what this accomplishes or suggests are my focus, however. For me, what matters is the way this moment shifts the dynamics of observer/observed.

made of breath,/And breath of life, I have no life to breathe/What thou hast said to me." This almost sonnet-like argument plays with Hamlet's sense of her as paralyzed, dead. Taken literally, Gertrude's lines here agree with Hamlet's earlier, radical assertion that she is insensible.But her deft rhetorical play puts a different spin on this. She no longer seems insensate, but she is using the trope of lifelessness in order to claim an ability to interpose her matter between Claudius and Hamlet.

When Claudius returns, he says, as Parker has observed: "There's matter in these sighs,/these profound heaves:/You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them./Where is your son?" (4.1.1-4).Claudius cannot extract the secrets of Gertrude's meeting with Hamlet from her bodily response. Though she does breathe--and in fact breathes in heaves -- she does not use her breath to speak anything to Claudius of her meeting with Hamlet, and Claudius can read nothing in it without her help. There is even the possibility that Gertrude's sighs are theatrical, that she is not simply misleading Claudius about the cause of her sighs, but is misleading him by sighing at all. Given the intensity of her conversation with Hamlet, however, this seems to push the possibility of her insensibility *too* far, against the grain of the text. What Gertrude *is* capable of, though, is burying the truth of the "matter" inside her body, where Claudius cannot find it out.

In a play obsessed with surveillance, and constantly engaged in it, the fact that Gertrude's observations become a secret in themselves means that she has achieved something notable. The happenings in her closet are secret from Claudius, but not from Hamlet or the audience. At other times, however, the true course of events is known only to Gertrude herself. Gertrude's courtship with Claudius, the

reasons for her choice, the motives, the circumstances, are known only to her. So, too, is the true course of Ophelia's death. Gertrude narrates Ophelia's death in the following manner:

> There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
> There with fantastic garlands did she come
> Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
> But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
> There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
> Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
> When down her weedy trophies and herself
> Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
> And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
> Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and indued
> Unto that element: but long it could not be
> Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
> Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
> To muddy death. (4.7.166)

With these words, Gertrude uses her role as a spectator, a reader of other women, to again interfer with the transmission of information. She does so by occluding her true

reaction, as well as her true perceptions, keeping those locked firmly within herself. Even her choice to refer to the flowers as “long purples” shows her determination to keep herself inscrutable: she does not commit to either a chaste or a vulgar term, instead simply reporting on the action. Ash she surveils Ophelia, Gertrude also draws a veil over *both* of their actions--it is a veil of words--but words that we recognize as mute, that function more like silence than speech. We sense that Ophelia’s own reaction to her death has been stylized. Though the language is vivid and exceedingly specific, we note that these words do not tell us “what happens in Hamlet,” to quote a famous phrase.

Montgomery provides a usefully encapsulating critique of the dominant trend in reading this scene:

Unfortunately, critics who have offered otherwise generous readings of Gertrude resist giving her achievements here their due. Some argue that "[t]he woman who describes Ophelia's death [. . .] is harrowed within her limits but not marked and changed by her experience" (Ewbank 67). Others suggest that "their [speeches'] diction and cadences clearly reflect the personality and mood of the speaker (this is not true of Gertrude's report, which is much more like a self-contained poetic set-piece)" (R. Levin 315) or that "Gertrude's speech [...] not being expressive of her […] does not belong to her" (Scolnicov 102)

Montgomery challenges these readings, which she see as diminishing Gertrude’s role in this scene: “ Gertrude's most crucial feat of play shaping here is her insistence that Ophelia did not deliberately jump but "Fell in the weeping brook" (4.7.146)... Gertrude is advocate as well as publisher for Ophelia.”

My reading reconciles Montgomery and the critics she rightly challenges. To me it is crucial to regard this speech about Ophelia's death as a deliberate intervention on Gertrude's part, as Montgomery so rightly asserts it is, but also as a*ppearing* as a set piece, a speech perhaps not even coming from Gertrude's direct experience. That the speech can be one thing and appear another in this way means that Gertrude attains an elusive rhetorical achievement: her words seem simultaneously not to come from her body, her mind, her sight, while also managing to be persuasive, lawyerly, and influential. Information is given, but it is obviously mediated, and weakens, rather than solidifying Claudius's power and control over his subjects via *his* knowledge of them. The true nature of this episode lies in the "chapter of Gertrude's bosom," a bosom much less readily displayed than Orsino's. It is worth noting that this is a cause of death she is dealing with--a major subject for modern state surveillance and the "detective gaze," and that is what she is interrupting, diverting in favor of her own ends.

In some respects, Gertrude exemplifies Queen Elizabeth's motto, "Video et Taceo" (or, "I see and say nothing"). Crane notes the following missive from Elizabeth to her chief advisor, Burghley:

> I give you this charge that you shall be of my privy Council and content to take pains for me and my realm. This judgement I have of you that you will not be corrupted by any manner of gift... and that without respect of my private will you will give me that counsel which you think best and if you shall know anything necessary to be declared to me of secrecy you shall show it to myself

only. And assure yourself I will not fail to keep taciturnity therein and therefore herewith I charge you.[10]

Crane notes that, in appointing her chief advisor, "Elizabeth was careful to stress his moral authority and her own willingness to keep silent and accept advice" (6).This summary of this conversation to me flattens out key features of this document. "You shall show it to myself only" is a crucial phrase, one Crane passes over when arriving at her reading. Information is flowing into Elizabeth, but not out, just as is the case with Gertrude. Although Queen Elizabeth is assuring Burghley that she will honor his silence with a "taciturnity" of her own, to me the most important thing is that this control over information gives Queen Elizabeth enormous power. In many ways, this relationship of secrecy echoes the relationship of Gertrude and Hamlet immediately following the closet scene. And in many ways "I see yet say nothing" is a perfect description of Gertrude's discreet handling of Ophelia's death. And yet it is important that Elizabeth *is* the state, and she sees and says nothing as the ultimate legal arbiter of the land, where Gertrude's silences and her unresponsiveness disrupts the law, even as she is "imperial jointress" to Claudius's "warlike state."

Gertrude's version of "Video et Taceo" serves Hamlet at the end of the closet scene, but it is also important to note that Hamlet is equally concerned with surveillance of Claudius, and that Hamlet finds Gertrude's behavior deeply threatening in his efforts to restore Elsinore to his own sense of order. Gertrude's "seeing" of Claudius and King Hamlet, without commenting upon the vast difference he perceives between them, disturbs Hamlet to a fever pitch. Gertrude keeps her own counsel not

[10]As quoted in Conyers Read, Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth (London: Cape, 1955), p. 119

just to protect Hamlet and Ophelia, but also regarding the nature of her choice of husband. To Hamlet, this is unendurable. Hamlet's rage at this silence from Gertrude has a profound influence on the shape of the play. Gertrude speaks only 200 lines in the entire play. Hamlet speaks nearly one hundred on the subject of her choice of Claudius as a husband. Rebecca Smith, one of the first critics to read Gertrude from a feminist viewpoint, notes that although male critics tended to accept Hamlet and the Ghost's views of Gertrude as lustful, Gertrude herself never speaks of or displays her lust.[11] Nor does Gertrude offer an alternate explanation for her decisions. She never says what she sees when she looks on Gertrude, not even after Hamlet orders her to compare the two portraits. Her response is then to bemoan the pain of looking at her own soul. But especially given that at this juncture Hamlet has offered no coherent reading of Gertrude's choices, it is quite clear that Gertrude herself never tells us exactly what it means to her to look on Claudius, or to engage any of her other senses with him. Perhaps the real threat is that Gertrude does not allow us to know the extent to which her body is ruling her, and keeps that as her own secret.

