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# Speaking Chastity: Female Speech, Silence, and the Strategic Performance of Chaste Identity in Early Modern Drama and Women's Writing

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the complex and contradictory relationship between female speech and chaste reputation in the early modern period. I draw on J.L. Austin's speech act theory, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding of homosociality to study the acts of speech and silence involved in the strategic construction of chaste identity in early modern drama and women's writing and the role that female homosocial networks play in helping to support the public appearance of feminine virtue. This dissertation scrutinizes literary moments in which the chaste reputations of women writers and their theatrical counterparts are at risk, specifically in Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617), William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611, pub. 1623), Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), and Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604-6, pub. 1608). I interrogate how these women construct the appearance of chastity through acts of speech and silence, paying particular attention to how and when these performances succeed and why they fail. In these texts, where one woman's speech or silence produces unintended fissures in her performative production of chaste femininity, other women's voices become a key element in the chaste reinterpretation of her voice. I argue that while strategic performances of chaste femininity allow for some personal agency over the public perception of feminine virtue, when faced with a threat to reputation, the female speaker is nevertheless placed in a double bind—her voice alone is not enough to ensure the perception of her chastity. In these instances, female homosocial bonds make all the difference. Together, as vocal collectives, other women's voices stand witness to individual performances of chastity, speaking when and how others cannot if they are to

be believed, to allow these questioned performances of chastity to seem to speak for themselves.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Rachel Speght, Elizabeth Cary, Thomas Middleton, Judith Butler, J.L. Austin, Sedgwick, performativity, homosociality, chastity, chaste reputation, speech, female speech, silence, female silence, sexuality, speech acts, gender, early modern, seventeenth century.

## Summary for Lay Audience

This dissertation explores the early modern idea that a woman's speech was related to her sexuality. I study the ways in which female characters in early modern drama and women writers work together to use speech and silence to construct and maintain reputations for chastity. The focus of this dissertation is on literary moments where chaste reputation is most at risk in Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617), William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611, pub. 1623), Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), and Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604-6, pub 1608). I study the ways in which women's speech and silence contributes to their appearance of chastity, paying particular attention to moments where that chastity is questioned. I argue that when chaste reputation is in jeopardy, other women's voices are what help support women's individual appearances of chastity. While performing the markers of what early modern society understands as chaste behaviour allows these women some agency, it is often not enough when faced to a threat to their reputation. In these instances, individual women's voices are often not believed. Instead, it is women speaking together that allows individual voices to be heard and understood as chaste.

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## Introduction

### “Her Chastity Spake For Her”

Holde thou thy peace as boldlye as other speake in Court: and so shalt thou better defende the matter of thy chastitie, which afore iudges shalbe stronger with silence then with speche. Wee reade in histories, that a childe was ones brought into the common place of the cyttie at *Rome*, vpon a matter of chastitie, and with holding downe his eyes, on the grounde, and still silence, defended his matter better then he should haue done with longe orations of Orators. But now to speake of women, *Susan* excused her selfe of the crime of adulterye with silence, and not with wordes. . . . The holy woman *Susan* helde her peace, and ouercame her enimies: for shee defended not her selfe with reasoni yng of wordes, nor with speech of anye attorney, but the holye woman her selfe holding her tongue, her chastitie spake for her.

—Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1529)

A good woman . . . *openeth her mouth with wisdom, the Law of grace is in her tongue: but a harlot is full of words, shee is loude and babbling, saith Solomon.*

—Barnabe Rich, *My Ladies Looking Glasse* (1616)

It suites not with *her* honour, for a *young woman* to be prolocutor. But especially, when either men are in presence, or ancient Matrons, to whom shee owes a ciuill reuerence, it will become her to tip her tongue with silence.

—Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentlewoman* (1631)

In the early modern period, conduct books, sermons, pamphlets, and treatises often prescribed an ideal of chaste silence for women. Thought to be naturally garrulous, women were advised to “tip [their] tongue[s] with silence” (Brathwaite sig. N1) because of the impact that unrestrained speech could have on their reputations, particularly for sexual virtue. But though Richard Brathwaite prescribes this ideal in *The English Gentlewoman* (1631), he also notes an inherent tension within the requirement for the maintenance of a virtuous reputation. “Truth is,” he explains, “their tongues are held their defensiu armour; but in no particular detract they more from their honour, than by giuing too free scope to that glibbery member” (sig. M4v). Here Brathwaite touches on an

apparent paradox: if a woman's words are her "defensiu[e] armour," how must she maintain, preserve, or repair her moral reputation if, as a woman, her reputation depends upon her silence? In his influential conduct book, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (trans. c. 1529),<sup>1</sup> Juan Luis Vives similarly acknowledges this apparent double-bind but prescribes only silence when it comes to "defend[ing] the matter of thy chastitie" (sig. K1-K1v). However, as Jessica C. Murphy notes, though "Vives works to show that chastity ought to keep a woman safe from harm, . . . he simultaneously reveals that chastity is incapable of protecting her" (18). Silence, it appears, is not enough to allow a woman's "chastitie [to speak] for her" as Vives suggests it should (sig. K1v).

Public reputations for honesty, morality, and trustworthiness were central to early modern social, economic, and political relationships for both men and women. As Craig Muldrew argues, household reputation or credit operated as a form of cultural "currency" based in language which "circulated by word of mouth through the community" and formed the basis of economic trust in transactions between heads of households (156). Although these transactions were often conducted between men in homosocial networks of trust and obligation, as Laura Gowing notes, "[t]he gossipy talk of which slander might be a part, identified and condemned as typically female, gave women a particular standing in neighbourhood social relations. Telling stories and judging morals made women the brokers of oral reputation" (*Domestic Dangers* 123). Though these networks

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<sup>1</sup> Originally published in Latin as *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae* in 1523 and dedicated to Catherine of Aragon, Vives' conduct book was translated into English as *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* by Richard Hyrde and first printed circa 1529. As Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman and Margaret Mikesell note in their edition of Hyrde's English translation, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* went on to be "published at least eight more times within the century, with variations reflecting political and religious changes in English culture" (xv) including changes that would eventually align the 1585 and 1592 octavo editions much more closely with "the ideology of late Tudor Puritanism" and to appeal to a broader middle-class readership (lxxviii). Many later Protestant conduct books are indebted to Vives' *Instruction* including Robert Cleaver's *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government* (1598) (which borrows entire passages from Vives) and Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentlewoman* (1631) (xliii). All citations from *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* are taken from the 1585 octavo.

of women operated mainly in domestic or female-only spaces, the “gossipy talk” that these networks produced circulated in the community and, as Gowing observes, “carried legal weight,” providing support for claims to chastity, the legitimacy of marital relationships, and even helping to determine guilt or innocence in legal contexts (*Domestic Dangers* 111). While the female voice was often understood to be a signifier of a woman’s lack of chastity, women’s voices also collectively formed the means through which reputations for chastity were circulated, maintained, and destroyed. It is this paradoxical relationship between female speech and chaste reputation that is the crux of this project. By studying the individual speech acts and silent, performative gestures involved in the self-conscious construction of chaste identity by women in their writing and female characters in early modern drama, I examine the role these vocal collectives play in navigating these paradoxes of speech to produce the public appearance of feminine virtue.

**“A harlot is full of words”**

A common thread that runs throughout early modern prescriptions for female conduct is the emphasis on chastity as one of the most important virtues for women. For conduct writers like Vives, the presence or absence of chastity determines a woman’s reputation and prospects:

shee that hath ones loste her honestye, shoulde thinke there is nothing lefte. Take from a woman her beautye, take from her kindred, riches, comelynesse, eloquence, sharpenesse of witte, cunning in her craft, gyue her chastitie, and thou hast giuen her all thinges. And on the other side, giue her all these thinges, & call

her a naughty packe, with that one word thou hast taken al from her, and hast left her bare and foule. (sig. E4)

For Vives, not only does a lack of chastity overshadow the presence of all other virtues, but his language here also underscores the fragility of such reputations for chastity.

“[C]all her a naughty packe,” he warns, and “with that one word thou hast taken al from her”—a single word is enough to call a chaste reputation into doubt. In her examination of the language of sexual slander and its litigation in early modern England, Gowing observes that in practice, “For both men and women . . . credit was measured through a combination of factors; but for women, that combination was filtered through the lens of sexual honesty” (*Domestic Dangers* 129). But while she notes that there were many ways for women to cultivate a “good name,” Gowing agrees that “for women, sexuality remained a vulnerable point in the construction and destruction of reputation. Whatever made a good reputation, sexual discredit could threaten it” (129).

As Vives suggests, a good reputation, since it is based in public perception and formulated through the circulation of language, is incredibly fragile. Citing the authority of Cicero, Vives warns that “Nothing fleeth more swiftly then an yll woorde, nothing goeth sooner forth, nothing is sooner taken, nor broader spredde: that if a slander once take holde in a maydes name by folkes opinion, it is in a manner euerlasting, nor canne not be washed away without great tokens and shewes of chastitie and wisdom” (sig. I2). Because reputation is fundamentally tied to language, these “ill words” have the ability to circulate swiftly through a community of speakers to influence collective opinion in a way that cannot be controlled either by the subject of gossip or the original speaker. Later in the period, the misogynist writer Joseph Swetnam warns that the circulation of “ill words” can be particularly dangerous because “there is but small



difference by being naught and being thought naught, . . . for when a woman hath gotten an ill name, whether it be deseruedly or without cause, yet she shall haue much adoe to recouer againe her honour and credit thereof” (sig. H3v). It does not matter whether a reputation for a lack of chastity is deserved or not, if others think or say it is.

A connection between female speech and sexuality underscores many of the prescriptions for silence for women in the period. In *My Ladies Looking Glasse* (1616), Barnabe Rich advises women to speak only in moderation since the alternative is the excessive “*loude and babbling*” speech belonging to the “*harlot*” (sig. F1v). Similarly, William Whatley in *A Bride-Bush* (1617) all but equates the scold and the harlot in the magnitude of their sins and transgressions against their gender. He argues that scolds are “[s]taines of woman-kinde, blemishes of their sexe, monsters in natures, botches of humane society, rude, graceless, impudent, next to harlots, if not the same with them” and argues that “[t]his impudencie, this vnwomanhood tracks the way to the harlots house, and giues all wise men to know, that such haue, or would, or soone will cast off the care of honesty, as of loyaltie” (sigs. F2, F1v). For Whatley, the woman who would speak against her husband is the same kind of woman who has little care for her chastity or even the appearance of it. For him, the connection between unruly female speech and sexuality derives from a woman’s lack of obedience, respect, or loyalty to her husband in all areas.

While most conduct writers take this association between speech and sexuality for granted, rarely explaining their suspicion of the female voice, Vives, seeking to instruct young women in virtuous behaviour, describes the double bind that makes both speech and silence for women suspect. He warns:

If thou talke little in companie, folkes thinke thou canste but little good: if thou speake much, they reckon thee light: if thou speake vncunningly, they connt thee

dull witted: if thou speake cunningly, thou shalt be called a shrewe: if thou answere not quickly, thou shalt be called proude, or ille brought vp, if thou answere, they shall saye thou wilte be soone ouercome: . . . if thou laugh when any man laugheth, though thou do it not of purpose, strayght they will say thou hast a fantasie vnto the man and his sayinges, and that it were no great maistry to winne thee. (sigs. I2-I2v)

According to Vives at least, it seems that there is not much a young woman can do to ensure that she is perceived as chaste in conversational situations. Instead, he prescribes remaining safely at home “for it is a token of no great chastity or good name, to be knowen of many” (sig. I2v). Brathwaite similarly prescribes silence for the preservation of “those precious odors of your good names,” adding that women should surround themselves first with others whose reputations “were neuer branded” and second with those “whose tongues for immodesty were neuer taxed” (sig. G1). For Brathwaite, unchaste words are linked to unchaste deeds:

As by good words euill manners are corrected, so by euill words are good ones corrupted. Make no reside there, where the least occasion of lightnesse is ministred; auert your Eare when you heare it, but your heart especially, lest you harbour it. To enter into much discourse or familiarity with strangers, argues lightnesse or indiscretion: what is spoken of Maids, may be properly applyed by an vsefull consequence to all women: *They should be seene, and not heard.* (sig. G1)

Brathwaite’s focus on female speech here is twofold: first, words, especially those that are unchaste, have the power to corrupt the listener to sexual licentiousness, and second, that too much speech for women suggests either a lack of chastity or, at best, a lack of

discretion. For both Vives and Brathwaite, “much discourse” for women, especially discourse that touches on immodest subjects, suggests a willingness to engage in illicit sexual behaviour as well.

Historians and literary scholars alike have attempted to explain this association between speech and sexuality in the early modern period, particularly as it pertains to women. M. C. Bodden traces the development of the perceived sinfulness of women’s speech from the medieval through the early modern period, particularly in relation to its association with women’s sexuality (38). For Bodden, the connection between female speech and sexuality has its roots in the opposition between celibate clerics, who controlled the written word, and women, who, for them, represented the temptation toward sex and away from religious purity (40). She notes that from the thirteenth century onward, art depicting the Fall represented the “devil-as-serpent” using feminine characteristics including women’s faces, long flowing hair, and even a female upper body with breasts. This had the effect of aligning the representation of the devil with the image of Eve even if the gendered language of the accompanying text identified the devil-serpent as male (47). Bodden traces this conflation of Eve and the seductive serpent through the Mystery Plays of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which figure women’s speech not only as the reason for the Fall of humankind, but also as erotically and rhetorically seductive. In Bodden’s analysis, the serpent’s “sinuousness, its undulating motion and the seductiveness of its basilisk stare” become associated with and transposed onto the “perceived erotic nature of evil ‘common’ to both serpent and Eve/woman” (51). On the other hand, in her analysis of early modern conceptions of the tongue, Carla Mazzio argues that the association between speech and sexuality was not necessarily a gendered phenomenon. She argues that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an

association “between the tongue and the penis became more explicit,” which had the effect of strengthening “the imagined relationship between rhetorical and sexual performance” (101). Mazzio notes, however, that “the gendering of the tongue (or speech itself) as ‘phallic’” was not straightforward, and instead it was “problematized by early modern medical texts that not only depicted the tongue as ‘*virile* (both manly and hard)’ and its opposite ‘*mulier* (both womanly and soft)’” (101). Additionally, these same texts also figure the clitoris as a woman’s “little tongue” (101). This dual gendering of the tongue may help to explain why oratory eloquence was associated with masculine virility as well as unruly feminine loquacity. Anthony Fletcher takes a more systemic view, arguing that the desire to control female speech rests “at the heart of the early modern gender system” (12). Fletcher suggests that women who spoke out of turn or for their own ends were understood as a potential subversion to patriarchal order: “The woman who speaks neither in reply to a man nor in submissive request acts as an independent being who may well, it is assumed, end up with another man than her husband in her bed. Thus every incident of verbal assertiveness could awake the spectre of adultery and the dissolution of patriarchal order” (12). Women who spoke for themselves might also choose their own sexual partners, thereby undermining early modern systems of primogeniture.

In her study of the regulation of women’s bodies and illicit sexuality in early modern communities, Gowing notes that since a lack of chastity did not leave physical marks on the body, a woman’s speech was understood to hint at her sexual knowledge (*Common Bodies* 32-3). While married women were able to speak much more explicitly about sex and their own bodies (94), Gowing notes that for unmarried women “not being able to talk about sexuality or the body could stand as evidence of chastity and virtue”

(11). This differing access to knowledge is also reflected in the use of allusion and metaphor in bawdy verse, sexual insult, and other methods of talking about sex which “served as a partial barrier to the participation of the young and the single, [while] it also provided multiple languages” with which to speak about sex (84)—languages which it was important for a young woman to appear not to understand. Such observations about the circulation of lewd ballads and other erotic verse in manuscript and oral forms helps to explain why conduct book writers such as Bartholomew Batty in *The Christian Man’s Closet* (1581) preferred that “the feminine sexe” not even “heare nor vnderstand any filthie wordes, nor mery ballades, iestes nor rimes, but let her young & tender tongue be seasoned with sweete songes and Psalmes” (sig. T3). A young woman’s lack of knowledge of sexual matters and consequent inability to speak about them could only speak to her chastity.

Other scholars argue that the conflation of verbal and physical intimacy is related to the embodied nature of speech (Larson 2). Katherine R. Larson notes that “[c]onversation was an embodied act, signifying social intimacy, cohabitation, and even sexual intercourse,” which meant that “conversation posed a particular challenge for women, whose virtuous reputation was contingent on sexual and verbal self-control” (2). In conduct books directed toward bourgeois households, writers like William Gouge and Barnabe Rich note the importance of both gesture and speech in the performative presentation of chaste interiority. In *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), Gouge argues that

A wiues outward reuerence consisteth in her reuerend { *Gesture.*  
*Speech.* (sig. T3)

Gouge’s lack of separation between gesture and speech in the formatting of his assertion suggests his belief in their inseparability in practice. In fact, he uses this device elsewhere

to similarly indicate the importance of both submission and contentment with regard to wifely obedience (sig. T8). Similarly, for Rich, in *My Ladies Looking Glasse*, a woman's tongue, gestures, actions, and entire countenance must consistently project the honesty of her mind. For Rich, the "bold" and "impudent" woman who cannot blush "hath lost her *evidence of honesty*: for the ornaments of a good woman is *temperance* in her minde, *silence* in her tongue, and *bashfulness* in her countenance" (sig. F1v). According to these writers, and many others, a woman's speech is fundamentally connected to her body, so the consistent performance of feminine modesty—both in gesture and speech—is an important part of the construction, maintenance, or defence of chaste reputation.