In considering the disruptive power that Gertrude gains by her opaque matter, the extent to which it causes Hamlet to unravel endless, copious language says a great deal about the effects she creates. Hamlet's language at these junctures is, as I have already implied, rich and interesting, providing the idea of Gertrude's astonishment and her insensibility, but these words are also a sign that Gertrude is throwing a serious wrench into the mechanics of her world.[12]

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[11] See especially page 197-200.

[12] Zvi Jagendorf gives an excellent summary of the ways in which silence provokes speech in Hamlet, although without considering Gertrude, and the way Hamlet's words multiply around her silences: "If

Gertrude's death is often seen as the crux of her role in Hamlet. From my reading, it is far from her most interesting scene. There are a few notable qualities to her last actions. One is that Claudius tries to cover his deed with an appeal to conventional assumptions of female spectatorship, and Gertrude roundly rebuffs him. When Gertrude shows the effects of the poison she has drunk, Claudius says, "she swoons to see them bleed" (5.2.341). She speaks out to deny this reading of her reaction. But here at last Gertrude speaks to explain her cause of death in a manner that would be satisfying to a surveilling state power that dispenses justice. She is poisoned, and she declares that she is poisoned. Though she cannot help it, her body does react strongly, visibly, dramatically through her death throes. To me, that is a disappointment, and seems like a thwarting of her subversive power.[13] She is not

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Hieronimo's self-inflicted maiming is meant to make all further questioning pointless, leaving the spectators on the stage and in the theatre with the fact of the heap of dead bodies to contemplate, the appearance in Hamlet of a silent Ghost has just the opposite effect. Both silences are close to death, the ultimate silence, but the Ghost's is creative of speech. It arouses in its observers the strong desire to question it, to find out what it wants and what its return to earth means. This is true of the silences in Hamlet in general. They provoke and test speech. They challenge words to explain and do justice to them….Silent gesture expresses those things that can never be fully known from the outside, or totally recaptured, namely, death and the action of another, or any action once it is past. Language assaults those gestures, demanding meaning and offering dialogue, explaining and interpreting. The Ghost does speak and describes his pain; the Player King and Queen talk of love, fortune and fidelity. But while words effectively communicate information and feelings to their audience, while they are more efficient than silence, they are also treacherous because necessarily subjective, and though they claim to 'tell all' can in fact only 'tell some'. Thus, what is unsaid, or what can not be said, continues to influence us as we hear what is said" (127). Although the Ghost certainly does create the effect Jagendorf identifies, Gertrude is his equal in this respect.

[13] In The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View, David Leverenz writes, "Hamlet is part hysteric, as Freud said, and part Puritan in his disgust at contamination and his idealization of his absent father. But he is also, as Goethe was the first to say, part woman. Goethe was wrong, as Freud was wrong, to assume that "woman" means weakness. To equate women with weak and tainted bodies, words, and feelings while men possess noble reason and ambitious purpose is to participate in Denmark's disease dividing mind from body, act from feeling, man from woman" (292) I view my paper as a similar effort to find aspects of Gertrude's femininity that are distinctive, and positive, rather than simply looking at behavior on a spectrum from better to worse, where the more like a man one acts, the better. But the course of my argument has taken me very far from Leverenz's viewpoint that: "Ophelia's drowning signifies the necessity of drowning both words and feelings if Hamlet is to act the role prescribed for him. That he does so is the real tragedy in the play." (293) This idea of the tragedy of "drowning words and feelings" is interesting from a psychoanalytic perspective, but to me Gertrude's less verbal, more

allowed to unsettle as Aaron does, with his off-stage death. Crucially, however, she speaks this as the state collapses entirely. I am wary of readings that see a triumph of Gertrude's agency, here, as it comes at the expense of her bodily inscrutability, but I do think it is important that even as Gertrude's body is made to speak, and even as she announces her own death and clearly asserts the truth before the law, the veil drops again, and that truth must only be reported. I take Hamlet's remark that "the rest is silence" as Gertrude's last victory.

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opaque existence is the loss I feel most keenly in the last scene, rather than Hamlet's copious, punning, twisting language. Leverenz declares, "Far from being a catharsis or a resolute confrontation, or an integration of the underlying issues, the play's end is a study in frustration and failure." I do share some of this sense of "frustration and failure." I hesitate to read the happy ending, as painted by John Paterson in "The Word in Hamlet" (an early essay on the play's disillusionment with language) as entirely happy: "The split between the word and the deed, between the speech and the thought, has reflected the more serious split that, in the state of Denmark as in the state of life, exists between appearance and reality. It is the triumph of the play that in the end the split is healed and truth reasserted in the proud final words of Horatio," (55) although it is not because I question the extent to which such a split has been entirely healed. In fact, I take some comfort in the fact that it has not been.

CHAPTER 3

DUCHESS OF MALFI STILL

The *Duchess of Malfi* raises the possibility that the Duchess will experience a kind of living death through her silent spectatorship, that her identity will cease to be definite, and that she will lose her inscription in the social world of the play. When she triumphs in making certain that her choice of silence will not undo her identity, this success involves an incredibly complex management, not only of her body and her speech, but of the reception of her silence. The masque is the final test of the Duchess's ability to control her image, and although at other times her success is more ambivalent, here she succeeds entirely, closing out the play with a strong assertion that silent spectatorship need not result in a loss of identity, even when it is occurring under duress, and is a choice borne out of a dramatic world where women's reactions, whether they be laughter or groans of death, elicit male disapproval and even violence.

In the immediate aftermath of the *The Duchess of Malfi's* debut on the early modern stage, opinions of the title character's silence in the play seem to confirm that rendering the Duchess as a silent spectator was a risk, but also that it was a success. In 1623, when the first quarto of the Duchess of Malfi appeared in print, commendatory verses by Webster's collaborators and contemporaries prefaced the text. One was by Webster's friend William Rowley:

> I never saw thy duchess till the day
> That she was lively body'd in thy play;
> Howe'er she answer'd her low-rated love

Her brothers' anger did so fatal prove,

Yet my opinion is, she might speak more;

But never (in her life) so well before.

I interpret the initial lines to mean that whatever the Duchess said or did not say, whether it was a well-judged or not, her brothers murdered her in anger in the end. The final lines can be read two ways: 1) Webster might have given more lines to his Duchess but not better ones and 2) the real Duchess might have spoken more than Webster's but she couldn't have been better-spoken. The second meaning comes to seem more likely when the reader reaches the end of the poem, but at first, due to enjambment, the first reading seems more likely. Rowley's poem is slippery, playful and ambivalent. The poem gives a first impression of critiquing Webster's Duchess on the grounds that she does not speak enough, but then coyly retracts this assertion. In the end, Rowley actually makes no argument at all about whether she spoke less than she should have, and says nothing at all about whether the historical Duchess of Amalfi spoke more or less than Webster's Duchess. Nevertheless, his verse strongly, undeniably puts this question in mind, via the surface it initially presents.