Both Larson and Ann Rosalind Jones argue that this conflation of verbal and physical intimacy leads women writers to adopt a number of strategies to counteract potentially immodest situations. In her exploration of the differing advice in conversational and epistolary manuals directed toward men and women, Larson observes a rhetoric of verbal and bodily self control. Young men were reminded of the correspondence between language and body and instructed to exercise control even over involuntary actions such as sneezing or accidentally spitting while speaking in order to "Let the gestures of thy body, be agreeable to the matter of thy discourse" as the author of *Youths Behaviour, or Decency in Conversation Amongst Men* (1646) phrased it (qtd. in Larson 22). Civil conversation for men involved both physical and verbal restraint as well as a keen understanding of social hierarchies and conversational context, which would allow them to adapt their conversational modes to suit their interlocutor.

For both Larson and Jones, the sheer number of conduct and epistolary manuals seeking to regulate conversation in both oral and written forms speaks to the idea that the ability to moderate speech, gesture, and the body according to codes of civility is not only

something that could be taught but is also a skill which was “acquiring value as a strategic tool for negotiation and self-positioning in a period in which . . . social order was beginning to shift” (Larson 24). For men, the art of civil conversation was becoming what Larson calls “a key element in the creation and maintenance of reputation and social relations” (24). Women received similar advice about the importance of bodily and verbal self control, though with the addition of a distinctly sexual element (Larson 32). Larson points to Brathwaite’s use of the language of enclosure in *The English Gentlewoman* as an example of his conflation of verbal and sexual moderation:

Modesty and mildnesse hold sweetest correspondence. . . . Let nothing passe from you, that may any way impeach you, or giue others aduantage ouer you. Your innocent credulity (I am resolued) is as free from conceit of ill, as theirs, perhaps from intendment of good: but these intercourses of Courtesies are not to be admitted, lest by this familiarity, an Entry to affection bee opened, which before was closed. It is dangerous to enter parley with a beleagring enemy: it implyes want or weakenesse in the besieged. Chastity is an *inclosed Garden*, it should not be so much as assaulted, lest the report of her spotlesse beauty become soyled. Such Forts hold out best, which hold themselues least secure, when they are securest. (sig. G1v)

In her brief analysis of this passage, Larson argues that the emphasis Brathwaite places “on ‘familiarity’ and ‘intercourse,’ together with [his] preoccupation with the dangerously vulnerable entry points to the ‘Fort’ or ‘Garden’ of the female body, reinforces the sexual nuances of conversational interchange” (32). While this is an important point that shows how speech and the female sexual body are conflated, I would also argue that it is significant that Brathwaite specifically puts the onus on the woman to be vigilant in

always protecting her chastity. For Brathwaite, to enter into a risky conversational situation “implyes want or weakenesse in the besieged.” As a result, much like the young man who uses verbal dexterity and awareness of audience to position himself to the best conversational advantage, “[a] woman conversed in order simultaneously to safeguard and to exhibit her chastity and her reputation” (Larson 32) by, in Brathwaite’s words “convers[ing] with Vertue” (*English Gentleman* sig. Ll4v; qtd. in Larson 32).

Jones argues that the conflicting rules governing chaste conversation for women become “bewilderingly complex” with regard to rules for courtly conduct, which attempt to blend the courtly demand for public self-display and the requirement for silent feminine modesty (44). She notes that “[t]hreatened with the constant possibility of scandal, the court lady is advised to defend herself through a calculated rhetoric of words and gestures. What she must learn is how to assess the surveillance that operates at court and how to exploit a corresponding set of words and gestures for feminine self-display” (43). Baldassare Castiglione’s description of the court lady in his immensely popular courtesy book *The Book of the Courtier* (translated into English in 1561 by Sir Thomas Hoby)<sup>2</sup> captures the delicate balance between witty eloquence and chaste silence that the court lady must maintain: “Accompanying with sober and quiet manners, and with the honestie that must alwaies be a stay to her deedes, a readie livenessse of wit, whereby she may declare her selfe far wide from all dulnesse: but with such a kinde of goodnesse, that she may bee esteemed no lesse chaste” (190-191). Maintaining constant vigilance to protect her reputation, the court lady needed to perform her erotic function at court while

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<sup>2</sup> All quotations from Castiglione’s work come from J. H. Whitfield’s edition of Hoby’s 1561 translation unless specified otherwise.



ensuring that chaste thoughts were visible on her face (without seeming contrived) in a complex combination of speech, silence, and performative reminders of her chastity.

Silence is often a key factor in prescriptions for chaste behaviour for women, since, as Larson notes, it often represented “the most extreme form of feminine conversational self-control . . . the sealed mouth ostensibly mirroring the successfully sealed genitalia” (32). However, as Christina Luckyj argues, “both speech and silence in early modern culture were in fact far more vexed and complex for both genders” than scholars typically acknowledge (7). Instead, she argues, silence, especially in the face of patriarchal demands for female speech, could be understood as a form of resistance since it creates what she calls an “‘inscrutable,’ private subject who cannot be fathomed or decoded” (7). Luckyj points to the contradictions and anxieties evident in the prescriptions for female silence by conduct book writers in the period to interrogate the idea that silence was always considered a sign of chaste submission. For example, Gouge in *Of Domesticall Duties* argues that rather than complete silence, “her husbands presence must somewhat restraints her tongue” (sig. T5v; Luckyj 59). Here, Gouge argues, the patriarchal preference is for relative silence, not absolute: “Otherwise silence, as it is opposed to speech,” he warns, “would imply stoutnesse of stomacke, and stubbornnesse of heart, which is an extreme contrarie to loquacitie,” something equally undesirable in a wife (sig. T5v). Luckyj’s exploration of what she calls “the shifting multiplicity of referents for women’s silences” (70) illuminates the possibility for female agency in silence and also the risk that men could translate female silence for their own ends. “There seems to be no way out for women,” she observes, “speaking, they are shrews or whores; silent, they are blanks to be inscribed by others” (71).

The performance of chastity and its strategic potential in the maintenance of reputation is the focus of this project. I explore how women and their theatrical counterparts use speech and silence to navigate the social constraints that arise from the conflation of verbal and sexual intimacy. Other scholars have explored women's strategic use of speech and silence to maintain the appearance of chastity in conversation. For example, Larson explores the strategic use of letter writing and other forms of "textual conversation" by women in the Sidney and Cavendish families. She argues that written conversation was a strategy that allowed the female writer more control over her conversational encounters including "the delimitation of protective spatial boundaries" (9) through which she could "distanc[e] herself from the physicality of oral intercourse even as she played with courtly conventions" (36). Jones similarly explores how Catherine Des Roches navigated the "intricate demands" of courtly conduct by inventing "a witty yet irreproachably chaste persona for herself" through her poetry as part of a literary salon (50). She argues that Des Roches "negotiates [this] minefield by asserting a rhetoric of feminine purity against the frankly sexual language of her male interlocutors" (52). And, as I have outlined above, Luckyj explores "silence in action" (9) in both early modern drama and women's writing to argue that "if men could appropriate feminine silence to their own rhetorical agenda, women could inhabit the space of silence to resist such appropriation" (174).

My project builds on these ideas and extends them to scrutinize literary moments in which women's reputations for chastity are at risk because of jealousy, slander, and various transgressions of the norms of chaste behaviour including adultery and prostitution. I interrogate how female characters in early modern drama, and women writers like Rachel Speght and Elizabeth Cary performatively construct the appearance of

a coherent chaste identity through speech and silence, paying particular attention to how and when these performances succeed and why they fail. While Larson and Jones similarly argue for the strategic potential of female speech in the maintenance of chaste identity, they study individual female voices. Since reputation is formed and circulated through communities of speakers, I examine how female speakers work together to deliberately fashion and support the formation of chaste identities. By directing attention specifically to the acts of speech and performative gestures involved in the self-conscious performance of chaste identity, I want to suggest that when women's voices function in concert, these vocal collectives become a key element in the successful navigation of the paradoxes of speech for women and their theatrical representations.

#### **“All vertuous Ladies Honourable or Worshipfull”**

Early modern conceptions of friendship emphasized an ideal summarized by Michel de Montaigne as “being no other then one soule in two bodies, according to the fit definition of *Aristotle*” (sig. I5v). Friendship was a shared, consensual bond between like-minded individuals of a similar social standing, rank, and degree with no ulterior motive other than mutual support and caring. But as many scholars note, the emphasis that Montaigne and others place on the idea of “likeness,” privileges “same-sex bonds over . . . heterosexual relations” (Shannon, *Sovereign* 1) and male friendship was held as the ideal (Luckyj and O’Leary 2). In fact, Montaigne argues that women are not capable of true friendship at all: “the ordinary sufficiency of women, cannot answer this conference and communication, the nurse of this sacred bond: nor seeme their mindes strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable. . . . But this

sexe could never yet by any example attaine vnto it, and is by ancient schooles rejected thence” (sigs. I4-I4v).

The early modern conception of friendship was, as Laurie Shannon notes, explicitly homosocial (*Sovereign* 9). In her work on male homosocial relationships in *Between Men*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines homosociality as “men-promoting-the-interests-of-men” or “women promoting the interests of women [*sic*]” (3). In the early modern context, though the concept of male friendship was thought to be apolitical (Luckyj and O’Leary 3), homosocial networks were at the very heart of social, economic, and political relationships. Men promoted the interests of other men in every facet of life. Homosocial networks influenced choices of heterosexual marriage partners (Sedgwick 28-29; Shannon, *Sovereign* 8-9) and were the medium through which reputations, particularly for honesty and morality, were circulated and maintained.

Scholars have sought to explore the complex relationships between women in the early modern period including alliances based in intellectual and religious communities, kinship, friendship, and love, while accounting for the temporary nature of some relationships and the conflicts that could divide them (Frye and Robertson 3-5). Scholars like Penelope Anderson and Karen Robertson investigate how female homosocial relationships are figured rhetorically in women’s writing (Anderson 244) and can be traced through their letter writing (Robertson 149). Others like Jessica Tvordi and Harriette Andreadis examine the dynamics of female homoeroticism in Shakespearean comedy (Tvordi 114) and the “sexually evasive yet erotically charged language of female friendship [used] to describe female same-sex intimacy” that Andreadis terms a “double discourse” designed to evade detection (241). Others highlight the potential for these alliances to subvert masculine authority. Simon Morgan-Russell compares the homosocial

bonds between gallants, potentially cuckolded husbands, and the wives in *Westward Ho*. He notes that although the women's merry jesting creates the expectation that they are also sexually available (76), the women are able to subvert the men's expectations by working together. Morgan-Russell argues, however, that it is because there is no actual adultery that the women come out on top. My project looks specifically at how women in these types of situations succeed (or fail) in subverting the appearance of a lack of chastity through speech and silence, which is not Morgan-Russell's focus.

Christina Luckyj and Niamh J. O'Leary's recent collection *The Politics of Female Alliance in Early Modern England* furthers the discussion of female homosocial relationships by arguing for a recognition of the political importance of alliances between women that had been previously discounted as simply "private" or "domestic" (4). For example, Megan Inbody explores the representation of women as gossips in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater, Arraigned by Women* as an example of "the increasing interest in the scope of female influence on justice beginning in the early seventeenth century" (50). Alicia Tomasian, on the other hand, notes an even more overtly political aspect of female alliance in her comparison of *The Winter's Tale* to the court of King James I and Anna of Denmark. She argues that Hermione and Leontes similarly "maintain separate courts" and argues that it is to this female court of "politically minded advisors" that Hermione turns when she is accused of adultery (147).

Of those scholars who explore female alliances, few consider their role in relation to both female speech and chaste reputation, which is the goal of this project. However, the insights of scholars like Bernard Capp, Laurie Shannon, and Miranda Fay Thomas provide tools which have helped to shape how I interrogate the role homosocial networks play in helping to navigate the tension between gendered norms of speech to preserve the

public appearance of feminine virtue. For example, Bernard Capp examines informal alliances between what he calls “ordinary women” and the ways in which they policed their communities “by curbing the behavior of individuals they saw as flouting the norms of social behavior” (15, 17-18). Importantly, he argues that because women’s influence often operated through informal pressures, “[t]he pressure had to be collective, for a woman alone possessed little leverage” (19). Instead, he notes, this influence was generated from what he calls a “female common voice,” a collective opinion shared by a community of women (19). Capp’s focus here is on tracing historical evidence of women’s influence in early modern communities, but this concept of a “common voice” is an important tool for thinking through the ways in which female characters work together as a community of speakers on the early modern stage.

In her exploration of the ways in which gender colours early modern discourses of friendship, Laurie Shannon argues that texts like *The Tragedy of Mariam* and John Donne’s poetic correspondence with Lady Bedford “contest the exclusive masculinity of both classical and Renaissance friendship models” (*Sovereign* 12). In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Shannon finds that female friendship, or “even a basic neutrality between women is precluded by a patriarchal social organization that directs women’s anger toward each other” (84) and that by depicting female chastity as “victimized” by a tyrannical husband and king, and “framing female association in terms of the mythical figure of Diana, Elizabeth Cary links a reconfigured female chastity with a homosocial paradigm of women’s bonds” (86). Shannon’s exploration of how Herod’s tyranny undermines amicable homosocial bonds between women in the play and her argument for a link between chastity and friendship provides an important foundation for my focus on

how speech and silence factor into the perception of individual performances of chastity in a play that lacks solidarity between women.

Miranda Fay Thomas explores the use of “female solidarity to shame men . . . into respectful action” in *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, especially through the performance of “what might be considered ‘submissive’ gestures” (87, 89). Thomas argues that in *The Winter’s Tale*, “nonverbal communication is misread within the play” (92), suggesting instead that the language used to describe the embrace between Hermione and Leontes when they are reunited recalls Leontes’ jealous interpretation of Hermione’s earlier embrace of Polixenes. When contrasting the alignment of words and gestures in the reunion of mother and daughter, Thomas suggests that the potential for misinterpretation of gesture calls into question the “gendered spectacle of forgiveness usually attributed to this scene” (93). Thomas’ focus here on “the gestural language built on passivity” (97) provides a model for my attention to the subtle details of verbal and nonverbal communication in the performance of chastity and how these performances are supported by alliances between women.

### **“Failure to repeat”**

My analysis of the ways in which female characters and women writers use speech and silence to navigate the contradictory gendered requirements for the public perception of feminine virtue is built on two very different, but related, theoretical foundations: Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity, and J. L. Austin’s theory of speech acts. Judith Butler argues that “[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (*Gender Trouble* 45).

Gender, for Butler, is not instinctive or innate, but is learned and performed in order to navigate the social constraints that regulate gender. Scholars of early modern conduct literature including Murphy and Jones have argued that while early moderns would have understood the sexes to have inherent qualities belonging to them, conduct manuals themselves admit “that the virtuous woman is a cultural construct” (Murphy 1) and that “men and women can be *produced*” through proper instruction in the ideals of gendered behaviour (Jones 41). It is therefore useful to think about the ways in which adherence to these gendered norms through repeated and constant performance actually produces, over time, the appearance of a naturally gendered identity, as Butler suggests.

There is a difference, however, between performance and performativity. The performance of gestures considered to be uniquely feminine—for example, a demure glance, the batting of one’s eyes, a bashful but flirtatious smile—can and have been performed by boy actors to produce the effect of femininity for the characters they take on. But these acts do not necessarily claim to represent or to displace the gender identity of the actor beneath, despite the worries of some anti-theatricalists in the period.<sup>3</sup> Butler argues that gender is a compulsory act that is repeated and consistent. It is also not voluntary, but instead both prescribed and compelled by the “regulatory frame” of the gender norms of a society. Together these acts cohere to produce the appearance of gender, which is understood to be a natural state of being (*Bodies that Matter* 12).

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<sup>3</sup> In their consideration of drag, Butler argues that performances of gender that do not match the performer’s gender identity have the ability to subvert “the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively [mock] both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity” (*Gender Trouble* 186).



Borrowing the concept of the “performative” from J. L. Austin’s theorization of speech acts,<sup>4</sup> Butler argues that gender is performative in that, like the utterance that “enacts or produces that which it names” (*Bodies that Matter* 13), the performance of gendered acts “constitut[e] the identity it is purported to be” (*Gender Trouble* 34). Rather than the expression of an inner gendered core of identity, for Butler, these acts produce the appearance of gender in the moment of their action. The difference, however, is that the performative utterance performs the action of which it is a part with deliberate and willed intent, and primarily in a single instance—the action takes place in the moment of the utterance. The performative production of gender, on the other hand, is not only compelled by cultural constraint, but it is also *continuous*. Additionally, as Butler notes, the performative construction of gender “regularly conceals its genesis” in acts which accrue gendered meaning, thereby compelling societal “belief in its necessity and naturalness” (*Gender Trouble* 190).

What makes the concept of gender identity even more complicated is that gender norms themselves are unstable and conflicting. Butler observes that gender norms are “inapproximable ideals,” a “set of social exclusions” that ensure “the impossibility of a full recognition, that is, of ever fully inhabiting the name by which one’s social identity is inaugurated and mobilized, [which] implies the instability and incompleteness of subject-formation” (*Bodies that Matter* 237, 221, 226). Gender norms exclude the possibility of

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<sup>4</sup> Austin describes the performative utterance as an act of speech where “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as ‘just’, saying something” (5). For Austin, performative utterances often have, or could take on, a specific grammatical structure that often names the action it performs like in the examples “I bet” or “I apologize” (32) and are also performed according to “accepted conventional procedure[s]” that must be performed by the appropriate person, in the appropriate circumstances to be said to be “happily” performed (14-15). Austin also identifies performative utterances as a type of “illocutionary act”—a concept to which I will return in the next section.

their full embodiment because they represent an ideal to which it is possible to aspire, but is rarely, if ever, possible to perform in any perfect or continuous way. We need only look to the norms surrounding the chaste silence of women in the early modern period to see evidence of such “inapproximable ideals.” As we have seen, women were understood to be naturally talkative, while silence indicated proper feminine passivity and chastity. This feminine silence, on the other hand, ought not to be too silent or women may risk being thought coy, proud, ill-brought up, or worse—defiant. These contradictions in the ideals themselves exclude the possibility of their complete fulfillment.

Nevertheless, while these ideals may be contradictory, there is no less of a compulsion to adhere to the standards of gendered behaviour. As Butler intimates,

because gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term *strategy* better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs. Hence, as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what “humanizes” individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right. (*Gender Trouble* 190)

Though here Butler speaks to the rigidity of the contemporary binary gender norms which seek to separate the exclusive categories of “man” and “woman” and regularly punish gendered acts that do not match the individual’s assigned gender, these “punitive consequences” for failing “to do . . . gender right” are equally, if not more, evident in the early modern period. We will see many examples of this throughout this project: the anonymous annotator of Rachel Speght’s pamphlet accuses her of a lack of chastity for daring to write about marriage; in *The Winter’s Tale*, Hermione’s wit and ability to persuade are rewarded with her husband’s jealous ire and public accusations of adultery;

Mariam's outspokenness in *The Tragedy of Mariam* sets the stage for Salome's slander of her; and Mother Gullman in *A Mad World, My Masters* warns her courtesan daughter of the consequences of failing to perform the markers of chastity. Women were regularly punished for not continuously performing not just femininity, but a specific kind of virtuous femininity that was both legibly chaste and distinctly silent.

Connected to the idea that the appearance of gender identity is the product of the repeated performance of normative gendered behaviour is what Butler calls "the possibility of a failure to repeat" (*Gender Trouble* 192)—the failure to continuously perform the small, gendered acts and gestures that help to produce the appearance of a stable gender identity over time. Though this "failure to repeat" could be and is often met with punishment, for Butler, this possibility of a break or a fissure in the continual performative production of gender opens up the prospect of agency through "the possibility of a variation on that repetition" and the "complex reconfiguration and redeployment" of gendered injunctions (198, 199). Butler looks to moments in contemporary society like drag that have the potential to "contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms" and "expos[e] the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction" (198, 192). However, I want to focus instead on much smaller instances of agency that do not necessarily seek to contest early modern systems of gender, but that allow individuals to strategically deploy the performative process of gender production to construct individual appearances of (and reputations for) chastity—one of the most important ideals of early modern femininity, which was central to what it meant to be a virtuous woman. These attempts at agency are most apparent in moments and situations where chaste identity is under threat or scrutiny. Such performative productions of chaste femininity involve the strategic navigation and performance of

contradictory norms that variably require chaste silence and submissive speech in order to appear as coherent, natural, and innate.

This possibility of the “failure to repeat” and the looming spectre of punishment that attends “fail[ing] to do . . . gender right” are therefore concepts to which this project intimately attends. As Butler argues, “[t]he injunction *to be* a given gender produces necessary failures, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated” (*Gender Trouble* 199). These moments of “failure” exist when the norms themselves conflict, such as when speech is required for self-defence, but that very speech is enough to confirm guilt or when desires, social roles, or moral imperatives compel contradictory behaviour. The goal of this project is therefore to examine the strategy behind the performative production of chaste femininity in these moments of crisis—where the fissures in coherence are most apparent and the potential of punishment for “fail[ing] to do . . . gender right” looms largest.

### **“As I express it”**

Butler argues that “[t]he effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (*Gender Trouble* 191). Speech, like other bodily movements, actions, and stylizations, is therefore part of the larger performative production of gender identity. In *How to do Things With Words*, J. L. Austin explores speech as a form of action rather than as simple descriptions that can either be true or false (1-3). He argues that beyond just “saying something,” speech can also be categorized as what he calls an “illocutionary act”—the “performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to [the] performance of

an act *of* saying something” (99-100). These illocutionary acts perform an action—to argue, to ask, to announce, to command—in the moment of the utterance itself. Austin’s main example of an illocutionary act is the performative utterance, a speech act that usually names the action of which it is a part and where “[t]he uttering of the words is . . . usually a, or even *the*, leading incident in the performance of the act” (8). The words “I command you . . .” perform the act of commanding rather than simply describing a desire for someone to do something. However, as Austin suggests, performative utterances are bound by cultural conventions. In order “to be said to have happily brought off . . . [the] action” the “accepted conventional procedure” must be followed correctly by an appropriate person (one who has the social or legal authority to do so), in the appropriate circumstances (14). It is not possible to successfully command someone else without the requisite authority. In the early modern period such authority and conventional procedures were often restricted to men (and women in positions of relative authority). Men were taught these procedures, expected to command, and win favour through verbal mastery, while women were advised to remain comparatively silent. Thus, the analysis of speech acts and their gendered conventions becomes helpful to exploring the role of speech in the performative production of gendered identities.

Austin also notes that “the occasion of an utterance matters seriously, and that the words used are to some extent to be ‘explained’ by the ‘context’ in which they are designed to be or actually have been spoken in a linguistic interchange” (100). In the context of the contradictory requirements placed on female speech in the period, “the occasion of an utterance” makes all the difference to both the meaning of the words and to what Austin terms its “illocutionary force”—the “functions of or ways in which we use speech” (99). In Austin’s words, “It makes a great difference whether we were advising,

or merely suggesting, or actually ordering, whether we were strictly promising or only announcing a vague intention, and so forth” (99). In gendered terms, the illocutionary force of speech acts makes a significant difference in how they are interpreted by those who would have women remain as silent and as passive as possible. But, as Austin also notes, “[t]hese issues penetrate a little but not without confusion into grammar” (99), leaving open opportunities for the analysis of the various ways these speech acts function in practice.

In acts of discretion, persuasion, or direct defences of reputation, the female speaker, as part of a larger homosocial network, is performing an illocutionary act: she conceals, urges, defends, or slanders. Her words, however, often also produce what Austin calls “perlocutionary acts,” “effects,” or “consequences” that take on a life beyond her original utterance. Once her words are uttered, they “produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons” that may or may not be intended by the speaker herself (101). A defence of reputation, meant to carry the illocutionary force of a refutation, could persuade the listener/reader or it could do precisely the opposite, prompting the anger of an adversary. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Hermione’s urging of Polixenes to stay in Sicilia, for example, has the intended perlocutionary effect of persuading Polixenes to stay, but it also has the later unintended effect of inspiring her husband’s jealous accusations of adultery.

Once uttered, the female speaker’s words are fundamentally beyond her control, whisked away upon the air, and carried to her listener where they take their effect. However, as Timothy Gould observes in his analysis of perlocutionary effects, often these two moments are temporally distinct: “In countless instances, this sort of gap opens between the happiness and coherence of my illocutionary act and, on the other hand, the

field of desired perlocutionary effects onto which I launched my utterance”—a gap that he dubs “illocutionary suspense” or “perlocutionary delay” (31). This gap between speech and its perlocutionary effects is important to consider when exploring the perception of female speech in the early modern period. To continue our *Winter’s Tale* example, Hermione’s words to Polixenes, overheard, prompt Leontes’ belief in her lack of chastity and later foreclose the happiness of her further illocutionary attempts to persuade him of her innocence. In her own words, “mine integrity, / Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it, / Be so received” (3.2.25-27). Butler similarly notes what they call “the open temporality of the speech act” in their work on injurious speech acts in *Excitable Speech*. They argue that this suspense—here between a woman’s utterances and their interpretation as unchaste—also leaves open moments for linguistic agency:

Such a loosening of the link between act and injury [in Austin’s terms, illocutionary acts and their perlocutionary effects] . . . opens up the possibility for a counter-speech, a kind of talking back, that would be foreclosed by the tightening of that link. Thus, the gap that separates the speech act from its future effects has its auspicious implications: it begins a theory of linguistic agency that provides an alternative to the relentless search for legal remedy. (15)

While Butler’s focus here is on the injurious illocutionary force of hate speech, I want to suggest that in instances where acts of speech produce the unintended perlocutionary effects of producing fissures or failures in the performative production of chaste femininity, other women often allow for a chaste reinterpretation both of acts of speech and of moments of silence. Where the chastity of the speaker is not at issue, the illocutionary force of her words is more likely to have its intended effect. In these instances, women’s voices have the power to support, defend, or even destroy the success

of performative productions of chastity. Rather than chaste silence alone, the voices of other women are what often allow a woman's chastity to speak for her.

### **“With public voice”**

The difficulty of studying the function of acts of speech and silence before the advent of audio recording devices is that these historical voices have long since been lost to time. Instead as scholars, we must look to where voices (and female voices, especially) were recorded or represented. However, this poses difficulties as well: as Ina Habermann notes, “The actual moment of enunciation is elusive, and the change of medium from the oral to the textual involves crucial changes as well as necessarily reflecting the interests and perspectives of the writers” (2). In an effort to recapture these moments of enunciation, literary scholars tend to view women's writing as analogous to their speech since, as Larson argues of letter writing, “[w]ritten conversation displayed remarkable affinities to its oral counterpart” (23). She notes that letter writing involved a similar navigation of rhetorical codes of class and gender, since “[t]he ability to maintain and manipulate reputation and relationships through language and gesture . . . informed both oral and textual social contexts” (23). As we will see in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, women writers were conscious of maintaining their appearance of modesty and chastity through their writing since, in the case of publication especially, the public circulation of a woman's ideas was often “associated with promiscuity” (Wall 281). Other scholars like Habermann and Gina Bloom turn to dramatic contexts to examine speech because, in their words, play-texts “retain a residual orality” (Habermann 3) and “inscribe on their pages the voices of actors—voices that exist at the nexus of the verbal and the concrete” (Bloom 4). Like women's writing, theatrical play-texts preserve the linguistic and



rhetorical constructions of oral language, effectively capturing the elusiveness of the speech act in textual form, which allows for its reproduction in publication and performance. Though female characters in early modern plays are fictional representations of women, often written by men (with a few notable exceptions, as we will see in Chapter 3) and originally performed by men as well, the drama of the period, as Habermann argues, “actively and self-consciously negotiat[es] the issues it takes up” (3). Thus, plays have the advantage of setting acts of speech in their fictional performative contexts to explore the complex social codes that governed gendered behaviour and the performative self-construction of chaste identity.

This dissertation therefore straddles the generic divide between dramatic and non-dramatic texts to examine the speech acts and silent performances involved in the strategic construction, maintenance, and attempts to repair chaste reputation by means of female homosocial networks. My analysis begins with an exploration of a real-life textual example of a young woman’s self-conscious construction of herself as chaste and how easily such constructions are negated through the exploitation of the perceived fissures in her appearance of chastity. I then turn my attention to dramatic representations of women whose performative production of chastity is in jeopardy to examine the ways in which other women play a role in the repair, destruction, and even fabrication of chaste reputation. Each chapter progresses through a different threat to reputation in which the performative productions of chaste femininity become increasingly tenuous. I consider the ways in which female speakers modulate their voices in order to both justify their speech and mitigate the negative effects their voices may have on their appearance of silent chastity. I argue that for these women, the strategic performance of chaste femininity allows for some agency over the public perception of their virtue; however,

when questioned by a threat to reputation, the female speaker is nevertheless placed in a double bind—her voice alone is not enough to ensure the perception of her chastity. In these instances, female homosocial bonds make all the difference. Together, as vocal collectives, other women can stand witness to individual performances of chastity, speaking when and how others cannot, to allow these performances of chastity to seem to speak for themselves.

Chapter 1 takes as its focus the conflict between a young female writer, a misogynist pamphlet writer, and an anonymous detractor as it plays out in a single copy of Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617). In her pamphlet, Speght takes on the misogyny espoused by Joseph Swetnam in his infamous *The Arraignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615) to defend the reputation of women against his slanderous words. This chapter traces the ways in which Speght emphasizes her chastity to create a position from which to speak against Swetnam's accusations of women's supposed "unconstancy." Though Speght's pamphlet specifically reaches out to other women in her defence of "*Hevahs sex*" (4), ultimately, as she herself acknowledges, she is the first "to enter the Lists of encountering with this our grand enemy among men"—she is a lone David who faces a "vaunting *Goliah*" (4). Speght's rebuke of Swetnam was followed by other feminine (yet pseudonymous) responses, but Speght could not prevent a negative reaction to her own pamphlet. Instead, a copy of Speght's *Mouzell* at Yale's Beinecke Library includes manuscript marginalia in which the contemporary annotator uses crude sexual puns and allusions to unchaste women to question Speght's chastity, eroticize her voice, and retroactively silence her from the margins of her own text. Taken together, Speght's construction of herself as a chaste

female speaker and the misogynist response it generated represent a compelling real-world example of the difficulty of voicing a defence of chaste reputation.

Chapter 2 explores King Leontes' jealous accusations of adultery against his wife Hermione in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611, pub. 1623). This chapter explores how the verbal wit and eloquence required of the lady of the court contrast with the imperative that she also continuously maintain a performance of chastity that is, by definition, "tongue-tied" (1.2.27). Although Hermione initially speaks only after her husband prompts her to, her eloquent persuasion of the king of Bohemia sparks her husband's jealous outrage and suspicion of her chastity. After he publicly accuses her of adultery, Hermione's already-suspected voice is not enough to defend herself against his accusations. Hermione's voice, however, is not the only female voice in this play. Instead, Paulina's and later Perdita's voices function in concert with, and in contrast to, Hermione's, suggesting that a chorus of female voices is needed to collectively support individual performances of chastity.

Chapter 3 focuses on the unchaste Salome's slander of the virtuous but outspoken Mariam in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (pub. 1613). This chapter first considers the ways in which the textual elements of Cary's play in print help to establish her own reputation as a learned and virtuous woman writer, while emphasizing the importance of female friendship in her own construction of chastity. In the play itself, however, there is a noticeable lack of female community. The voices of Cary's female characters are antagonistic and discordant, sounding against one another in anger and slander. Where Mariam is outspoken but ultimately chaste in action, Salome is notoriously unchaste but much more strategic in her performance of the markers of chastity. Her slander of Mariam succeeds because she recognizes and deliberately

exploits the differences in their performative productions of femininity. However, in the juxtaposition of these two very different, opposing female characters, *The Tragedy of Mariam* suggests the importance of female community as an antidote to the patriarchal tyranny that separates women.

Finally, Chapter 4 takes as its focus the completely fabricated reputation for chastity of the Courtesan Frank Gullman and her Mother in Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604-6, pub. 1608). Not one of the play's female characters is chaste, but yet they *appear* to be so. This chapter traces how the women of *A Mad World* teach each other when and how to speak and when to stay silent in order to construct the appearance of chastity and marital fidelity even where it does not actually exist in practice. Recognizing chastity as a social and economic imperative, Frank Gullman, her Mother, and Mistress Harebrain collectively counterfeit the appearance of feminine virtue in order to pursue their individual desires. Together their voices interpret and stand in for each other to maintain their communal performance of chastity, with each reputation dependent on, but also reinforcing the others. In the face of varying threats to reputation, how women use their voices is incredibly important to the perception of their chastity—both their own and that of those for whom they speak.

## Chapter 1

### “A Good Woeman Will Neither Kicke nor Wince”: Rachel Speght, Reputation, and the Feminine Voice

I know I shall be bitten by many because I touch many, but before I goe any further let me whisper one worde in your eares, and that is this, whatsoever you thinke priuately I wish you to conceale it with silence, least in starting vp to finde faulte you proue your selues guilty of these monstrous accusations which are heere following against some women: and those which spurne if they feele themselues touched, proue themselues starke fooles in bewraying their galled backs to the world, for this booke toucheth no sort of women, but such as when they heare it will goe about to reprove it, . . . although I deale with you after the manner of a shrowe which cannot otherwise ease her curst heart but by her vnhappy tongue.

—Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615)

In his infamous pamphlet *The Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615), Joseph Swetnam characterizes women as “stinging Hornets humming about [his] eares” (sig. A3v) who are “dissembling in their deeds and in all their actions subtill and dangerous for men to deale withall, for their faces are lusers, their beauties are baytes, their lookes are netts, and their wordes charmes, and all to bring men to ruine” (sig. B2v). For Swetnam, women—especially those that are beautiful—cannot be trusted: a pleasing outward appearance only masks the “cruell heart,” “hellish thoughtes,” and “mercillesse mindes” that lie beneath (sig. B2v). Though Swetnam’s ideas were far from original, *The Araignment* was immensely popular, prompting numerous reprintings and several responses including the anonymous play *Swetnam, the Woman-hater, Arraigned by Women* (1620), which dramatizes the controversy. The first of these responses stands out from the rest. Rachel Speght’s *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617) is explicitly concerned with defending the reputation of women and is not only the most serious in its treatment of Swetnam and his ideas, but also the only response to which its author

attaches her own name, making it the only response which can be confirmed to be written by a woman. Because of Speght's focus on defending the reputation of women as her impetus for writing, her pamphlet also becomes an important record of a young woman speaking out against what she perceived to be slander, something usually only preserved in court records, if at all. Despite presenting herself as a young virgin armed "with the truth . . . and the Word of Gods Spirit" (4), however, Speght could not prevent what she called "the biting wrongs" of her readers (5). A copy of her *Mouzell for Melastomus* at Yale's Beinecke library contains manuscript marginalia in which the contemporary annotator attempts to negate Speght's speaking position through crude sexual humour, puns, and religious references.<sup>5</sup> Together Speght's pamphlet and this manuscript response represent a fascinating real-world example of the difficulty of voicing a defence of chaste reputation. In order to explore Speght's attempts to speak with, and on behalf of, other women it is important to first trace how Speght counters Swetnam's injunction to silence by constructing a chaste and modest speaking position, before turning to an analysis of the contemporary annotations that seek to silence her.

Joseph Swetnam seemed to anticipate the response his text would generate, and he explicitly sought to preclude his would-be detractors. As James Purkis explains, "To reply is to affirm the text's dominant characterization of women as unruly, shrewish, and irrational. Silent and private reception of *The Araignement's* misogyny is apparently the only option for its female readers" (116). A female response, then, can only confirm the accusations against her, and Speght must struggle against this double bind in order to use

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<sup>5</sup> All citations from Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* are taken from Barbara Keifer Lewalski's edition of *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, while manuscript annotations from the Beinecke copy will be cited by signature reference.

her voice—here always already “proven” to be shrewish and unruly, with all the implications of sexual unruliness that accompany such accusations—to defend women against the same characterization. Significantly, however, Speght ensures that her words draw on the community of women she claims to represent. She explicitly connects herself to “all vertuous Ladies Honourable or Worshipfull, and to all other of Hevahs sex” (3) and though she is the first “to enter the Lists of encountring with this our grand enemy among men” (4), she is later joined by other feminine—though pseudonymous—voices in speaking against Swetnam’s “unjust imputations” (3). In reaching out to other women, Speght ensures that together these feminine voices function in concert against Swetnam’s misogynist accusations to provide an alternate narrative about the character of women.

**“Although . . . I am young in yeares”**

Faced with an injunction to silence, women writers like Rachel Speght needed to carve out a position from which to speak that neither threatened their performance of chaste femininity nor provoked censure from their potential readers. In general, though women had long participated in manuscript culture, circulating poems, translations, and other works to a limited circle of friends and acquaintances, women writers were often discouraged from participation in the emerging technology of print, largely because of patriarchal anxieties about masculine control (Wall 280-281). The medium of print promised a much wider, public circulation of ideas that prompted the same sort of anxiety that was provoked by women who gossiped and circulated or “gadded about” town, beyond the control of their husbands or fathers. Thomas Becon in *The Boke of Matrimony* (1564), explicitly links a woman’s physical circulation beyond the home with promiscuity:

For there is not a more eident token of a lighte woman or harlot then seldome to tary at home, and many times causeles to gad abroad. Salomon in the description of an harlot, setteth forth her to be such one as is full of loud wordes, redye to dally, & whose feete cannot abide in the house, but now she is with out nowe in the strets, seldome at home, &c. Saint Paule requireth, [that] those matrones and sober wiues, which will be counted godly should not be wanderers abroad, but keepers of the house, and diligently tary at home. (ff. 675v-676)

Publishing, and the circulation that it promised, presented a similar threat: as Wendy Wall explains, “A woman’s decision to ‘press the Press’, to venture far from her place ‘at home within’ and from her passive . . . silent ‘feminine’ role, could be seen as a sign of her refusal to respect sanctioned cultural boundaries” (281), including those boundaries that constrained female sexuality. Like uncontrolled female speech that became associated with an uncontrolled sexual appetite, publishing, for a woman writer, and the accompanying public circulation of her ideas, became associated with promiscuity (281), the public circulation of her sexual body. Like the circulation of the gadding woman, publishing could indicate a desire to be *known* by many—in more than one sense of the word.

Avoiding such censure required a female writer to construct a speaking position within her writing that would not only allow her to claim a legitimate authority in print but also to maintain her appearance of chastity even in the face of publication. She must at once claim the learning and experience needed to be considered an authority on the subject, while explaining away her age, gender, and rank—essentially anything that marked her as inferior to her masculine counterparts—without eschewing the feminine modesty expected of her as an early modern woman. Many female writers turned to the



rhetoric of modesty to help craft a position from which to speak. As Barbara Kiefer Lewalski notes in her introduction to her edition of *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, “Speght mounts an effective answer to Swetnam by creating a persona who is the living refutation of Swetnam’s charges against women. She presents herself as religious, learned, serious, truthful, eminently rational, engagingly modest, unassuming, justifiably angry yet self-controlled, and courageous in defending wronged women and their Creator” (xxii). In order to speak against Swetnam, she herself must avoid his accusations, so she presents herself as one of the “wise, vertuous, and honest women” (Speght 9) that Swetnam has slandered.

Speght’s use of modesty rhetoric in her prefatory material is not unusual. It was conventional in the period for writers to use the rhetoric of modesty to foster good will in their potential readers (Pender 22; Dunn 4). Male authors frequently presented themselves as unskilled or reluctant to write, publishing only at the behest of a patron or friend. Even John Milton in *Paradise Lost* presents himself as “Nor skilled, nor studious,” benefiting only from communion with a “celestial patroness” who inspires his “unpremeditated verse” (qtd. in Pender 7). Beneath the guise of humility and deference to a dedicatee—often a potential patron of some importance—the work would be more likely to have a positive reception because, according to Kevin Dunn in his exploration of classical rhetoric, this modesty could overcome the “natural defensiveness of the listener, who can more easily afford to trust a weak speaker than a strong one” (6). For Dunn, this downplaying of authorial confidence has rhetorical power that comes from “the inverse relationship between perceived and actual authority . . . the more effective the speaker’s self-abnegation, the more seriously the listener will take his words on a subject, since he has made his own motivation invisible” (5-6). When Milton says that he doubts his ability

to find an “answerable style” or that his verse is “unpremeditated” (qtd. in Pender 7), the brilliance of his poetry shines even brighter in contrast.

As part of this rhetorical convention, authors also emphasized their reluctance to write, distancing themselves from any personal attachment or motivation in the publication of their work. Instead, they pass off their efforts as a work of leisure or locate the inspiration for the work outside of themselves, either as the result of communion with a muse, the request of a dedicatee, or because of the project’s inherent utility or necessity (Dunn 5). The effect of this performance of reluctance is twofold. On one hand, it explains away any deficiency in the act of creation—if the reluctant author is admittedly not the best person for the task but is writing only at the behest of another or because it needs to be done, he or she may be more easily excused if the work is not to the reader’s liking. On the other, if an author locates the source of his or her inspiration in a source outside of the self, any praise for that work can more easily be deflected onto that outside source, thereby maintaining the guise of humility in the act of publication. In fact, as Patricia Pender points out, Castiglione in his *The Book of the Courtier*, “recommends the performance of modesty as a cloak for self-praise” (26-27). Castiglione’s Count Ludovico<sup>6</sup> advises how this balance between modesty and self-praise might be achieved: “in mine opinion, all doth consist in speaking such thinges after a sorte, that it may appeare that they are not rehearsed to that end: but that they come so to purpose, that he can not refraine telling them, and alwaies seeming to flee his owne prayse, tell the truth” (37-38). Writers, like Castiglione’s courtier, must maintain a delicate balance between

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<sup>6</sup> Hoby refers to this character as “Counte Lewis” throughout his 1561 English translation.

presenting themselves and their work in a way that will evoke praise from their readers and seeming to eschew such praise out of modesty.

It should therefore come as no surprise that women writers in the period readily adopted the rhetoric of modesty in their compositions. As Pender argues, Castiglione's Count Guazzo suggests that modesty in women makes their other qualities more appealing: "As Goldsmiths sometime cover their ware and jewels with a Glass to make them shewe the better, so a mayde under the vayle of modesty, ought to inclose all her other perfections, to increase the brightnesse of them, and the more forcibly to drawe the eyes and the hartes of others, to have her in admiration" (qtd. in Pender 28). Women writers' use of the modesty topos in their writing, then, becomes not only a device to garner support from their readers but also an extension of their performance of the kind of femininity that was expected of them as early modern women (Wilcox 213-214). In a world where women were advised that "the ornaments of a good woman is *temperance* in her minde, *silence* in her tongue, and *bashfulness* in her countenance" (Rich sig. F1v), modesty would be expected and absolutely necessary in order to justify their writing and maintain their performance of femininity. On the surface, such modesty is meant to be read as a "straightforward sign of the author's submission to a hostile, patriarchal literary culture" (Pender 2) and therefore an expression of the woman writer's adherence to idealized norms of gendered behaviour, but as Pender suggests, it is also a "primary site of early modern women's subtle and strategic self-fashioning" (3). The result is a complex negotiation of the social norms that dictated when and how women should speak using conventional methods already in use by male writers. Like the rhetorical modesty used by their male counterparts, women's modesty is not a literal disparagement of their work or skill, but a "calculated display" (2) designed to not only foster the good will of

their readers, but also to create a space for women's literary pursuits and mask what Pender calls "the sometimes surprising aspiration and ambition" that can be found in early modern women's writing (14).

Jane Anger, the likely pseudonymous author of the pamphlet *Jane Anger her Protection for Women* (1589), does something similar by addressing her two prefaces "To the Gentlewomen of ENGLAND" (sig. A4) and "To all VVomen in generall, and gentle Reader whatsoever" (sig. A4v). Here Anger creates what Dunn calls "a pretense of privacy" (5) by addressing her pamphlet to women, excluding, as Joad Raymond suggests, the majority of the usual readership of pamphlet literature (282). Raymond also notes that "these double prefaces accent a feminine readership, and while they do not exclude men, they place them in the category not distinguished by status. A dual readership is created, a device characteristic of women's public writings. The pamphlet embraces women in first person plural pronouns, and denotes men by the third person" (282). Though her pamphlet was still widely available to the reading public, by singling out women as the preferred audience, Anger rhetorically manufactures a space away from the eyes of male readers that mimics more private women-only spaces within the community. Publication in this context can be justified as intended for women, rather than the wider circulation that suggests immodest desires.

In *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, Speght is more explicit about her intent to publish her tract, but similarly addresses her first preface to other women. Her second preface is addressed, "Not unto the veriest Ideot that *ever set Pen to Paper, but to the Cynicall Bayter of Women, or metamorphosed Misogunes, Joseph Swetnam*" (7). Like many dedicatory epistles, Speght's choice of dedicatees, and the order in which she addresses them, is an important part of how she figures herself and the purpose of her pamphlet.

Like Jane Anger, Speght addresses her pamphlet first and foremost to other women, not only signalling her connection to them, but also creating a sense that her pamphlet is intended not for the general public, who may not be sympathetic to her cause, but to other women who understand the need to speak out against the threat posed by Swetnam's words. Significantly, she specifically addresses her pamphlet to "*Ladies Honourable or Worshipful*"—aristocratic women and the wives of city officials—all of whom outrank her in terms of social class, in an attempt to seek the "patronage from some of power to shield mee from the biting wrongs of *Momus*, who oftentimes setteth a rankling tooth into the sides of truth" (5). This call for patronage and her accompanying deference to those of a higher class are typical of prefatory material in the period where writers would excuse their class, gender, and education under the guise of writing for or on behalf of a patron of a higher social station.

As part of her performance of modesty, Speght excuses herself for being "yong, and the unworthiest of thousands" (3), but by claiming that she writes on behalf of "*Ladies Honourable or Worshipful*," she also claims a reason to write. Specifically concerned with the "*just reputation*" (3) of women, by writing on behalf "of all *Hevahs* sex, both rich and poore, learned and unlearned" (4) who may not be willing or able to risk "the persecuting heate of this fierie and furious Dragon" (5), Speght figures herself as their champion, and as a result, her class, age, and education cease to matter. She is careful to maintain her semblance of modesty, however, noting that it is not because she thinks herself to be "more fit then others to undertake such a taske, but as one, who not perceiving any of our Sex to enter the Lists of encountring with this our grand enemy among men, I being out of all feare, because armed with the truth . . . did no whit dread to combate with our said malevolent adversarie" (4). It is not that she believes herself to be

more capable of engaging Swetnam in metaphorical combat; she is simply the only one willing to risk personal censure to do so, and as such it becomes necessary for someone like Speght to write on behalf of “the wronged” (5).

Here Speght is caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place—according to Swetnam’s pamphlet, if she speaks against him, she is a shrew whose very act of speaking only proves his point. If she does not speak, she takes the risk that others will believe that women are as Swetnam believes them to be. In the preface that she addresses directly to Swetnam, Speght therefore uses his own terms to address what she considers to be his faulty logic. She argues that “though everie galled horse, being touched, doth kicke; yet every one that kickes, is not galled: so that you might as well have said, that because burnt folks dread the fire, therefore none feare fire but those that are burnt, as made that illiterate conclusion which you have absurdly inferred” (8). In Swetnam’s terms, Speght acknowledges that she is kicking back but argues that her response to his accusations does not mean that she is “galled” by them—instead, she figures herself as one of the “wise, vertuous, and honest women” (9) whom Swetnam unjustly maligns in his pamphlet. Rather than taking Swetnam’s advice to “conceale [her thoughts] with silence” (sig. A2v), Speght attempts to follow the advice that she lays out in her first preface as a “paradigmatical patterne for all women, noble and ignoble to follow” (4). She argues they should, following the example of Seneca, “be not enflamed with choler against this our enraged adversarie, but patiently consider of him according to the portraiture which he hath drawne of himselfe, his Writings being the very embleme of a monster” (4). In advocating for patience and self-control in the face of a justifiable anger, Speght specifically attempts to avoid the label of shrewishness by performing the kind of femininity that is, paradoxically, almost always defined by the same silence that Swetnam

recommends. She figures herself as speaking only out of necessity in order to combat a man who has shown himself to be “the very embleme of a monster” (4).

Though it may be frustrating for modern readers who would wish for Speght to destabilize the established gendered hierarchy in her defence of women, it is therefore no wonder that Speght does not disrupt the patriarchal assumption that a woman’s place is to be subordinate to her husband and to be taught by him. Instead, Speght frequently defends these ideas, arguing only that

those husbands [are] to be blamed, which lay the whole burthen of domesticall affaires and maintenance on the shoulders of their wives. For, as yoake-fellowes they are to sustayne part of each others cares, griefs, and calamities: But as if two Oxen be put in one yoke, the one being bigger then the other, the greater beares most weight; so the Husband being the stronger vessell is to beare a greater burthen then his wife. (20)

Rather than arguing that women should have the same freedoms as men, she suggests that men help their wives in the roles that they are meant to fill. As Diane Purkiss explains, established patriarchal discourses “offered women some kind of social function and protection, some kind of clear and recognizable starting-point from which to speak as [a] woman without attracting instant condemnation. . . . Speght is voicing patriarchy, but at least she is speaking at length, beginning the long task of speaking for women by speaking from precisely the place assigned to them” (92). For Speght, patriarchy provides an accepted model for what constitutes a “good woman”—a role that she must claim for herself if she is to speak against Swetnam. Speght can then use her performance of this kind of femininity as a shield: she can still fight back against Swetnam’s accusations, but

her deliberate adherence to idealized gender roles and her performance of modesty is strategic.

Her characterization of herself as one of the good women slandered by Swetnam also explains why Speght, unlike many other female writers in the period, never explicitly excuses her sex as a hindrance to her ability to write. She does, however, use the elements of conventional modesty rhetoric in gendered ways that further her characterization of herself as a virtuous woman, whose desire to “*shield her Sex from Slaunders Dart*” (11) makes it necessary for her to write. Central to this characterization of herself are her youth and virginity, which Speght emphasizes through the three commendatory poems, written under the names “Philalethes” (lover of truth), “Philomathes” (lover of knowledge), and “Favour B” (10-11), that she includes immediately following her dedicatory epistles. As Lewalski observes, these poems were likely written by Speght herself, since “The poem by ‘Philomathes’ contains an unusual Latinism, ‘obtreccation,’ that Speght often uses, and the verse in all three poems resembles Speght’s in her later poems” (xxvi n39). If this is the case, the laudatory poems become an interesting part of Speght’s self-construction: technically separated from herself, the authors of the poems can say what Speght cannot, allowing her to explicitly establish her virginity, commitment to piety, and education without immediately jeopardizing her appearance of modesty. Instead it is “Favour B” who hails Speght as a “*Pupill unto Pietie*” (11, line 7) and

*A Virgin young, and of such tender age,*

*As for encounter may be deemd too weake,*

*She having not as yet seene twenty yeares,*

*Though in her carriage older she appears.* (lines 9-12)



Coming directly from Speght, these lines would appear immodest, but seemingly from the pen of another, they appear as a truthful testament of Speght's virtue and advise the reader not to underestimate or devalue Speght's youthful contribution.