Twenty-first century viewers of the play continue to find the Duchess's silence troubling. Ben Spiller, in "Inconstant Identities on the South Bank: The Duchess of Malfi and the Homeless Visitor" writes, "Janet McTeer's Duchess, who had accepted her death as an almost welcomed release from the hell she was living, sat centre stage and constantly reminded us of her continuing, post death influence on the play. Her absence of focused identity and almost constant passivity in life continued in death" (26). Here, the precarious nature of the Duchess's silence as perceived by Rowley has

become for Spiller an "absence of focused identity" and "almost constant passivity." In this chapter I will explore why such silent presence can be perceived, within the discourse of the time, as well as from Spiller's modern framework, as resulting in an "absence of focused identity." However, I will also argue that in the text itself, the Duchess dispels this notion and assures the audience of her identity.

Linda Woodbridge, in "Queen of Apricots: The Duchess of Malfi, Hero of Desire" has made a compelling case for the Duchess's frank, playful sexiness.[1] This compelling view of the Duchess suggests a very different woman than the one Spiller saw on the South Bank. We might ask: did the South Bank production simply misread the Duchess? Should Linda Woodbridge have been their dramaturg? My answer is no. Much has been made of the split between public and private action *in the Duchess of Malfi.*[2] I build on scholarship which asserts a public and a private Duchess to argue that although she is playful and sexual with Antonio and Cariola, she must also engage in public performance, and that this performance is in the role of silent female spectator. Being a "silent female spectator" does not mean at all times choosing stillness and impassivity. As Woodbridge notes, the Duchess lives a private life in which she is far from impassive (hair loose, kicking and squirming at night, flirting and teasing).[3] But in the public world of the play, when the spectacle is not her own family but her brothers' controlling cruelty, she behaves differently. This is not a role that she chooses of her own accord, but it is one that she inhabits with incredible skill and deftness.

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[1] See especially p. 162
[2] For a useful overview, see Callaghan's chapter, "The State of the Art," in Luckyj's *Critical Guide*, especially pages 71-72
[3] p. 162

The South Bank's production seems to have focused more on the public side of the Duchess, though the extent to which the production minimizes other facets of her behavior is not wholly clear from Spiller's essay. What is clear, however, is that the South Bank's decision to have the Duchess sit on the stage in Act V, while a strong reading of several threads already present in the play, undoes the Duchess's careful work to reposition her silence, to reshape discourses around it. In putting the Duchess silently on stage for these scenes, the production misses the extent to which the Duchess is not just a presence in the play, but an orchestrator of her own reception.

In "Ears Prejudicate in *Mariam* and *The Duchess of Malfi*," Reina Green observes that the Duchess is often a silent listener, and argues that the Duchess's silence is resistant. I would like to build on this work, and to view the Duchess's silence as a fluid, nuanced praxis. Thinking about the Duchess's complex, involved work *as a female spectator* simply hasn't been done in this way.[4]

The Duchess's brothers force her into the role of spectator, giving her no choice but to witness a cavalcade of horrors. In addition to the masque of madmen, Ferdinand also presents her with what appears to be Antonio's severed hand, and wax likenesses her family, apparently dead. Nevertheless, she controls what it means to be

[4] Lynne Maxwell provides several excellent readings of the Duchess as a spectator, for instance, in looking at how Ferdinand orchestrates his spectacle in such a way as to teach her how to read it in such a way that it will appear both real and horrible to her: "His perversion of the ritual of reconciliation and presentation of the dead hand make him seem capable of anything. By playing with her expectations, manipulating the lighting, and limiting her sensory access to the hand-allowing her to feel it first in the dark, before raising the lights-Ferdinand primes her to believe that his next display, the trio of wax sculptures modeled to look like her family's corpses, consists of "true substantial bodies." When Bosola directs her to "look" at the "the piece from which 'twas ta'en" so that she will "know directly [that Antonio and his children] are dead," she does not question the truth of the figures (4.1.56, 58). Ferdinand masterfully combines deception and revelation to enhance the impact of his torturous display and devastate his sister." I hope to complement this analysis with a similarly detailed reading of the Duchess's own mastery in orchestrating responses to the spectacle of her own spectatorship.

cast into this role. The Duchess herself makes sure that spectating is not to be viewed as lesser. When the Duchess declares her resolve to persist in her course despite her brothers' threats, she does so in terms that cast spectatorship as an action, and the key task of the play to boot: "and even now, even in this hate, as men in some great battles/by apprehending danger have achieved/almost impossible actions—I have heard soldiers say so—So I, through frights and threatenings, will assay/this dangerous venture" (1.2.345). She asserts that "assaying the venture" means "apprehending danger" and that it is through "apprehending the danger," (as opposed, even, to "assaying the venture") that the "almost impossible actions" have been achieved.

The verb "apprehending," as employed in the 17th century, bundles together connotations of physical motion, logical appraisal, and emotional agitation. According to the OED, in the 17th century, it is a word that can mean physically grasping an object. One could "apprehend" a cat by its tail, for instance. The grasping involved in "apprehending" can also be less literal, however; it can mean, "to seize or embrace an offer or opportunity." When "apprehending" occurs only in the mind, it has the potential to be viewed as intellectual project, but also as a passionate project: It can mean, according to the OED, "a grasping of the intellect" but it can also mean "to feel emotionally, be sensible of, feel the force of." All of these definitions are in play in the Duchess's use of the word. The idea of grasping danger by the throat, either literally or figuratively inheres in her use of word, but so does the idea of grasping with one's intellect the dangers inherent in choosing this path. And so, too, perhaps most of all, does the idea of feeling apprehensive. So the task, according to the Duchess, is as much an emotional task as it is a physical or intellectual one, but it is also as much a

physical or intellectual task as it is an emotional one. She disrupts a hierarchy that many in the 21st century take for granted, namely that action is always more important than reaction.

The next step in understanding the Duchess's praxis is understanding *why* she chooses silent response. Without understanding this, we cannot fully see what she is working to avoid, and what the stakes are. Even before the Duchess enters the stage for the first time, the play makes clear, albeit through what appears to be a light comic digression, that reacting volubly to spectacle has social consequences. We see this via a woman who has become the butt of a dark joke. This early scene tells the audience that the Duchess will need to behave differently if she is to succeed. It tells us that when a female spectator cannot manage her reactions and their reception--which often must involve concealment of even the act of reacting--, the failure can result in a loss of male respect, and can unleash vicious male violence. It also suggests that failure along these lines might mean that the only recourse available to women would be to avoid the theater, and that even this choice might not result in an escape from these unfortunate consequences.

Castruccio, a courtier, tells the Duchess's brother Ferdinand a little about his wife's behavior as a spectator. In doing so he provides Webster's audience with an example of a woman who seems to fail both to manage her bodily responses and to manage the reception of those responses. Castruccio tells Ferdinand that his wife cannot abide the comic faces that Castruccio's fool makes, "nor endure to be in merry company; for she says too much laughing, and too much company, fills her too full of the wrinkle" (1.1.135). Although in one sense Castruccio seems wrong to say that his

wife cannot abide comic faces, since clearly they make her laugh, what she cannot abide is being made to laugh (and therefore wrinkle) against her desires. Merry company becomes unendurable to Castruccio's wife because she does not want to wrinkle, but is being forced to. The uncontrollable effects of comedy trouble her. She seems to have no power to proof herself against the feeling. She cannot regulate her body as she takes in the fool's jokes. Her only hope of avoiding a bodily response is to keep herself out of the fool's presence (Castruccio's remarks do not clarify whether she does remove herself from the situation or not, and whether "cannot abide" means "avoids"). Her bodily weakness appears to her husband a double one: she cannot surround herself with merry company without laughing, if she so chooses, and if she does laugh, the act will leave undesirable marks on her body. Her concern with wrinkles, although one Castruccio probably shares (would he want a wrinkled wife?), makes her appear vain.

Ferdinand gives a vicious reply, when Castruccio tells him of his wife: "I would, then, have a mathematical instrument made for her face, that she might not laugh out of compass" (1.2.138). Though it is a punning reply, playfully re-literalizing the phrase "out of compass," the fantasy behind the words is one of measurement and control. Whether this "instrument" would be painful, and how it would operate remains unclear, but it is a sinister image Ferdinand creates. Given his later sadism, it is a reply that clearly contains the seeds of a violence that will grow throughout the story. The price of failure is unleashing both violence and disdain.

From her first scene in the play, the Duchess must deploy speech and silence exceedingly carefully. During this first scene, she explicitly casts herself as a

spectator, remarking, “I think this speech between you both was studied, It came so roundly off”[5] (1.2.244).After the Cardinal leaves, she speaks one and a half more lines. It is only once Ferdinand has also left the scene and she speaks only to her maid Cariola, that she speaks freely, uttering a fluent ten and a half lines. Her first appearance on stage can be compared to Hamlet’s in order to illuminate some of the gender specific struggles the Duchess must face. Hamlet speaks the most lines of any Shakespeare character (1500, in total), but in the first scene in which he appears, he is a sullen, almost entirely silent spectator. He discomfits and disrupts the court with this behavior--it is a calculated and controlled means of defying his mother even as he states, “I shall in all my best obey you, Madam” (1.2.120). Hamlet is Claudius’s subject, and for that reason he must bring his suit to return to Wittenberg to his King.

The Duchess is not her brothers’ subject, but rather a ruler in her own right. She has no request of them. In fact, the first words the Duchess speaks are in response to a suit Ferdinand brings to her (to appoint Bosola to the position of Master of the Horse). Here, although the Duchess nominally has more control over the situation than Hamlet, the whole interaction has an intensity and over-familiarity to it that suggests complicated gendered undercurrents making the Duchess’s silent response a different matter entirely than Hamlet’s. It is Ferdinand’s crude assertion that “whores by that rule are precious” (1.2.216) that prompts the Duchess to say, “will you hear me? I'll never marry” (1.2.217). She is forceful and succinct in her response, but the

[5] This is one of her very first utterances. “Who must despatch me? I account this world a tedious theatre” is one of her very last. Rather than this “reactive” position being a weak one, this puts them before her for her judgment, and allows her to assert herself through her judgment of the world as “tedious.”

question “will you hear me?” reveals the extent to which the Duchess is asserting herself against a powerful violent current of male dominance.

One of the Duchess’s key strategies is speaking yet saying nothing through conventional, aphoristic language. This helps her manage the reception of her response, by offering up a form or resistance that does not seem to be resistance. The Duchess’s language, even when she does speak, is not completely distinct from silence, according to classical understandings of the term. She has found a way to speak while seeming merely to ventriloquize, to avoid supplying her own language, which Ferdinand and the Cardinal might mock, belittle or twist to their own ends. The Duchess’s manner of speaking when addressing her brothers exemplifies the ways in which some forms of speech can function more like silence than speech. The Duchess’s omissions when she speaks become important in occluding her responses to her brothers. For instance, when considering appointing Bosola as master of the horse at her brother’s request, she declares: “Your knowledge of him commends him and prefers him.” This sentence tells a clear, vivid story. It is a simple subject, verb, object sentence, with no nominalizations, no passive voice. The clarity and precision of the sentence is part of what makes it resemble silence: it is not a “noisy” phrase. It is stripped down. Yet despite the firm, active phrasing of the sentence, she has elided the words “to me” In this way she acknowledges the request without confirming it, and without suggesting its effects on her. This elision is also important to the ways in which this form of speech resembles silence.

When Ferdinand and the Cardinal begin to rail against the Duchess’s wish to marry, performing for her, she responds to their display with an aphorism: “diamonds

are of most value, they say, that have passed through most jewellers' hands" (1.2.216).She speaks in conventional wisdom, but with a purpose. This aphorism allows her to contradict her brothers without explicitly addressing their concerns. Her seemingly effortless reference to what "they say" about jewels allows her to make her point clearly while seeming not to defend herself in specific terms, to marshal her own rhetoric, to reason, to make appeals or denials. Interestingly, this and other remarks also reveal that the duchess, a woman willing to marry a manager of her household, is willing to expose the "bourgeois" economic practices that have infiltrated the court. As Barbara Correll observes, "at key moments in the play the duchess... turn[s] to market discourse... [she] uses the market in a demystifying way that serves not only to debunk the feudal valorization of honor and female chastity but to further destabilize it by unmasking the already interdependent relation between market and court" (86).This shows that using the term "management" to describe the Duchess's work with her reception gets at the essence of the ways in which the Duchess explicitly acknowledges and participates in a new economic order, one in which the managerial class will come to more and more prominence, and the act of "management" will therefore come further and further into standard vernacular.

The Duchess exercises significant bodily control throughout the play. When the Duchess says, "shall this move me?" (1.2.255) regarding the harsh injunctions of her brothers, she also uses language that suggests bodily control. Bridget Escolme notes that in the early modern period the term "moved" was more bodily, and that mental and physical acquiescence often blended: "Many of the early modern treatises on the passions figure them as turbulent movements it is impossible to control.

Patience in the face of adversity is stasis, passion is movement" (11). She asserts that "even where there is no obvious move to action as a result of inner motion/emotion, being moved is associated with action and movement" (12).[6] In refusing to be moved, the Duchess takes on a bodily task.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to view the Duchess's project as being one to *always* control her body, to never react (never to weep, never to laugh, never—perhaps—even to speak). Her objective is to avoid disdain and violence, and that sometimes means, rather than entirely suppressing her reactions, managing the way such reactions are received. The Duchess understands that some physical reaction is inevitable, and is part of human life, and must occur when she is being tried so sorely, but she has thought hard about how to shape interpretations of those reactions.