As a young, unmarried woman Speght's speech is circumscribed, since, as Laura Gowing notes, in the early modern period "access to knowledge was supposed to be tightly limited. For the young and the single, not being able to talk about sexuality or the body could stand as evidence of chastity and virtue" (*Common Bodies* 11). The commendatory poems that establish and praise her virginity, virtue, and education serve not only to account for the fact that "*in her carriage older she appears*" (line 12) but also to free her from continuously performing a lack of personal knowledge about the subject of marriage. If her virginity is established by another from the beginning, it might be less likely to come into question later on. It is important to note, however, that Speght does deliberately perform her knowledge of and adherence to the social boundaries that are the result of her age, marital status, and gender. In her second preface, she explicitly catches herself before she goes too far in her condemnation of Swetnam, acknowledging that "Minority bids me keepe within my bounds" (7), and she later refuses to speak about widowhood, since "in that I am ignorant of their dispositions, accounting it a follie for me to talke of *Robin-hood*, as many doe, that never shot in his Bowe, I leave the speculation (with approbation of their *Beare-bayting*) to those that regard neyther affabilitie nor humanitie" (40-41). Having never been a widow, she cannot claim to understand their positions. This, however, does not keep her from writing about the roles of men and women in marriage—presumably something for which she herself was preparing—but in the act of writing about a subject of which she cannot legitimately claim personal experience without jeopardizing her appearance of chastity, Speght leaves herself open to

possible censure. As we will see, this fact does not escape her annotator in the margins of her text.

In her preface to the second part of her text, “Certaine Quaeres to the Bayter of Women,” Speght begins her address to her “curteous Reader” (31) by both emphasizing and downplaying her education in a very gendered way. She argues that “Although . . . I am young in yeares, and more defective in knowledge, that little smattering in Learning which I have obtained, being only the fruit of such vacant houres, as I could spare from affaires befitting my Sex, yet I am not altogether ignorant of that Analogie which ought to be used in a literate Responsarie” (31). In justifying her deviation from the rules of the genre in which she writes, she both demonstrates her knowledge of those rules, and excuses her access to the type of education in rhetoric that was often denied to women. By emphasizing that her learning did not take away from her performance of her gendered role, Speght uses a similar trope to John Woodbridge’s when, as Pender notes, “he assures the reader of [Anne] Bradstreet’s 1650 volume of poetry that the time Bradstreet has spent on poetry has not been stolen from her domestic duties” (23). For Speght especially, it is important to show that she has not let her education come before her duties as a young woman in her household, since it could be used as evidence to justify Swetnam’s complaints that women often lead “a proud and lasie and idle life, to the great hinderance of their poore Husbands” (sig. B1).

A large part of how Speght claims a speaking position is through her claim to necessity. For Speght, it is necessary to speak out against Swetnam because of the potential for his words to take on a life of their own beyond his distasteful pamphlet. She characterizes his ideas about women as “*Slaunders Dart*” (11) and “scandals and defamations” that could “in time prove pernicious, if they bee not nipt in the head at their

first appearance” (3). Speght argues that, like pernicious gossip, Swetnam’s words are like a “small sparke” that if “kindled . . . may worke great mischiefe and dammage” (3) or like a contagious disease (3), “deadly poyson” (3), or infectious “venome” (31) that would tarnish the reputation of her entire sex if others were to believe “his Diabolicall infamies to be infallible truths” (3). In short, Speght is concerned with the perlocutionary consequences of Swetnam’s words—effects that, for J. L. Austin, include such socially-dependent actions as “convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (109).

In their exploration of contemporary hate speech in their book *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler notes that though utterances “initiate a set of consequences”, “the saying and the consequences produced are temporally distinct” (17). The utterance comes first—in this case, the publication of Swetnam’s pamphlet—and is followed by the consequences. However, unlike performative utterances, which produce in the moment the action that they purport to describe, here the utterance and its consequence are not one and the same, but are separated by time, however brief. Timothy Gould calls this temporal gap a “perlocutionary delay” (31) and Butler argues that such delays open up moments of agency in “the possibility for a counter-speech, a kind of talking back” (15). In her response to Swetnam, Speght attempts to disrupt the link between Swetnam’s pamphlet and the potential perlocutionary effect of his words by presenting her alternate, corrective viewpoint. She must intervene in order to “prevent future infection with that venome, which he hath, and daily doth sweate out” (31) since, in her words, “*Tacere is, quasi consentire*” (3)—to do otherwise, her silence would imply consent (Lewalski 3, n18-19).

As part of this characterization of herself as a lone defender of her sex against Swetnam's contagious influence, Speght figures Swetnam as a "vaunting *Goliath*" (4) to her David, which not only creates the need for her to respond, but it also carries rhetorical power. She constructs herself as Swetnam's opposite, the consummate underdog: where Swetnam is a "fierie and furious Dragon" (5), she is small, young, and female, "armed" only "with the truth . . . and the Word of Gods Spirit" (4). Moreover, by figuring herself as a David, Speght signals her readers to view her, not as "galled" or "touched" (Swetnam sig. A2v) by Swetnam's accusations, but as brave in selflessly taking on this looming figure who has more power than she does. Here Speght's David and Goliath metaphor plays with gender in important ways. The contrast that the David and Goliath image evokes reflects the gendered power dynamic between men and women that Speght herself does not question. By emphasizing that she occupies a role that appears to be less powerful, Speght is able to maintain her performance of reluctance and feminine modesty on the surface, while taking on an active role in shutting down a powerful adversary with the support of her readers. However, since both David and Goliath are male, Speght's use of this metaphor to describe a dispute that is distinctly gendered produces some conflicting effects. On one hand, by presenting herself as a David figure, Speght uses the sympathy usually afforded the masculine David to obscure and distance herself from the role that Swetnam would have his opponents occupy—that of the shrew (sig. A2v). On the other, as Purkis points out, Speght's occupation of a masculine role also "threatens to unsettle [her] voice" (121). Indeed, the metaphor itself also suggests that Speght has a great deal more confidence in taking on Swetnam than her supposedly-feminine underdog status would allow—after all, David slew Goliath with a single stone.

Speght's occupation of a masculine role combined with her obvious disdain for Swetnam threaten to unsettle Speght's characterization of herself as one of the good women Swetnam slanders. From the beginning, she sets him up to look foolish and stupid, addressing him as "not . . . the veriest Ideot that *ever set Pen to Paper*" (7) (but close) and suggesting throughout that his argument is "irregular, without Gramaticall Concordance, and a promiscuous mingle mangle"(31). Later, as Purkis suggests, "her caution and modesty slip, as she insults Swetnam, using the spelling 'asse' instead of 'as' when she addresses him" (121, quoting Speght 34). To extend Speght's martial metaphor (though it is tempting to cheer Speght's more pointed jabs at her "pestiferous enemy" [3]), if she is "armed with the truth" (4) and potentially shielded by her connection to "patronage from some of power" (5), her personal armour is her modest self-construction, which, faltering, leaves her vulnerable to attack.

### **"Not soe good as common"**

And attack someone did. Yale's Beinecke Rare Books Library boasts a copy of Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (Call number: Ih Sp33 617M) that contains an extensive, vehemently misogynist response to Speght in the margins of her text. The manuscript annotations are written in a single, mixed contemporary hand and appear on thirty-five of the forty-nine printed pages of the quarto pamphlet, beginning on the frontispiece, and comprising eighty-seven annotations in all. Though the annotator frequently underlines and occasionally amends Speght's words (sigs. B4 and C1), the majority of the annotations appear in the pamphlet's outer margins (the right-hand margin of the recto sides, and the left-hand margin of the verso) and at the bottom of the page. The top of the page is free from intervention and the annotator only occasionally uses the

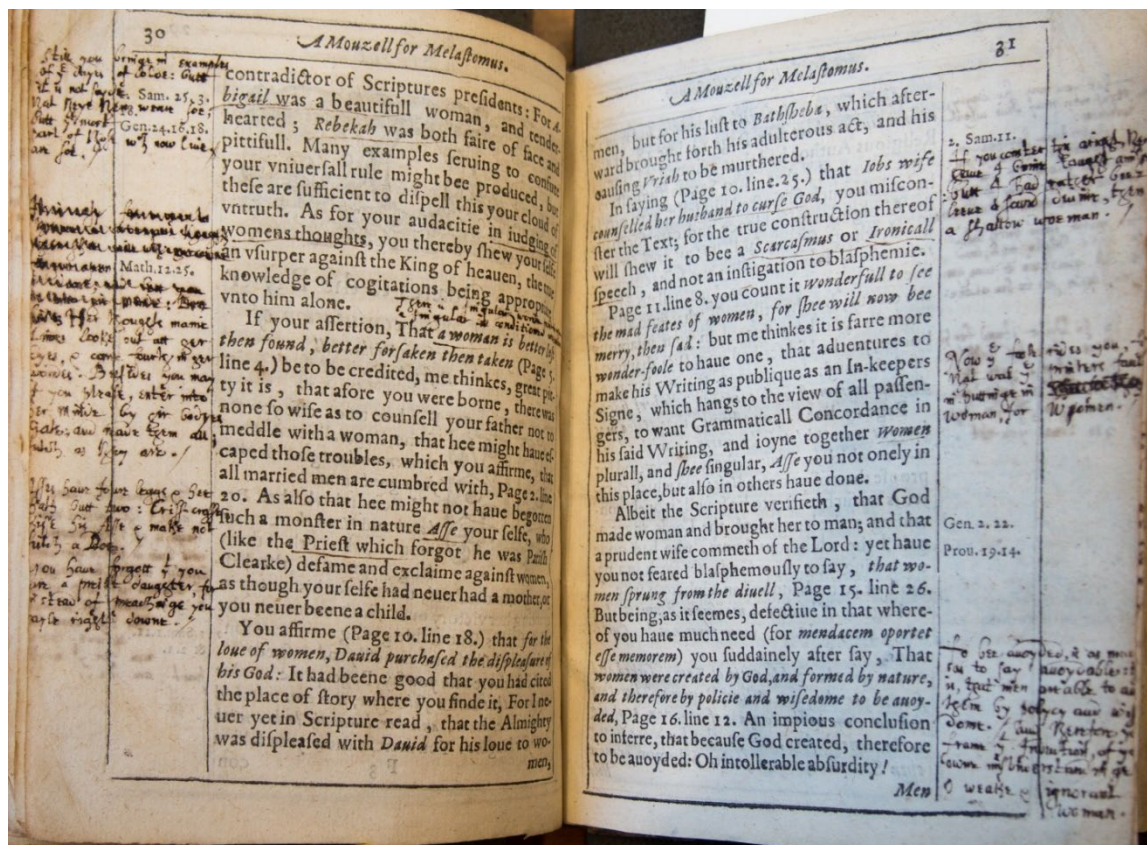


Figure 1: Sig. F3v and F4. Source: Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University

pamphlet's gutter where some words are now partially obscured by the binding. Six of the comments are crossed out or smudged and illegible (see fig. 1), but the rest are quite clear. Though the annotator occasionally comments in the spaces between paragraphs and extends the commentary beyond her ruled marginal lines to the space between her words, Speght's text, including her own printed marginal citations, is never completely obscured. The most intense intervention, however, occurs on Speght's commendatory poems (sigs. B4 and B4v). Here the annotator completely ignores the ruled margins and makes copious use of the blank space surrounding the poems, including the space between stanzas (see fig. 2).

Not much is known about the annotator who wrote in the margins of Speght's text.

We can, however, assume that he is male, both from the vehemence with which he

**I**f he that for his Countrie doth expose  
 himselfe unto the furie of his foe,  
 Doth merite praise and due respect of those,  
 for whom he did that perill undergoe:  
 Then let the Author of this Monzell true  
 Receiue the like, ofright it is her due.

*These must have  
 a large shield  
 to receive all  
 darts of all  
 at for whole sexe.*

For she to shield her Sex from Slaunders Dart,  
 and from inuective obrectation,  
 Hath ventured by force of Learnings Art,  
 (in which she hath had education)  
 To combate with him, which doth shauie his Sex,  
 By offering feeble women to perplex.

**PHILOMATHES.**

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**P**raise is a debt, which doth of due belong  
 To those, that take the path of Vertues trace,  
 Meating their wayes and workes by Reasons rule,  
 Having their hearts so lightned with Gods grace,  
 That willllingly they would not him offend,  
 But holily their liues beginne and end.

Of such a Pupill unto Pietie  
 As is describ'd, I doe intend to speake,  
 A Virgin young, and of such tender age,  
 As for encounter may be deem'd too weake,  
 Shee hauing not as yet seene twenty yeares,  
 Though in her carriage older she appeares.

*I haue knowne Rose  
 haue encounter'd  
 men, at his at my first  
 and haue made him yelde  
 his weapon.*

*you can not suron  
 for his virginitie  
 vntil you see her  
 for that; & then you  
 can see what she is*

Her wit and learning in this present worke,  
 More praise doth merit, then my quill can write:  
 Her magnanimitie deserues applaud,  
 In ventring with a fierie foe to fight:  
 And now in fine, what shall I further say?  
 But that she beares the triumph quite away.

*By my booke  
 rose.*

*Neither vnlesse  
 fight in  
 for  
 in  
 saye.*

Thy mistisfe beare y' pricks e  
 prize away.

**FAVOVR B.**

Figure 2: Sig. B4v. Source: Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University.

disparages women and the fact that he includes himself among the men when he asks, “If [the] wisest man [that] ever lived, in choosing of seven hundred wives & three hundred Concubines, could not choose one that was upright: what s[h]ould wee silly men hope for a good woeman in these our latter dayes” (sig. C4v). Although Lewalski speculates that the annotator could be Joseph Swetnam preparing a response to Speght’s charges against him (“Female Text” 144), I would argue that this identification is unlikely given that he refers to Swetnam in the third person and is occasionally critical of him even though he defends Swetnam’s views.

Regardless of the annotator’s identity, his response to Speght in the margins of her text transforms her pamphlet as a material object in a fascinating way. Like perlocutionary sequels (Austin 117) that are set in motion by an act of speech but cannot be controlled by the speaker once the words have been uttered, the circulation of Speght’s text after publication places the reception of her words beyond her control. However, unlike speech, which is ephemeral, Speght’s pamphlet exists as a material object; not only can her readers return to her words over multiple readings, but they can also interact with her text in ways that leave a lasting mark on the physical object.

Early modern readers often wrote in the margins of printed books. As William H. Sherman observes, though the proportion of marginalia in printed books declines in the early seventeenth century, “among the books printed as late as the 1590s, 52 percent still contain contemporary marginalia” (124). He goes on to explain that this proportion rises again in the 1640s and 1650s and stays well over fifty percent among “religious polemics and practical guides to law, medicine, and estate management” (124). Moreover, many books show signs that manuscript notes have been washed, bleached, or cropped away, a practice which Monique Hulvey notes “reached its peak in the nineteenth century as an



attempt to “get rid of all the ‘mutilating’ marks” (qtd. in Sherman 122). Still others have no doubt been lost to time either because they fell into disrepair through frequent use or because collectors tend to choose and retain copies that have fewer marginal notes to mar the clean pages (Sherman 123). To modern readers, these numbers might be surprising, but as Paul Saenger and Michael Heinlen argue, readers of early printed books did not yet share what they call our “modern book etiquette, which views the printed page as sacrosanct and consequently all handwritten additions to the printed page as personal notes, detrimental to subsequent common use” (254).<sup>7</sup> Proper engagement with the ideas of the text often involved marking or underlining certain passages for ease of location (Sherman 121), referencing other works they associated with the text (126), and reacting to and interacting with the content of what they had read (Kallendorf 114). Even more books contain writing such as birth announcements, recipes, penmanship exercises, doodles and the like, since books provided a ready source of paper which was often in short supply (Sherman 130-131).

While modern readers may prefer a pristine printed page, free from the markings of other readers, Craig Kallendorf suggests that “annotated books were often preferred to unannotated ones because they contained more information” (112), citing John Winthrop’s note in 1640 that the annotations in some of his books made them “farre the more pretious” (qtd. in Kallendorf 112). If a book is valued for more than the printed text that it contains, it suggests also that the readers who mark that text with their insights,

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<sup>7</sup> Though Saenger and Heinlen argue that the development of printing techniques that no longer required emendations and additions from readers “planted the seeds for modern book etiquette” (254), Sherman’s exploration of manuscript annotations suggests that the movement away from readers marking in books was gradual and that annotations remained quite common in some genres (124).

opinions, and suggestions bring with them an authority not often ascribed to modern readers. As Evelyn B. Tribble argues,

the margins and the text proper were in shifting relationships of authority; the margin might affirm, summarize, underwrite the main text block and thus tend to stabilize meaning, but it might equally assume a contestatory or parodic relation to the text by which it stood. Nor is the margin consistently the site of the secondary, for the margins of texts were often central in their importance. Yet precisely because the margin was in a fluid relationship to the text proper, margins allow us to see the competing claims of internal authority and plural, external authorities in the margins of the text. (6)

Though Tribble focuses on printed marginalia, used to guide readers in their analysis of the text, this is also true of manuscript annotations which correct or argue against the main text, since they too were often meant to be read in conjunction with the text proper. Like manuscripts which often circulated among groups, printed books with annotations—like the Beinecke copy of Speght’s *Mouzell*—were not necessarily only intended for personal use. If the annotated copy of Speght’s *Mouzell* was intended for circulation—even among a group of like-minded individuals—it may explain the vehemence with which the annotator seeks not only to counter her points but also to eroticize her voice. It becomes important, then, to look at how these annotations change the way in which the original text is received as the annotator asserts his authority over the page, imposing his ideas over, under, and around hers.