In thinking about what the Duchess might be striving for with control over her body, it is important to consider Michael Schoenfeldt's polemical pushback against scholarship that attempts to draw too close a kinship between psychoanalytic and Foucauldian theories and early modern conceptions of the self. In Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England, he suggests that: "the early modern regime seems to entail a fear of emotion that resembles our own fear of repression" (16).Shoenfeldt suggests that "the renaissance seems to have imagined selves a differentiated not by their desires, which all more or less share, but by their capacity to control these desires"

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[6] For this, her primary proof is the Taming of the Shrew: "'A woman moved is like a fountain troubled' (5.2.143) says Katherine in her final speech of capitulation to her role as perfect wife. While your husband is obliged to move about the world for you, she argues, committing 'his body/To painful labour both by sea and land,/To watch the night in storms, the day in cold', the woman is fortunate enough to lie 'warm at home, secure and safe' (5.2.149–52). Women, at the end of The Taming of the Shrew, should stay 'unmoved' both mentally and physically – and it is difficult to extricate the two in early modern English." (12)

(17). The Duchess's self-control has stakes for her selfhood, according to this reading; if she is "moved" she will be less differentiated, less an individual. But in this play I see evidence that her silence threatens her selfhood as well. Nancy Simpson-Younger argues convincingly that unresponsive bodies on the early modern stage lose their identities and must be re-described through language in order to have meaning once more: "Through actions and words, the identity of a sleeper or corpse is therapeutically re-membered for the satisfaction of the living: listed body parts, traits, or characteristics are re-forged into a signifying whole, creating an identity for the non-responsive character by re-endowing the body with meaning…" (153).The Duchess of Malfi bears this out. The Duchess cannot tell wax replicas of the bodies of her loved ones from the people themselves. And, although it is dark, she mistakes the severed hand first for Ferdinand's living hand, and then for her husband's dead hand. The illegibility of unresponsive flesh occurs repeatedly. Most telling, however, is the conversation that occurs between the Duchess and Bosola before he murders her:

> Duchess: Am not I thy duchess?
>
> Bosola: Thou art some great woman, sure, for riot begins to
>
> sit on thy forehead (clad in gray hairs) twenty years
>
> sooner than on a merry milk-maid's (4.2.123).

What is crucial to note here is that when the Duchess asks whether or not she is Bosola's Duchess, he responds in a way that suggests that he will make the judgment of who she is by how she has reacted to the world. Riot on her forehead, gray in her hair. It implies that without her reactions, which permanently mark and prematurely age her, the Duchess ceases to be legible as a "great woman."

The Duchess balances these two competing pressures—not to lose her identity through bodily loss of control *or* through impassivity--but as the play progresses, the Duchess's the effort to do so must become more and more complex. Displaying her reactions give her brothers increasing power to diminish her, while at the same time, her impassivity begins to make her appear increasingly less alive. When private scenes in her palace that have allowed her to assert a different, more vivid side of herself have given way to scenes of imprisonment and duress, she faces a great challenge in self-representation. The following exchange with Cariola shows as much:

DUCHESS: Necessity makes me suffer constantly,
And custom makes it easy. Who do I look like now?
CARIOLA: Like to your picture in the gallery,
A deal of life in show, but none in practice;
Or rather like some reverend monument
Whose ruins are even pitied.
DUCHESS: Very proper;
And Fortune seems only to have her eye-sight
To behold my tragedy (4.2.30-34).

In this moment with Cariola, the Duchess's image drifts in two unfavorable directions at once. One is towards such stillness that she will appear unlifelike, with no continuing force or influence on the world, and no ability to determine her own place in the social world of the play. The remarks that the Duchess resembles her portrait imply that the Duchess has made a largely successful effort to remain impassive, but that this impassivity is causing her to appear lifeless. The other negative image,

paradoxically, is as the Duchess as an object diminished not by impassivity but by suffering. The metaphor of ruins implies that she is broken down, altered from herself. Both negative ideas inhere in this passage. The Duchess must, through careful language, control what this means. The Duchess's response, "very proper," suggests the Duchess's careful management of Cariola's reception of her suffering. Just what, precisely, is proper, is unclear. It might be that it is proper that she be pitied, it might be proper that the marks of her suffering show, it might be proper that she appears like her picture in a gallery. Or perhaps she is merely praising Cariola for describing her as she sees herself. The Duchess allows this ambiguity to remain, but assures her that all is in order, thereby asserting herself once again.

With the words, "fortune seems only to have her eye-sight/to behold my tragedy," the Duchess figures fortune as a female spectator. In doing this she is conjuring a new spectator, who sees differently than Cariola, and subtly shifting her position. Her spectacle is central--fortune has eyes only to behold her. And again, she uses this opportunity to make "beholding" a key action. Fortune, this powerful female spectator, does her work, turns her wheel, by beholding. In describing fortune in this way, the Duchess is also positioning her own role in the play, as one who "apprehends danger," as a critical one.

The Duchess and fortune are explicitly doubled in this play. Leslie Thomson, in "Fortune and Virtue in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*", notes that the Duchess, in her earlier remark, "I would have you lead your fortune by the hand," unwittingly suggests that the Duchess is the agent of her own undoing…As a consequence, rather than passing the blame to a deity as the novella does, the play prompts the audience's

awareness that the Duchess is quite literally a victim of herself-Fortune's fool" (480). To me, however, the motif implies more about the Duchess's agency through spectatorship than it does her agency in bringing about her own demise. Fortune is figured as a spectator, but she shapes the course of history through her sight. To "see" must, in some way, be to cause, or else fortune would not be fortune. In saying that she has eyes only to behold the Duchess's suffering, she is not saying that she is a passive observer, but rather that eyes themselves of fortune become the means of dealing out fate.

"The masque of madmen" that occurs in Act IV of *the Duchess of Malfi* appears, on its surface, relatively conventional, drawing on a range of familiar subjects of interest to early modern viewers: courtly masques, bedlam asylum, local trade locations. In fact, it has become standard to call it "the masque of madmen" even though no one in the play actually refers to it as such, due to it so clearly displaying key formal elements of a court masque. Despite the familiarity of many individual components of the scene, though, the way in which these components come together disrupts established conventions that would see the Duchess as a performer, rather than a spectator. The break with convention that makes the Duchess a figure of female spectatorship in this scene also unsettles social signifiers and leaves the characters to fight to determine what they will mean. The Duchess shapes a volatile situation, in which the meaning of a new form of theater is not clear, to her advantage. Up until this point, she has chosen silence and impassivity at key junctures, and displayed several key strategies for shaping the reception of such a silence. The masque puts these strategies to a new, complex test, as the Duchess must find a way to remain silent

without appearing to lose her social identity, and her force within the play. She succeeds. To paraphrase one most famous lines of the play,[7] she remains both "still" and "the Duchess of Malfi."

The play as a whole is entropic.[8] In the *Duchess of Malfi*, there is a sense of rot, of decomposition. The plot of the play itself seems to be decaying, losing coherence as we plunge into increasing chaos and a fifth act that lacks the play's protagonist. The Duchess's own arc, however, as my reading of the masque shows, is not one of entropy.

Acting in such a masque was meant to flatter and raise up the nobles. It is meant to be a set piece for their power. As the ruler of the court, the Duchess should have a central role in this masque. Instead, she is a spectator. Ferdinand turns it from a vehicle for affirming the authority of the king and court to a vehicle to undermine the Duchess's authority.

Some scholars have posited that the madmen in the play would have been doubled parts with the courtiers. This doubling would powerfully evoke a real court masque, where typically, instead of real madmen, courtiers *would* play such roles. In fact, the ways in which this resembles a real court masque make it a more subversive; the imitation casts its subversions into sharper relief. Perhaps part of the humiliation of this particular masque is that this form, usually both participatory and flattering, is neither.[9]

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[7] See 4.2.137

[8] For Jennifer DeReuk, Webster "anticipated in his complex dramatic artifacts, with their resonant work ideologies, the atmosphere of a later age in which coherence is gone and we - like the Duchess in her "tedious theatre" - are similarly beset by simulacra."

[9] Other factors confound what the play signifies as well. Putting the masque before a large public audience also unsettles its purpose. The reference to a "glass house" in the masque would have

The Duchess explicitly becomes a spectator of a play within the play, the "Masque of Madmen," after her command to "let them come in." Depending on where one identifies the start and end of the masque, the Duchess either remains entirely silent for the duration of the Masque of Madmen, or says only "Sit, Cariola—let them loose when you please, for I am chained to endure all tyranny.[10] The Duchess's has been imprisoned in her own palace, and she is about to watch a torturous spectacle, one that inverts the usual purpose of the masque. Yet she is able to make use of this and turn it around. Her remark: "let them come in" reminds us that this is her space, her palace, and emphasizes that she is inviting in this spectacle.

She also takes advantage of the play's ambiguous nature to suggest that the play, rather than harming her, will actually do her good. "Nothing but noise and folly can keep me in my right wits; whereas reason and silence make me stark mad," (4.2.15) the Duchess remarks to Cariola. The Duchess has heard the cries of madmen outside her lodgings, unleashed upon her by her brother. Cariola, speaking from her position as the Duchess's loyal and sympathetic maid, believes that Ferdinand's decision to let loose these madmen is terrible act of tyranny committed upon the

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reminded playgoers at Blackfriars that the theater was right next to a glass factory. This reference would have strongly reminded viewers of their own sense of place, their own material reality, and reminded them of who and where they were. This would have casting into sharper relief that they are the audience for what should be a masque for the Amalfi court, and that this is in no way a "proper" mask. Though a small thing, this would have heightened the feeling that this masque was not a known quantity, and that its meaning could be claimed and contested by the characters on the stage.

[10] Webster does not delineate the division between this play within a play and the play as a whole with perfect clarity. Although one might argue that the servant's enumeration of the madmen is not part of the masque, I will consider it to be part of it. The point at which the masque ends is also not perfectly clear. After the madmen dance, Bosola enters dressed as an old man, and the Duchess asks, "is he mad, too?" This question suggests that Bosola's conversation with the Duchess might serve as a continuation of the masque. As Sarah Southerland has noted, the anti (or ante)-masque/masque structure was common in court, and one could view the masque of madmen as the ante-masque and then the Duchess's execution (which does contain Bosola's oddly mannered, rhyming speech about her impending death) as a masque.

Duchess. The Duchess herself, however, suggests that the cries of these madmen may help her keep her wits. This is in accord with many theories of the time, including those of Robert Burton, in Anatomy of Melancholy. It is not an easy hypothesis to refute—plausible enough, in fact, to encourage us to reinterpret Ferdinand's action in light of it.

Just before the Duchess makes her statement to Cariola about the power of the madmen to keep her sane, a conversation between Ferdinand and Bosola occurs, one that may suggest that Ferdinand believes the madmen will improve the Duchess's state of mind, but may suggest precisely the opposite. "Why do you do this?" Bosola asks, speaking of Ferdinand's cruel, and successful attempt to terrorize the Duchess with the sight of her dead family. "To bring her to despair," Ferdinand says, simply enough. But then the following dialogue occurs, complicating matters:

> Damn her! That body of hers,
> While that my blood ran pure in 't, was more worth
> Than that which thou wouldst comfort, call'd a soul
> I will send her masks of common courtezans,
> Have her meat serv'd up by bawds and ruffians,
> And, 'cause she 'll needs be mad, I am resolv'd
> To move forth the common hospital
> All the mad-folk, and place them near her lodging ;
> There let them practise together, sing and dance,
> And act their gambols to the full o' the moon:
> If she can sleep the better for it, let her (4.1.118).

Is Ferdinand's decision to send these madmen before her a genuine end to his torture, and attempt at a cure? It would seem that these last lines, "if she can sleep the better for it, let her, " must surely be spoken in anger, and without any belief that she might, indeed, sleep better for it. And yet. When the Duchess herself suggests that, indeed, the presence of the madmen might help her sleep, a seed of doubt is planted. And it is possible to read this "if" statement to be expressing some idea on Ferdinand's part that this is a real possibility. And when a servant arrives to announce that the madmen will perform a masque for her, he says:

> I am come to tell you
> Your brother hath intended you some sport.
> A great physician, when the Pope was sick
> Of a deep melancholy, presented him
> With several sorts of madmen, which wild object
> Being full of change and sport, forc'd him to laugh,
> And so the imposthume broke : the self-same cure
> The duke intends on you (4.2.48).

Horrors mount upon horrors during this sequence. An interesting effect of this duplication of terrors is that it allows the Duchess to declare her interpretation of the effect of the madmen upon her before the servant comes in to introduce the madmen. Before the servant can make the surprising claim that the masque of madmen is intended as a cure for the Duchess's melancholy, the Duchess has already suggested as much herself. This simultaneously gives credibility to the Duchess's theory and to the

servant's. It even raises the possibility that Ferdinand actually does believe the masque might function in this manner.

Tanya Pollard writes: "In Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1612), Ferdinand arranges to have his sister regaled with a theater of madmen as a purported medical treatment…In this scene, however, as in The Taming of the Shrew, the idealizing rhetoric of curative theater masks other underlying intentions and effects…despite citations of apparently successful theatrical cures, Ferdinand's masque of madmen is designed to undo rather than to heal. Through its means, the Duchess will be taunted and tortured, although ironically—despite his intent—she not only responds with dignity, but ultimately finds respite in this diversion from her own sorrows" (13). Here, Pollard's reading of the ways in which other, darker, more complex motives lurk within the rhetoric of curative theater seems sound to me. I would argue, however, that the Duchess may not, in fact, find respite from her sorrows in the play. The Duchess says this, but should we take her at her word? Ultimately, we are missing the final proof of how this play functions, the core information that would make all of these repetitions unnecessary: we cannot tell whether the play does restore a melancholy Duchess's spirits, or whether it plunges a faltering Duchess still deeper into despair. Webster will not—or cannot—tell the story of the Duchess's interior mental life, even as he suggests that her state of being—mad or sane—might well be the key to understanding whether the masque has "worked."