The spatial arrangement of Speght’s text almost invites intervention. The margins are ruled with vertical and horizontal lines to physically mark out an enclosed space at the top for her running headers and page numbers, and in the outer margins to contain her

printed biblical references—themselves a representation of the external authority upon which she draws to support her claims. This layout, with its ruled margins and running headers, retains some of what others have called the “typographical complexity of the humanist page” (Molekamp 34) used in “learned texts, with headings and printed marginal notes,” which was imitated even in some manuscript books of devotion (Narveson 170). Speght’s biblical citations in the margins emphasize her grounding in scripture, standing in sharp contrast to Swetnam’s pamphlet that contains no citational references and which she derides for being “a building raised without a foundation (at least from sacred Scripture) which the winde of Gods truth must needs cast downe to the ground” (4). Though the other responses to Swetnam—Esther Sowernam’s *Esther Hath Hang’d Haman* (1617) and Constantia Munda’s *The Worming of a Mad Dogge* (1617)—similarly contain printed marginal notes, which are at times more extensive than Speght’s, they lack ruled margins and therefore do not draw attention to the margins as a textual feature in the same way.

Speght’s ruled margins contain only biblical citations and a few brief references to content for ease of locating the main portions of her argument. The result is that Speght’s margins are far from filled with her own citations. The uniformity of the ruling of her margins emphasizes the blank space between her citations—sometimes entire pages are left free of printed marginalia. As a text feature deliberately designed for Speght’s own marginal notes, it provides a marked off space that could have the side effect of encouraging an active reader to fill in these blank spaces with similar references and ideas. Speght’s annotator pays attention to these lines in many places but ignores them in others. On the rectos of the page, his writing starts at the inner marginal line, but when he has more to say, he extends his comments to the edge of the page, completely ignoring

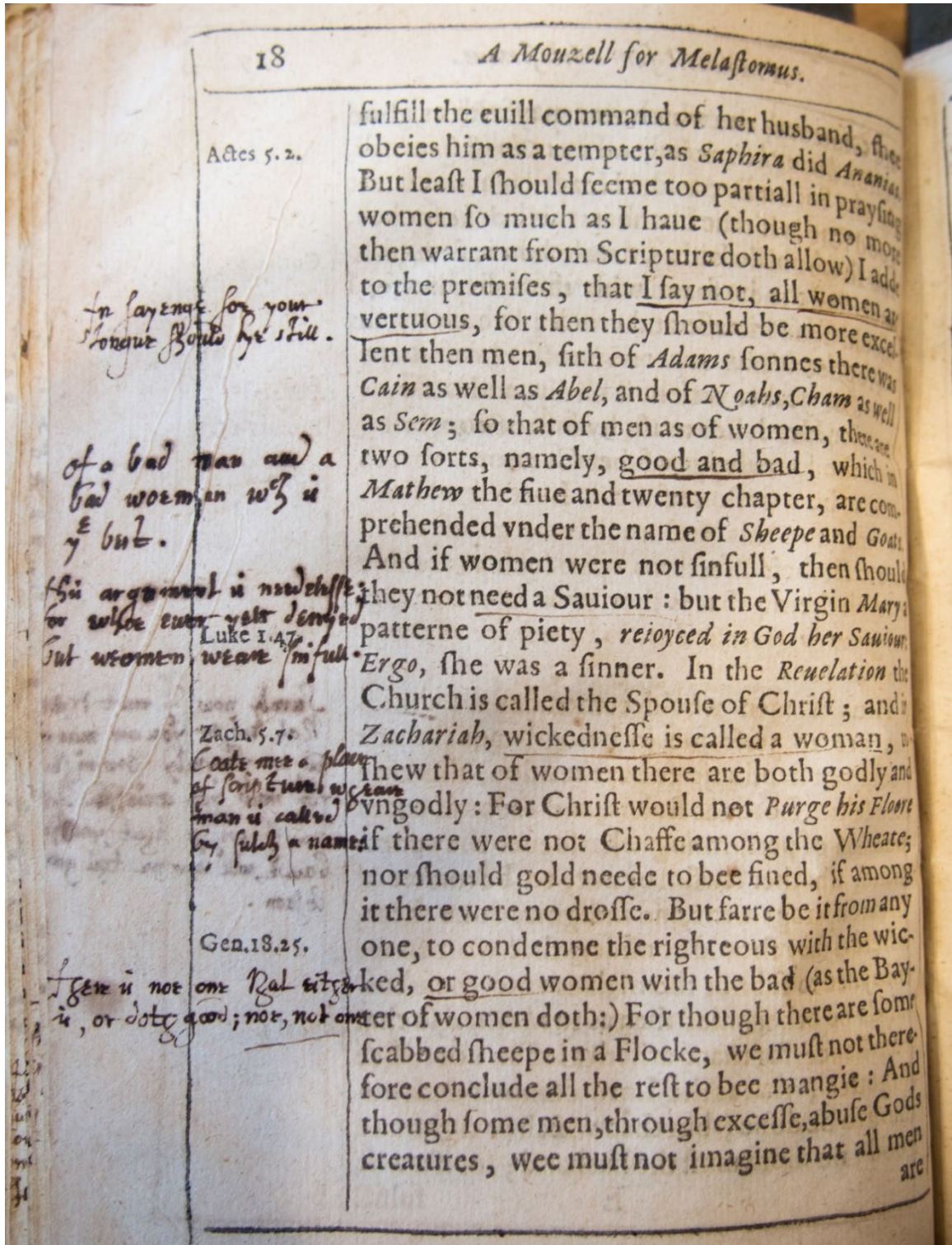


Figure 3: Sig. E1v. Source: Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University.

the outer marginal line. On the verso pages, his observation of Speght's ruled margins is inconsistent. In some places his writing starts neatly confined to the ruled margin, while

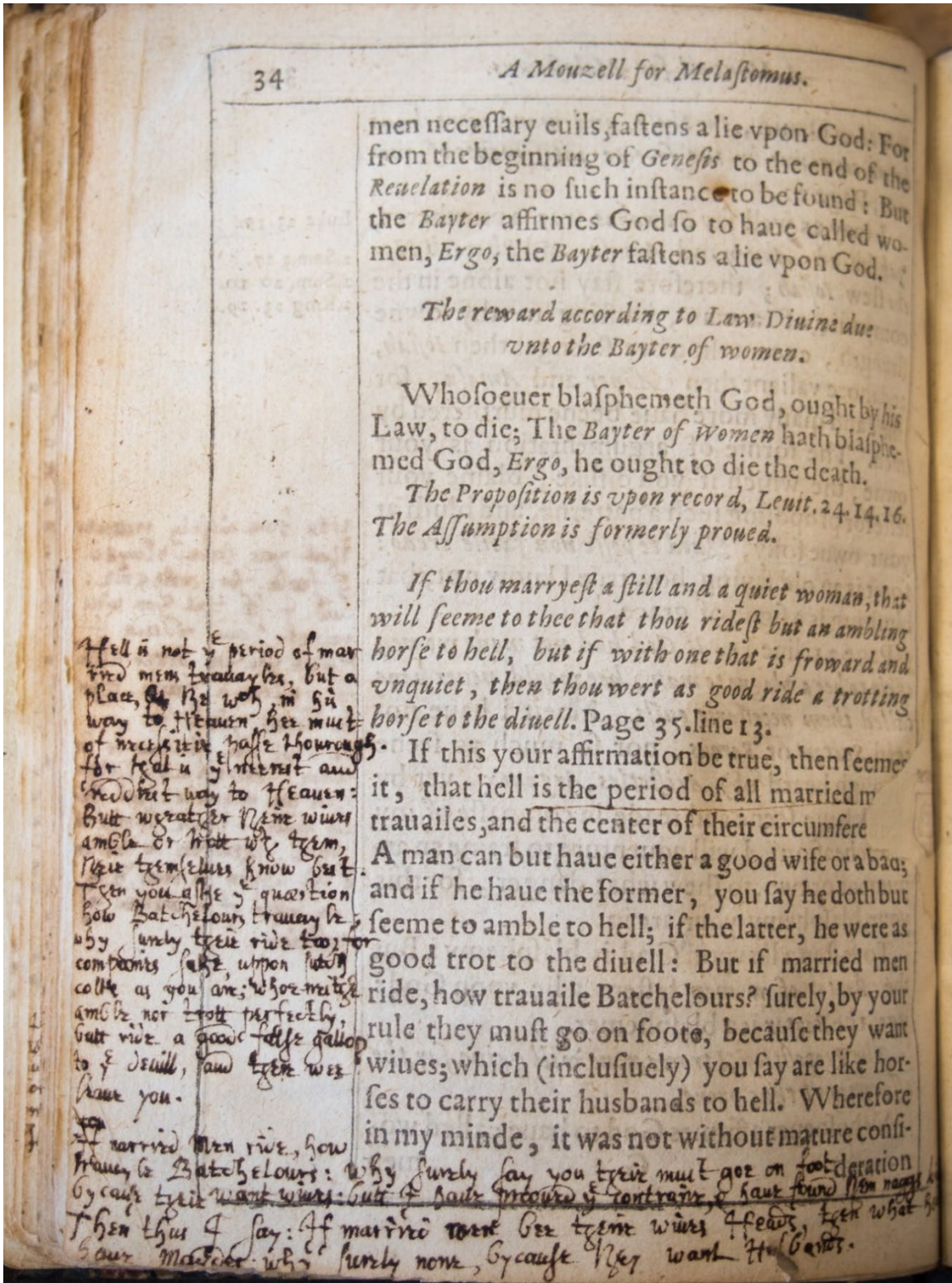
in others he ignores the ruled margins altogether and instead starts his annotations at the edge of the page (see figs. 2 & 3).

Early in the pamphlet, the annotator writes, “Likewise it is sayd, revile not those that revile: which muzzell would verie well have fitted your mouth in manie places of this booke” (sig. B2). This has prompted Susan D. Amussen and David E. Underdown to conclude that “The annotations were clearly made after reading the whole text, with comments at the beginning referring to the rest of the pamphlet” (26). I would argue, however, that what we see in the Beinecke copy is likely the result of several layers of annotations, with at least some representing his first impressions of the text—particularly those which engage with Speght’s argument, even if only to refute it—and likely increasing with intensity and vehement misogyny in subsequent readings and layers of annotation. In sequential order, the tone of the comments shifts dramatically with no consistent pattern or progression, engaging with her arguments at one instance and making personal attacks about Speght’s perceived sexuality the next.

The annotator’s self-referential comments also suggest that he revisited his own annotations and therefore represent further textual proof that he engaged with Speght’s text through multiple readings. On sig. G1v (fig. 4) he responds to Speght’s countering of Swetnam’s assertion that women are the horses on which men ride to hell. Where Speght suggests that it would be better to be married to a woman and therefore to have a “horse” than remain a bachelor and go to hell “on foote, because they want wives” (38), the annotator responds by arguing that “surely theie ride too, for companies sake, uppon sutche coltes as you are; whoe neithe[r] amble nor trott perfectly, butt ride a good fayr gallop to [the] devill, and there wee have you” (sig. G1v). Here he suggests that, though unmarried, bachelors do not necessarily abstain from relationships with women—rather

than wives, the annotator argues bachelors have “coltes”, which not only suggests a younger woman, but could be understood to mean “one of a lusty disposition” (Williams 274), with/on whom they “trott” and “ride”—i.e., have sex. Furthermore, here the younger colts “gallop” compared to Swetnam’s “ambling” or “trotting” wives (sig. F2; Speght 38), taking bachelors with them to hell that much faster. As quickly becomes characteristic of this annotator, he implicates Speght herself in the extra-marital sexual escapades of his hypothetical bachelors, suggesting that she is one of these “coltes.” It is this comment to which the annotator returns—most likely on a subsequent reading of Speght’s text—to reiterate his own point: “If married men ride, how travayle Batchelours: Why surely say you theie must goe on foot bycause theie want wives: butt I have proved [the] contrarie, & have found them naggs to ride. Then thus I say: if married men bee theire wives Heads, then what head have Maides, why surely none, bycause they want Husbands” (sig. G1v). Bragging, he directly references his previous comment: “I have proved [the] contrarie,” indicating that upon this subsequent reading, his own annotations have become part of the text upon which he intends to comment. Here he extends the vocabulary of the woman/horse metaphor in his use of the word “naggs”—both suggestive of nagging and of unruly female speech and slang for “whore” (Williams 932). The second comment, like the first, remains skeptical of virginity, suggesting instead through the metaphorical association of the husband as the head of the family, that maids, in a way, have always already lost their maidenheads or are destined to do so since female sexuality cannot be controlled.

The location of these two comments on the page makes it hard to distinguish that the two annotations are entirely separate (see fig. 4). The first starts in the outer margin at the edge of the page, and occasionally crosses briefly over the inner marginal line to



men necessary euils, fastens a lie vpon God: For from the beginning of *Genesis* to the end of the *Reuelation* is no such instance to be found: But the *Bayter* affirms God so to haue called women, *Ergo*, the *Bayter* fastens a lie vpon God.

The reward according to Law Diuine due vnto the *Bayter* of women.

Whofoeuer blasphemeth God, ought by his Law, to die; The *Bayter* of women hath blasphemed God, *Ergo*, he ought to die the death.

The Proposition is vpon record, *Leuit.* 24. 14. 16. The Assumption is formerly proued.

If thou marryest a still and a quiet woman, that will seeme to thee that thou ridest but an ambling horse to hell, but if with one that is forward and vnquiet, then thou wert as good ride a trotting horse to the diuell. Page 35. line 13.

If this your affirmation be true, then seeme it, that hell is the period of all married m<sup>r</sup>trauailles, and the center of their circumsere. A man can but haue either a good wife or a bad; and if he haue the former, you say he doth but seeme to amble to hell; if the latter, he were as good trot to the diuell: But if married men ride, how trauaile Batchelours? surely, by your rule they must go on foots, because they want wiues; which (inclusiue) you say are like horses to carry their husbands to hell. Wherefore in my minde, it was not without mature confi-

It is not a period of marriage, but a place, & the way to Heaven. Hee must of necessity have horses for to ride a quiet way to Heaven: But whether these wives amble or trot, they know but. Then you aske a question how Batchelours trauaile, why surely they ride too, for commodities sake, upon which colts as you are; whoe might amble not trot perfectly, but ride a good false gallop to Hell, and then wee haue you.

Then thus I say: If married men ride, how trauaile Batchelours: why surely say you they must goe on foot, & that because they want wives: but I haue proued & contrair, & haue found them riding. Then thus I say: If married men ride, how trauaile Batchelours: why surely say you they must goe on foot, & that because they want wives: but I haue proued & contrair, & haue found them riding.

Figure 4: Sig. G1v. Source: Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University.

intrude upon Speght's text. The second begins directly below the first and wraps around the bottom of the text proper, completely ignoring the bottom ruled margin line, stopping

short of writing over the catchword at the bottom of Speght's text, and continuing to the bottom of the page. Except for a small space at the end of a line, the two comments are almost connected; however, the annotator's repetition of "how Batchelours travayle" and "how travayle Batchelours" in both comments suggests a lapse of time between the writing of the two since otherwise the repetition, and self-referential nature of the comment itself, would be rendered unnecessary.

The visual effect of this two-fold comment is striking. Extending from roughly the half-way point on the page, the annotator's text threatens to overwhelm and envelop Speght's, competing for dominance on the page. The annotations themselves are written in a clear hand with small lettering in ink that even now is darker than the printed text. Ignoring the ruled margins, his words extend from the edge of the page to the marginal line, occasionally extending even into the spaces between Speght's printed words. In this annotated copy, it is impossible to read the text proper without looking to the margins to read the contestatory viewpoint, which mocks and undermines Speght at almost every turn. Explicitly connecting Speght's writing to an unruly sexuality, his annotations that envelop and encroach upon her printed text can be understood as an attempt to silence her from the margins, disciplining the page in her absence. Given that Speght's goal is to defend women from Swetnam's slanders, this annotated copy of *A Mouzell for Melastomus* then becomes an important textual example of what could and did happen when a woman like Speght attempted to use her voice to defend the reputation of women. Speght, however, ultimately fails to navigate the double bind that circumscribes female speech: in defending the reputations of women, she must use her voice, but as her annotator's comments frequently attest, her words belie her claims to slander, since they are indicative of uncontrolled female sexuality.