Still, although the text suggests that ultimately the effect of the performance is unknowable, the Duchess controls the narrative around this play within a play. Where we often think of imagined audiences as serving the play, as being imagined in order

to aggrandize or validate or confirm the play's value, this masque does the opposite: the play itself is deeply under suspicion—the sense that it might be a torture device never fully leaves us--but the Duchess herself is raised up through her control over the discourse around the play.

The Duchess also succeeds in another way by framing this as a medicinal play for her, for her body. This makes the staging of play itself an assertion of the Duchess's particularity. What could be more individualized, more aware of the individual body than a medical treatment? And how could such a body be empty of life, in such a case?

In the unsettled, subversive space of the masque of madmen, the question is what can be made of it. What Webster does with the masque of madmen is to make what was originally intended as a form where acting is key, into one where spectating is. He also turns it from a form that does not give power to the nobility via Ferdinand's intention to treat it as a torture device. The Duchess, however, is able to draw on these older tropes to inject uncertainty into the spectacle. She is able to plausibly argue that the masque will be medicinal, after all, and to make it work for her, as if it really were a masque chosen to ratify her position.

Gina Bloom, in noting the relevance of Judith Butler's work to the work of "resistant hearers" in the early modern period, provides another lens through which to understand how the Duchess manages both her responses and the reception of her responses during this culminating masque scene. It becomes clear that the Duchess thinks carefully about timing, and how to use time to her advantage. Bloom notes that for Butler, "The potency of an insult...is not arbitrary and is not established in a single

instance of its use: a bigoted name-call, for instance, has efficacy because it has been repeated again and again as an abusive utterance, thereby accumulating harmful meaning. This view of linguistic agency as temporally mediated enables Butler to "question...the presumption that hate speech always works," thereby "losing...the link between act and injury" (143). Duchess is highly skilled at attenuating this "link between act and injury."

She uses this strategy in confronting the masque, but nowhere is this more evident than in the scene in which the Duchess draws up her own will. The exchanges in this scene between the Duchess and Antonio ultimately lead into the Duchess's carefully orchestrated proposal of marriage to Antonio. Before she shifts her discussion of her will in such a way as to prompt a discussion of marriage, which in turn leads to her flirtation and then her very plain declaration to Antonio that he should wear her ring as her husband, she makes the following statement:

> I am making my will (as 'tis fit princes should,
> In perfect memory), and, I pray, sir, tell me,
> Were not one better make it smiling, thus,
> Than in deep groans and terrible ghastly looks,
> As if the gifts we parted with procur'd
> That violent distraction? (1.2.290-296)

Wills can be documents of great power in early modern drama and out of it. Octavius turns the people of Rome against Antony by reading his will. And, of course, Julius Caesar's will is the instrument by which Antony inflames the crowd. The Duchess,

however, instead reveals facets of the writing of a will that matter to a female spectator who wishes to manage responses to her reactions. She is concerned not with using her will to orchestrate the passions of others, as Antony does with Caesar's will, but rather with managing the ways in which others will perceive her reactions. The Duchess determines that she must seem not to be disturbed, distressed, at giving up her belongings, so she must carefully calculate when and in front of whom she writes the will. The issue is one of timing, of avoiding the appearance of cause and effect where that cause and effect would seem to link two things that are unseemly to link: suffering and the loss of possessions[11]. The Duchess will be sure that her "deep groans and ghastly looks"--which may be inevitable, will not be mistaken for a reaction to having to give up her worldly goods. It is difficult to tell a true story of the passions--it is difficult not to appear distressed for the wrong reasons. The Duchess seeks a way to exploit, rather than suffer from, the difficulty of saying what has caused an emotion.

In the masque episode, the Duchess also uses time to her advantage by letting doubt accumulate but then reasserting herself for the audience where it matters. During the mask of madmen, the Duchess says and does nothing as the madmen mock

[11] the Duchess identifies no specific audience for these reactions, for the "deep groans and "terrible ghastly looks." She does not address who might come to believe that "the gifts we parted with procured that violent distraction"—they become important seemingly in and of themselves. The Duchess makes clear that simply because no audience is identified does not mean that the idea of an audience does not influence the nature of her work. In this way, the Duchess of Malfi becomes a play about imaginary, implied audiences, and it reveals that a substantial amount of work can be directed at shaping the reactions of an unnamed, implied audience rather than an explicitly identified and named audience. This imaginary, implied audience has more authority for being invisible. It is faceless, genderless, seemingly without will or choice or reason. It is simultaneously authoritative and entirely without agency. The Duchess herself represents a very different type of audience. She has power, but it is power that she must earn, through careful work within her body and careful management. In existing as an individual she does lose this faceless power, but that power is not political power, it is not personal power, and it does not accrue lastingly to those who wield it. It only exists for the imagined audience as a body--no real, individuated spectator has this type of power.

her and gambol across the stage. Although some productions stage the masque in such a way that the madmen crowd close, allowing the Duchess to either stand firm or to cower back, there is no stage direction to this effect. The Duchess spends a protracted scene with nothing to do to keep herself alive and vibrant on the stage. However, when the next scene with Bosola affords her the opportunity, she re-asserts herself, "re-members" herself, as Simpson-Younger might say, with the phrase "I am Duchess of Malfi still." One of the key themes that arises in literature on women's silence in the period is that total silence is undesirable. The ideal is a few simple utterances, enough to make one's obedience known.[12] What the Duchess shows, however, is that these few utterances can be used for her to control the meaning of her silence, to make it work for her. Her "few words" redeem the chaotic nature of her earlier silence not for Bosola, or Ferdinand, but for her, for her own sense of identity, position, dignity.

When the Duchess of Malfi remarks, "I am Duchess of Malfi still," she invokes, perhaps unwittingly, the meaning of still that is "not moving or making a sound" as well as "nevertheless; all the same." In this famous self-assertion, she reveals that her stillness coexists with her continuing vitality, identity, and position of political power.

[12] See Reina Green, "Ears Prejudicate in Mariam and The Duchess of Malfi": "Silence, although connected to chastity, was not necessarily recommended. If a woman was silent, there was no way to monitor what she had heard, or what she was thinking; a "few, reverend and meeke" words were required.6 Robert Cleaver therefore represents the "silence" of an ideal wife by the way she responds to her husband: "as the Eccho answereth but one word for many." (460)

CONCLUSION

Most theaters where I have seen Shakespeare performed have been filled with silent, or nearly silent, spectators, male and female. It is unremarkable now, to be such a spectator. It does not make one a Gertrude, or a Duchess of Malfi. As theaters have become quieter, the meaning of being a silent spectator has changed. In an article for the guardian, Toby Parker-Rees writes:

> Tim Crouch, who is the best at doing plays, told me that "audiences still don't fully believe it's for them … theatre is still not common language". This means "we are all a little cowed" when we go to the theatre. We're stuck in a viciously dull cycle; theatre needn't try to engage a ready-cowed audience, so it struts further and further away – and we become ever more cowed by its distance….Theatre is Dionysus's artform, and Dionysus is all about ecstasy (ek-stasis – going outside yourself). Theatre used to be a collective unclenching; a cathartic party.
>
> There's no ecstasy now, though – only tutting.