Early on it becomes clear that the annotator's project is not to refute Speght on the level of argument but to silence her using very gendered methods to do so. Picking up on Swetnam's attempts to preclude his would-be detractors from speaking against him, the annotator argues that Speght's response proves the truth of Swetnam's words. Turning the galled horse metaphor around on Speght again, the annotator reiterates Swetnam's point: "Kickinge is a verie ill quallitie in anie horse: [which] you can not cleare your feete of: for youre sowre wordes moove it against you. But a sound & good horse, and soe consequently a good woeman will neither kick nor wince" (sig. B2v). He objects to Speght's "sowre words" because any response at all shows that she is not the "good woeman" that she claims to be—a good woman would, as Swetnam suggests, "conceale it with silence" (sig. A2v).

Not only does the narrator attempt to reinforce Swetnam's injunction to silence, but he also emphasizes the connection between female speech and sexuality. Countering Speght's claim to know how "the Judicious" (8) would judge Swetnam, he makes this connection explicit, arguing "You your selfe weare one of the Juditious: but now by reason of your publique booke, not soe good as com[m]on" (sig. B2v). Prior to voicing her objections in the public medium of print, Speght could claim to be among those who could judge Swetnam for his ideas, but by circulating her words, her text changes her status as a woman—she becomes worse than a common prostitute. He further emphasizes this connection with vulgar sexual humour, frequently twisting her words into crude sexual puns and suggesting that by writing Speght demonstrates her sexual availability.

### “Golden distraction[s]”

When Speght turns her attention to the concept of marriage itself rather than the difference between men and women and their respective duties, she ventures onto a difficult thematic ground: as a young, unmarried woman she does not have the first-hand experience of marriage required to speak about the subject. To speak or write about marriage at all implies a rather more *intimate* knowledge of marital relations, which in turn jeopardizes Speght’s appearance of chastity. This thematic shift in Speght’s text is accompanied by a shift in the way the annotator responds, moving away from a more sustained engagement with her arguments on the previous few pages to a more personal attack on Speght’s status as an unmarried woman. His rhetorical shift represents a complex move to silence Speght after the fact by effectively taking away her authority to speak. When Speght uses a conventional pun on the word marriage to argue that “Marriage is a merri-age, and this worlds Paradise, where there is mutuall love” (22), the annotator responds with “See how shee is carried away in a golden distraction: you must goe to Man, or all will bee spoyled” (sig. D3v). The annotator suggests here that Speght’s glorification of marriage is simply a manifestation of her desire for sex—a sentiment he expresses in his repeated interjections on the same page: “Oh, for a husbände” and “Maydenhead for a husband” (sig. D3v).

At first sight, the annotator’s use of the phrase “shee is carried away in a golden distraction” seems rather innocuous, referring only to Speght’s youthful praises of marriage. However, this annotation also follows Speght’s invocation of the figure of Mary Magdalen as one of several women who “ministred unto CHRIST” and whose heart was “a receptacle for Gods Word” (20; sig. D2v). Following these exemplary women Speght argues a woman’s “feete should be swift in going to seeke the Lord in his

Sanctuarie, as *Marie Magdalen* made haste to seeke CHRIST at his Sepulchre” (20; sig. D2v).<sup>8</sup> As such, I interpret the annotator’s use of the distinctive phrase “golden distraction” as an allusion to Robert Southwell’s 1591 prose meditation, *Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears*, which was printed ten times between 1591 and 1636. In this tract Southwell uses this same phrase to illustrate Mary Magdalen’s experience at Christ’s tomb, the moment that Speght herself references.

As an allusion, the comment becomes a much more pointed attempt to use religion—Speght’s own weapon of choice—against her. Tasked with spreading the news of Christ’s resurrection, Southwell’s Mary loses herself in a daydream:

Sometimes shee forgetteth herself, and loue carrieth her in a golden distraction, making her to imagin that her Lord is present, and then shee seemeth to demand him questions, and to heare his answeres: she dreameth that his feete are in her folded armes, and that hee giueth her soule a full repast of his comfortes. But alas when she commeth to her selfe, and findeth it but an illusion, she is so much the more sorie, in that the onely imagination, being so delightfull, she was not worthie to enjoy the thing it self. (sigs. I7v-I8)

In her “golden distraction,” Mary imagines a physical and emotional intimacy with Christ rather than simply a spiritual one (Schmitz 187). Although the image of Jesus’s feet in her folded arms deliberately recalls Mary’s washing and anointing of Christ’s feet in Luke 7

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<sup>8</sup> Speght’s annotator engages with this paragraph by underlining a word in the next sentence: “Finally, no power externall or internall ought woman to keep idle, but to imploy it in some service of GOD, to the glorie of her Creator, and comfort of her owne soule” (sig. D2v). To the left of Speght’s text, the annotator’s comment reads: “It was [the] sayinge of Seneca, Longu[m] est iter per praecepta; breue et efficez per exempla; Shewe them, by your example; and lett your deedes speake unto them: Plus sonas (valde metuto) quam vales” (sig. D2v). Lewalski translates the Latin as “The way is long through precept; short and efficacious through example” and “You speak more (I greatly fear) than you are able to do” (107). Here the annotator is engaged with Speght’s argument enough to find fault with it and her status as a speaking woman. The comment which is inserted into the space following this paragraph and before the next—“A woeman was made for both endes” (sig. D2v)—marks the beginning of the annotator’s shift toward commenting on Speght’s sexuality, which becomes much more pointed on the page that I have chosen as my focus.

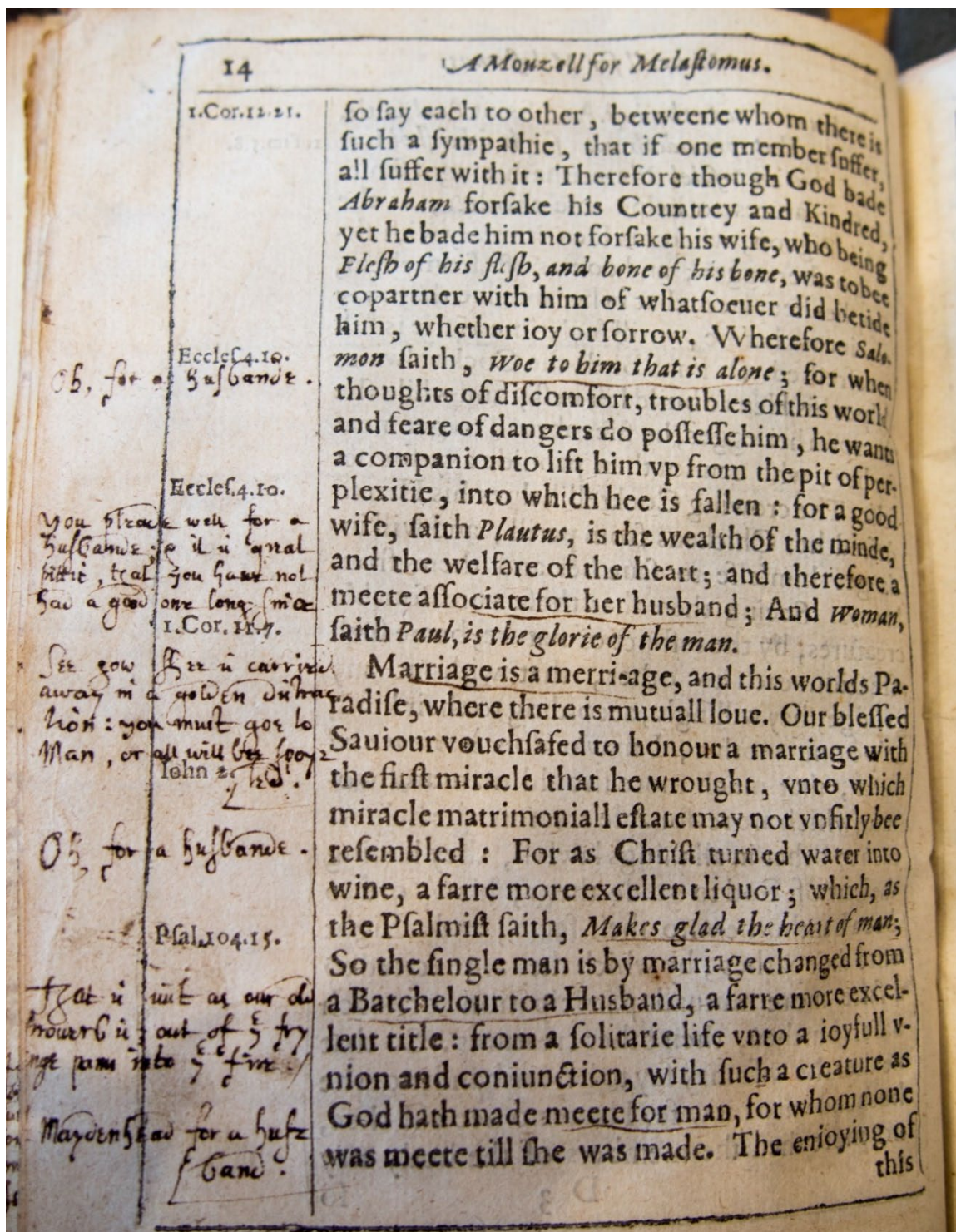


Figure 5: Sig. D3v. Source: Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University

and 8, in the context of Mary's daydream, this posture becomes something more physically intimate—she imagines them together in a position of rest, sharing and touching comfortably.

Though Southwell's description of this "golden distraction" is not overtly sexual, in the larger context of the work, and given that Mary Magdalen often represents, as Götz Schmitz suggests, "a living example of the weakness of the flesh" (186), this physical intimacy becomes suggestive of the potentially erotic nature of her dream. Noting a continuity between the body and soul as early as his dedicatory epistle, Southwell later equates Mary's love for Christ to that of "louers [who] in the vehemency of their passion, can neither thinke nor speake but of that they loue" (sig. F2), and he frequently describes her love in both marital and erotic terms. Southwell's narrator uses the same patriarchal logic that governed early modern marital property to temper Mary's assertion that Jesus belongs to her "because his loue was mine, and when he gaue me his loue, hee gaue me himselfe, sith loue is no gift except the giuer be giuen with it" (sig. E7v). Instead, Southwell's narrator argues, "if he be thine by being giuen thee once, thou art his by as many gifts, as daies, and therefore hee being absolute owner of thee, is likewise full owner of whatsoever is thine, and consequently because he is thine, hee is also his owne, and so nothing liable vnto thee, for taking himselfe from thee" (sig. E8v). Like an early modern husband, by giving his love, Christ gains ownership of Mary and all that is hers but retains ownership of himself in the process.

Southwell also frequently describes Mary's passion for Christ in erotic language. Interpreting Mary's silent grief, Southwell's narrator infers, "For him thy heart throbberth, thy brest sigheth, thy tongue complaineth" (sig. G3), and imagines her as unafraid "to embrace and carry him naked in [her] armes" (sig. H5v). As Debora Kuller Shuger suggests, Southwell's narrator even "pictures the Resurrection as a sort of Venus and Adonis scene telling Mary that 'all hazards in taking . . . [Christ's body] should have beene with usury repaid, if lying in thy lap, thou mightest have seene him revived, and his

disfigured and dead body beautified in thy armes with a divine majesty” (171, quoting Southwell sig. H6). In this imagining, like Venus, Mary grieves over the prone body of the object of her unrequited erotic desire; only here he is miraculously brought to life again. Mary’s focus on Christ’s body therefore seems to suggest that she may hope for a physical resurrection rather than a purely spiritual one. Bringing Southwell back to Speght’s text, the annotator’s use of the phrase “golden distraction” thus evokes not only an image of a young woman lost in a daydream, but it also connects Speght with Mary Magdalen, the Biblical fallen woman, to suggest that Speght’s “golden distraction” is of a similarly erotic nature. He suggests that Speght “must go to Man” because such insatiable lust, if left unchecked or not legitimized within the bonds of marriage, would lead her to “spoyle” her all-important reputation.

It is important to note, however, that Southwell never explicitly accuses his Mary Magdalen of returning to her former sinfulness, even while describing her passion for Christ in erotic terms. In fact, he never mentions her sinful past at all. Instead, Southwell’s narrator chastises Mary for her lack of faith, which he locates in her excess of feminine emotion and her focus on her emotional attachment to Jesus since she is “yet better acquainted with [his] bodily shape, then with [his] spirituall power” (sig. C5). For Southwell, Mary’s focus on Christ’s body detracts from her knowledge of his spiritual power so that she is unable to recognize the evidence of his resurrection. When the angels who appear at Christ’s tomb question why Mary weeps, Southwell’s narrator argues that Mary is “too much a *Woman*” (sig. E1v) to be a disciple: “art thou now so much a *Woman* that thou canst not command thy eies to forebeare teares? If thou wert a true Disciple, so many proofes would perswade thee, but now thy incredulous humor, maketh thee vnworthy of that stile, and we can afforde thee no better title then a *Woman*, and

therefore *O Woman* and too much a *Woman*, why weepst thou?" (sigs. E1-E1v). For Southwell, Mary Magdalene's focus on Jesus's body and her personal relationship with him as a man speaks to a lack of faith, which in the context of the narrative become an example of the need to turn such passions in a more spiritual direction.

But why this text? Why invoke the writings of a Jesuit martyr to speak against Speght, the daughter of a Calvinist preacher? For one, the print history of *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* indicates that Southwell's works were read by more than just his intended Catholic readership. *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* was published ten times between 1591 and 1636, and the first five printings were from commercial, Protestant publishers, not the clandestine presses typically behind identifiably Catholic works. Though Gabriel Cawood, the publisher responsible for the 1591, 1592, and 1594 printings, may have had Catholic sympathies (Brown 200), Southwell's *Funeral Tears* was published again in 1602 and 1609 by William Leake, who acted as Warden and later Master of the Stationer's Company (Erne 151). Importantly, none of these printings includes Southwell's name—only the initials S. W. appear on the dedicatory epistles, so as Nancy Pollard Brown suggests, "printer and publisher could be assured that nothing in the work could trace its origins to a Catholic priest" (204). It was not until 1616, the year before Speght's *Mouzell*, and again in 1620, that a Catholic press in St. Omer printed Southwell's meditation. These versions pair *Saint Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* with *Saint Peters Complaint* and other poems organized around the lives of these two Catholic saints. Unlike the earlier printings, the St. Omer versions emphasize Southwell's status as a Jesuit priest and the 1620 version even gives his full name. A very different version was also published in 1620, a collected works of sorts, published by William Barrett and dedicated to Richard Sackville, the third Earl of Dorset, first husband to Anne Clifford.

Though Dorset's mother was Catholic and had ties to Southwell (McDonald and Brown lxxv), Barrett's edition is distinctly Protestant in its content: *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* appears in full, but Barrett omits Southwell's identifiably Catholic poems, and includes what Robert S. Miola calls a "radical abridgement" of Southwell's *A Short Rule of Good Life* with all Catholic references removed (Miola 426). Barrett's edition was clearly marketed toward a Protestant audience, and given its reprintings in 1630 and 1636, it was obviously popular. The 1616 and 1620 printings—just before and a little after Speght's *Mouzell*—indicate that both Catholics and Protestants were reading Southwell for their own ends while the debate about women, in which Speght participates, was ongoing.

Speght's annotator's allusion to Southwell may also be related to the variant treatments afforded the figure of Mary Magdalen in Catholic and Protestant texts. As Schmitz points out, "Protestant writers tended to stress the conversion of the sinner Mary, and therefore took in more of the earlier parts of her history . . . . This automatically shed more light on Mary's dubious past, and her sins were not as easily washed off" (192). Someone like Speght would be familiar with texts that outlined Mary's sins and focused on the penitential nature of her absolution, all the while still recalling her sinful past. Southwell's text is different though: it takes place well after Mary is already penitent and converted, with hardly any reference to her former sinfulness. At first glance, alluding to a text that avoids any account of Mary's sinful history seems like an odd choice especially given the annotator's fondness for crude sexual puns, but when targeting Speght—a Calvinist woman—Southwell may be a good choice.

As a Catholic text, *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* does not show the same division between the body and the soul as Protestant texts (Shuger 189). Southwell



himself notes a continuity between the body and the soul, suggesting in his dedicatory epistle that the passions and love that are the usual subject of erotic love poetry should be directed

vnto their due courses, . . . to draw this floud of affections into the righte chanel. Passions I allow, and loues I approue, onely I would wishe that men would alter their obiect and better their intent. For passions being sequels of our nature, and allotted vnto vs as the handmaides of reason: there can be no doubt, but that as their author is good, and their end godly: so ther vse tempered in the meane, implieth no offence. (sigs. A3v-A4)

When directed toward God, Mary's passionate energy becomes, for Southwell and his Catholic readers, a "most sincere and perfect loue" because "the thing loued was of infinite perfection" (sig. A5v). Mary's desire for Christ's physical body is therefore evidence of her passion and love for him, and only becomes a problem when her excessive grief for the loss of Jesus, the man, supplants her faith in his promised resurrection. Shuger observes, however, that this "continuity between natural and transcendent desire" does not exist in the same way for Protestant writers, noting that "The humanist/Protestant division between nature and spirit . . . tends to separate erotic (which then moves toward the sexual) from religious discourse" (189). Indeed, in his commentaries on the Gospel according to John, which Southwell's tract illustrates, John Calvin argues that Mary Magdalen remained at Jesus's tomb not out of devotion, but because of "superstition alone, accompanied by carnal feelings" (254). For Calvin, Christ's refusal to let Mary touch him is because her "eagerness to *touch* him had been carried to excess" (258), adding that "those who are desirous to succeed in seeking Christ must raise their minds upwards; and . . . rid themselves of the earthly affections of the

flesh” (259). For Calvin, the division between earthly and spiritual passions is clear, and in this light, Mary’s focus on Christ’s body in *Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears* becomes evidence of her continued carnality rather than even a misdirected spiritual passion.