Though perhaps Parker-Rees over-glamorizes the loud theaters of the past, what he says makes sense. The louder the theater, the more immersive and engaging the spectacle. The more coercive and engaging the spectacle, the more complex and labor-intensive silence becomes. More powerful theater also meant more powerful female spectators. That mutually constituting relationship has ceased.

The important difference is that it has become the *expectation* that the theater will not move people to speech. When it is expected that one can remain silent, both women and the theater get less credit. Now, everyone is silent, and that silence, even when the play is deeply compelling, is not viewed as a terrible effort. It has been a slow process, but the gaze has shifted away from female spectators. They are not the objects of power and interest they once were.

A Midsummer Night's Dream's Hippolyta might seem like an obvious choice as a subject for this dissertation. She, like the other female spectators I have looked at, remains unresponsive to the Rude Mechanicals' "Pyramus and Thisbe." But to me, Hippolyta's response works differently, and is part of a different narrative than the one I have been building. The implicit assumption of the three plays in this dissertation is that theater exerts an enormously powerful force on the female spectators in question, and that they, in turn, resist it. The women in *Love's Labour's Lost* need masks, and distance, and time. Gertrude, it is implied, suffers from a medical condition that does not just prevent her from recognizing the difference between Claudius and Hamlet Sr, but which prevents her from being moved by the *Murder of Gonzago*. And, last but not least, the power of the "masque of madmen" is enough that, unlike the other two plays within plays, Webster allows it to escape its boundaries and become part of the play itself; the Duchess's death scene is staged as a formal "anti-masque," following on from the masque of madmen shows that even if the Duchess is resisting the play, it is not some strange, archaic entertainment, to be clearly cordoned off from the rest of the play. The Duchess's death is one of the most pivotal scenes in the entire play, to the point where it could be said to be strange that the play continues after it, and the

form of the masque bleeds into this. Therefore when the women resist these plays, they are resisting something powerful. That power requires them to find ingenious strategies for negotiating that power and putting it to their own uses.

When Hippolyta does not respond to Pyramus and Thisbe, something quite different is happening. Her disengagement speaks to a different view of the theater, one that shows it as less powerful. That is not to say that at the time Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the theater was viewed differently. This play was probably written between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Hamlet*, so that cannot be true. Rather, it shows that even when the theater was loud, and producing the sort of narratives I have outlined, it was also producing some works where the theater was *not* powerful in this way. And in our own time, there may be moments when remaining silent in the theater really does say something dramatic.

Just as Hippolyta can coexist with the Princess of France, each time will have a wide range of different ideas of women and of the theater. However, more work needs to be done to trace the shifts in how female spectators have been viewed through time. In the Restoration, there was still, at this time, a strong emphasis on the audience as spectacle, and a strong focus on observing female spectators. An account from Henri Morrison, a Restoration playgoer, shows that this is the case:

> Further up, against the wall, under the first Gallery, and just opposite to the Stage, rises another Amphitheatre, which is taken up by Persons of the best Quality, *among whom are generally very few Men*. The Galleries, whereof there are only two Rows, are fill'd with none but ordinary People, particularly the Upper one. [Emphasis mine] (219-220)

There is not quite the same “gender coded dichotomy,” Callaghan has identified, since women were acting on the stage, but female spectators are still an object of focus. The theaters are still noisy, and still highlighed the role of spectators.

And yet the conditions were changing in subtle ways, which no doubt changed what it meant to be a female spectator, For one thing, as Allan Bottica observes:

> Actors had become worthy of emulation. The behaviour of the different generations of spectators who came on stage was not the same. Earlier audiences assumed a lordly entitlement to reclaim the space they had allowed to their social inferiors, the players; later ones contested the rights to a space clearly defined as belonging to the actors. Contemporaries wrote of spectators "acting" in the players' place, challenging them at their own profession (33).

I hope further studies will examine what happened to the figure of the female spectator in the Restoration and beyond.

As I draw my argument to a close, Callaghan’s impassioned argument in *Shakespeare Without Women* haunts me. She argues that we have been too quick to fetishize presence in Shakespeare, to let ourselves believe that everything in the world is to be found in Shakespeare, and Shakespeare is everything and everyone. She wants to look at absence, instead, and take seriously that women were not present on the stage. Representation is, by its nature, about absence, and while it's difficult to draw clear lines between "reality" and "representations," it's pretty plain to see that there's a difference between what happens on a stage and off. Callaghan notes that women and minorities have to deal with the fallout of these representations. She also argues that

it's easy to think of the reliance on the reactions of female audiences as something that puts women in a position of power, because the play then depends on those reactions for its validity, but she observes that reactions can occur without giving power *or* pleasure.

She is right. However, she focuses strongly on the motif of the hyper-reactive female spectator. My question has been, what do other ideas of female spectatorship do, and why do they exist? I argue that silent, impassive female spectators put the projects of the male characters in bad positions and shift their meanings. The silent female spectators in my dissertation provide nuanced explorations of what women can do, and I think because of this they become more *conversational* than representational.

The question of what purpose these silent female spectators are serving for the men who create them and observe them does not have a clear answer, but I believe that the story of Patient Griselda is important in illuminating the compulsion that underlies the intent observation of silent female that recurs throughout this dissertation. Perhaps what these portrayals of silent female spectators do is satisfy a curiosity, a compulsion to watch the woman watching. Within the plays, Hamlet is fascinated with Gertrude as a spectator, Ferdinand is obsessed with the Duchess in this capacity. Perhaps Shakespeare and Webster recurrently address silent female spectatorship for the same reason that writers keep retelling the tale of Patient Griselda, putting different spins on what it means and trying to reckon with it. What endures is that it compels. Perhaps the impassive female spectator is interesting enough to get a sustained treatment—not because the figure is in itself either

politically subversive or crucial to the status quo, but simply because it is riveting.[1] Playwrights want to let it play out on stage.

The presence of women in the audience of the time has become an absence, as those women are lost forever to us. Now what we have left is the representations. Fortunately, those representations are incredibly rich, and open up new ideas about women and audiences. I have focused on the presence, not of living breathing women-identified people, but on the practices of spectatorship these plays portray. I believe, however, that the practices themselves take on a life and presence of their own. Stephen Greenblatt notes in Shakespearean Negotiations that "the theater elicits from us complicity rather than belief" (119). Consenting to complicity with the image of the boy actor as a woman, in both the past and in our presence, in itself gives these narratives power as stories about women. Playgoers were letting this possibility in, were actively choosing it, and so are we. As I have shown, when we do so, new possibilities for imagining what women were and could be become available to us.

[1] The assumption has very often been that plays are trying to teach audiences how to respond to them correctly, both implicitly and explicitly. Nova Myhill has offered an important corrective, arguing that playtexts encouraged a wider range of acceptable behaviors; according to her essay, "Taking the Stage," the only real failing was to look at the audience instead of the play. For Myhill, Jonson's Caroline *Staple of News* staged female spectators not to show what behaviors to avoid, but rather as a device to compete with the real women in the audience. I agree, and work to expand the ideas of what kind of behaviors could rivet audiences in this way. My work suggests that it is not only chatty, loud women like those in the *Staple of News* who were drawing the eye as rival spectators to those in the audience.

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