For the recusant English Catholics that were Southwell’s intended readership, however, Mary’s focus on Christ’s body also served another purpose that would have been lost on a Protestant audience. Gary Kuchar argues that Mary’s grief at the loss of Christ’s body speaks to the English Catholic experience of living in a Protestant country “without access to the transubstantiated presence of Christ’s body in the consecrated host of the Catholic Mass” that “provid[ed] the faithful receiver with the promise of eternal life through the cleansing of sins” (“Gender” 141). Often unable to receive communion from a Catholic priest, Catholics in England would be able to identify with Mary’s despair and sense of “religious abandonment” (136) at discovering Christ’s body was gone. For Protestant readers who had renounced the belief in transubstantiation, Mary’s focus on Christ’s body would not have the same eucharistic significance and would therefore be interpreted differently, especially by Calvinists like Speght. As Shuger explains,

Knowledge in Calvin is based on reading rather than seeing . . . . Since, according to Calvin, Mary and the other disciples had “abundantly clear testimonies” from Scripture for the Resurrection, they have no excuse for their grief and confusion . . . . As the verbal sign displaces Christ’s body, Mary’s need for that body becomes evidence of her carnality. (174-175)

Mary Magdalen then becomes an example of a woman who does not have enough faith to interpret the signs of the word of God, and it is her carnality that gets in the way of that interpretation.

Since Speght's interpretation of the Bible is the foundation of her argument against Swetnam, our annotator's reference to Southwell's Mary Magdalen suggests that Speght is guilty not only of the same carnality but also of allowing that carnality to cloud her ability to interpret the Bible. Speght's "golden distraction" puts her dangerously close to sinfulness, weakening her hold on the virtuous position from which she claims to speak. By implying that her discussion of marriage is fueled largely by her desire for sex, the annotator eroticizes her voice to question the soundness of her biblical interpretation: if her words are indicative of only her baser urges, her arguments can be ignored, however logical they may be.

**"Oh, for a husbände"**

The annotator marks what he sees as evidence of Speght's desire for a husband elsewhere on this same page, both sequentially before and after his suggestion that "shee is carried away in a golden distraction" (sig. D3v), with the repeated refrain, "Oh, for a husbände" (sig. D3v). Like his use of the phrase "golden distraction," here too he eroticizes Speght's voice by referencing something else—in this case, a popular song about a young woman desperate for a husband. The phrase "Oh! Oh! Oh! For a husband" is the refrain in the song, "There was a mayde this other day"—so titled for its first line—which first appears in John Gamble's manuscript commonplace book of songs dated 1659 (Drexel MS 4257), forty-two years after Speght's pamphlet. Gamble's dating of his manuscript, however, does not preclude an earlier origin for the song. In her introduction to the facsimile edition of the manuscript, Elsie Bickford Jorgens argues that Gamble's manuscript "was almost certainly in use for some years both before and after [1659]" (v-vi). Vincent Harris Duckles also suggests that "several of the tunes and texts are of 16<sup>th</sup>

century origin and had long held a place in the repertoire of popular song at the time they were entered into the manuscript” (22). Both Jorgens and Duckles positively date other songs in Gamble’s collection as early as 1615 (Duckles 22) and the 1630s (Jorgens v-vi). However, in his *Popular Music of the Olden Time* (1859), William Chappell suggests a much earlier origin for “There was a mayde this other day,”<sup>9</sup> arguing that “it is by no means improbable” (782) that Beatrice’s line, “I may sit in a corner and cry ‘Hey-ho, for a husband’” (2.1.293-294) in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598, pub. 1600) is an allusion “to the burden of this song” (Chappell 782).

There is some dispute over the allusion that Beatrice makes in *Much Ado About Nothing*. While scholars seem to agree that Beatrice’s suggestion that she may “cry ‘Hey ho, for a husband’” (2.1.294) alludes to a popular song of the time, sources differ as to which song this is. Music scholar Charles W. Hughes asserts that the song in Gamble’s manuscript was “well-known” and “is mentioned in Shakespeare’s ‘Much Ado About Nothing,’” and titles the song in his work as “Heigh ho for a Husband” after the song’s refrain (215). On the other hand, the editors of *The Norton Shakespeare* suggest that “Hey-ho for a husband” was “the title of a ballad; probably a catchphrase in Shakespeare’s time” (1403 n3), which, given the alternate title for the song in Gamble’s manuscript, does not preclude “There was a mayde this other day” as the song in question. However, most modern editors of *Much Ado About Nothing* do not cite Gamble’s manuscript as the source for this allusion. Instead, editors such as Claire McEachern, in her Arden edition, follow a long editorial tradition of citing the broadside ballad titled “Hey ho, for a Husband. Or a willing Maids wants made known” (“Hey ho,

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<sup>9</sup> Chappell acknowledges his source as Gamble’s commonplace book but instead titles the song “Oh! For a Husband” for its refrain (454-455).

for a husband"; McEachern 197 n294), which was published around 1674-1679, fifteen to twenty years after Gamble's manuscript. However, it is important to note here that the phrase "Hey-ho, for a husband" that Beatrice quotes in *Much Ado* is only the *title* of this broadside ballad. The phrase itself does not appear anywhere else in the song. Instead, the song's refrain repeats "For fifteen years of age am I / And have never a Suitor yet" ("Hey ho, for a husband" 8-9). To complicate matters further, in his Oxford edition, Sheldon P. Zitner points to H. E. Rollins' "An Analytical Index to the Ballad Entries in the Registers of the Company of the Stationers of London," which lists an entry for the song, "Hey ho for a husband, or the married wives felicity, &c." for April 4, 1657 (two years before Gamble's manuscript)—the lyrics for which I have not been able to find. Accompanying this entry, however, Rollins suggests that the song beginning "There was a maid this other day"—which he locates in Thomas D'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719)—is potentially a later version of the same song in the Stationer's Register (98). Though Rollins is correct in his suggestion that D'Urfey records an earlier song, D'Urfey's song is the same song in Gamble's manuscript, set to music by "Mr. Akeroyde" (Chappell 782; Jorgens, *The Texts of the Songs* 516; D'Urfey 56-58). All this is to suggest that while there may be no editorial consensus for Beatrice's reference in *Much Ado*, "There was a mayde this other day" remains a strong candidate given its refrain and alternate title.

While it may be possible to use the reference in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* to suggest an earlier date for "There was a mayde this other day," this song also stands out from the other songs claiming "Hey-ho, for a Husband" as their title because of its repeated refrain "Oh! Oh! Oh! for a husband." Not only does this song's repetition make the phrase "Oh! for a husband" particularly memorable, but the fact that Speght's annotator uses the phrasing "Oh, for a husbände" (sig. D3v) rather than "Hey-ho, for a

husband,” as in *Much Ado About Nothing*, also makes it more likely that he is referencing this song’s refrain, rather than simply referencing a phrase in common parlance at the time. Like the song itself, Speght’s annotator uses “Oh, for a husband” as a refrain of sorts, repeating variations of the phrase three times on the same page and once on the next (sigs. D3v-D4; see fig. 5).

Reading “There was a mayde this other day” alongside the annotations on Speght’s text is therefore useful for exploring the potential implications of Speght’s annotator’s use of the phrase. The song’s first verse describes a girl who is desperate for a husband:

There was a mayde this other day  
 Sighed sore god wott  
 & she sayd that wives might sport & play  
 But (maidens) they might not  
 Full fifteene have I liv’d she sayd  
 Since I poore soule was borne  
 & if I chance for to dye a (maide)  
 Apollo is forsworne;  
 Oh! oh! oh! for a husband  
 Oh! oh! oh! for a husband  
 Still this was her song  
 I will have a husband;

A husband be he old or yong. (1-13)<sup>10</sup>

Here the maid's desperation for a husband is not because of her desire for any man, but for the benefits that she sees other women gain upon marriage. To her it seems "all wives might sport & play / But (maidens) they might not" (3-4), both in the sense that wives get to have sexual intercourse, where maids do not, and in that married women have greater status and so perhaps more freedom within the community. The lines "[And] if I chance for to dye a (maide) / Apollo is forsworne" (7-8) further emphasize the distinctly sexual nature of the maiden's envy, since "maide" in this sense would refer to her virginity rather than age at her death. If the word "dye" is taken to mean "*la petite mort*" or orgasm, it suggests that the maid does not want, nor expect, to remain a virgin, so she appeals to Apollo, the god of music, for a husband to legitimate her desire.

The song's later verses trace the maid's progress as she meets a much older man, begs her mother to be allowed to marry him, and subsequently discovers after only "a quarter of a yeare" (23) of marriage that "'Twere better lye alone" (29) than with a much older man who "could nought but sigh & grone" (27). Dissatisfied with marriage, the former maid wonders "did ever woeman soe abide" (28) and concludes that a year of such a marriage is much too long for someone who is "both fayre & yong" (37). She has not had the same experience as other wives, who, though not nearly as young and beautiful, are able to "have their will" (38) in marriage, so she sets about to "try my skill, / & find som Remedy" (40-41). Reflecting the change from her desperation for a husband to her dissatisfaction with her resultant marriage, the chorus changes in its final two repetitions

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<sup>10</sup> Spelling and original punctuation are retained from Gamble's manuscript and words inserted above the manuscript line are indicated by round brackets. The verse lineation is taken from Elise Bickford Jorgens' transcription in *The Text of the Songs* (242), since the first verse accompanies musical notation in Gamble's manuscript.

to “Oh! Oh! Oh! With a husband / [what] a life lead I / Out uppon a husband, / such a husband; a husband fy, fy, fy” (30-33; 42-45). Like the wives that Swetnam criticizes, the young woman in this song is fickle, entering into marriage with ideas about getting her own way only to quickly realize that marriage is not what she expected at all. Her youth and beauty give her a sense of entitlement, and not being able to “have [her] will” (38) like the other wives—who she recognizes are not as young or as beautiful as she—she vows to “try [her] skill, / & find som Remedy” (40-41). Presumably this “skill” on which she plans to draw is the same that Swetnam warns of when he writes of the dangers of getting involved with beautiful women:

he that getteth a faire woman is like vnto a Prisoner loaden with fetters of golde,  
 for thou shalt not so oft kisse the sweete lippes of thy beautifull wife, as thou shalt  
 be driuen to fetch bitter sighes from thy sorrowfull hart in thinking of the charge  
 which commeth by hir, for if thou deny hir of such toyes as she standes not in  
 neede of, and yet is desirous of them, then she will quickly shut thee out of the  
 doores of hir fauour & deny thee hir person, and shew hir selfe as it were at a  
 window playing vpon thee, not with small shot, but with a cruell tongue she will  
 ring . . . such a peale, that one would thinke the Deuill were come from Hell,  
 saying, I might haue had those which would haue maintained me like a woman,  
 where as nowe I goe like nobody: . . . with such like words she will vex thee,  
 blubbering forth abundance of dissembling teares (for women doe teach their eies  
 to weepe)[.] (sig. B4v)

As Swetnam warns is characteristic of beautiful women, the song hints that the former maid plans to use her knowledge of her own beauty to either manipulate her husband—potentially by withholding sex, nagging, or crying—or to seek comfort outside of the



marriage. The annotator's use of "Oh, for a husbände" (sig. D3v) would not only call to mind the initial desperation of the song's maiden, but also its conclusion, reiterating Swetnam's misogynistic, though conventional, view that women, especially those that are "fayre & yong" (37) are unhappy in marriage because of their fickle and manipulative natures.

Like his reference to Southwell's *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, the annotator's musical allusions comment on what he sees as evidence of Speght's sexual desire in her writing. The form of "Oh, for a husbände" (sig. D3v) is different, however. Taken from the refrain voiced by the song's titular maid, the phrase itself retains its feminine voice in its structural form, implying a female speaker. By inserting this feminine-voiced lament into the margins of Speght's text, the annotator not only suggests that Speght's desire for a husband motivates her arguments about marriage, but he does so by figuratively putting words in her mouth, ventriloquizing her voice in the margins of her text. By appropriating her voice as the speaker of the lament, the annotator forces Speght into the role of the maid who pines for "a husband, / A husband be he old or yong" (12-13), a role that then enables him to more easily dismiss her ideas within the body of her text. Elizabeth D. Harvey explores a similar issue in her book *Ventriloquized Voices*, in her analysis of what she calls "transvestite ventriloquism" (12)—the appropriation of female voices by male writers in Renaissance literature. Though Harvey explores this concept on a much larger scale, her argument about how the ventriloquism of female voices represents "a powerful strategy of silencing, of speaking on behalf of another, of disrupting the boundaries of a propertied utterance" (142) is equally relevant in this more pointed instance of ventriloquism. Here the annotator speaks for Speght in the margins of her text, twisting the meaning of the words she writes for herself by

ascribing the ownership of his feminine-voiced “Oh, for a husbände” (sig. D3v) to Speght herself. Reducing her arguments to a desperate plea for a husband, the annotator then judges her based on the words he puts into her mouth, subjecting that utterance to the same kind of “male disdain” that Harvey locates in Ovid’s treatment of the figure of Sappho (9). In effect, the annotator-ventriloquist silences Speght by speaking for her, eliminating the need to read Speght’s actual argument by purporting to voice in the margin what Speght *really* means.

Though the words that he gives to Speght specifically invoke the maid’s desperation in the first two verses of the song, they also call to mind the song’s subsequent verses and chorus: the maid’s initial “Oh! Oh! Oh! for a husband” (9) easily becomes “Oh! Oh! Oh! with a husband” (30) once she is married. With this in mind, the annotator’s ventriloquization of Speght’s voice serves to make her valorization of marriage doubly suspect. Not only does the annotator suggest that Speght’s discussion of marriage indicates that she is desperate for the sexual experience a husband would afford her, but he also insinuates that she—like the young woman in the song—has no real understanding of marriage. Her arguments about marriage then become moot. Instead, Speght, as she is ventriloquized, is figured as the song’s maid-turned-dissatisfied-wife and is just as fickle, “unconstant,” and manipulative as the women Swetnam disparages.

Like the variation in the chorus of “There was a mayde this other day,” Speght’s annotator also varies his use of the refrain “Oh, for a husbände” (sig. D3v), to take his commentary on the sexual desire of young women even further than the song. At the bottom of the page, the annotator alters his refrain to “Maidenhead for a husband” (sig. D3v; see fig. 5) to comment on Speght’s characterization of marriage as a movement “from a solitarie life unto a joyfull union and conjunction, with such a creature as God

hath made meete for man, for whom none was meete till she was made” (sig. D3v, ms underline in Beinecke copy). For the annotator, Speght’s assertion that women are the perfect companions for men becomes further evidence of her desperation. His choice of phrase, however, is significant. Taking the same form as Richard III’s famous line, “A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse” (5.7.7), the annotator—in Speght’s ventriloquized voice—admits a ready willingness to give the most important thing she has—her maidenhead, her honour, her chastity—for a more immediate, but less significant need: the fulfillment of her sexual desires. The phrase sets up a transactional, almost economic, relationship in which Speght is willing to trade or use her maidenhead as a sort of currency in exchange for the promise of a husband. While such a transaction is implied in the consummation of a marriage, by presenting it as an exchange—one maidenhead for one husband—the annotator suggests that he believes Speght is more than willing to give up her chastity, or further that she is specifically advertising her willingness to do so through the publication of her book, a connection he makes more explicit in a subsequent annotation when he assures her, “This booke will bespeak[ke] you a husba[nd]” (sig. D4). For the annotator, Speght’s goal in writing is not to defend women from Swetnam’s slander, but to advertise her desire for, and to bring about, her own sexual fulfillment.

### “’um, ’um, ’um”

The annotator later uses this same kind of ventriloquization to mock Speght and her use of modesty rhetoric in the prefatory material to the second half of her pamphlet: “Certaine Quaeres to the bayter of Women.” Following her discussion of her issues with Swetnam’s ideas more generally, in this second part Speght prepares to address Swetnam

point by point. In her letter “*To the Reader*” (31), she excuses the form of her response, suggesting that Swetnam’s pamphlet is such “a promiscuous mingle mangle, it would admit no such order to bee observed in the answering thereof, as a regular Responsarie requireth” (31). Here Speght does several things simultaneously. She defends the form of her response, blaming Swetnam and not her lack of understanding for her deviation from generic conventions. She then returns to the rhetoric of modesty both to reiterate her youth and her adherence to gendered expectations, excusing what could be seen as deficiencies in her learning as the result of prioritizing her adherence to “affaires befitting my Sex” (31). Her annotator, however—forever in the margins commenting on her text—takes issue with her return to rhetorical modesty and mocks her by ventriloquizing her voice in a simpering tone: “I am young sir and scorne affection; ’um, ’um, ’um” (sig. F1). He imagines Speght addressing a (likely older) man and turns her claims of modesty into coyness. In the annotator’s words, the ventriloquized Speght is not modest at all and instead uses her youth as an enticement. Her modesty, in this imagining, is not genuine, and her claims to “scorne affection” become instead an invitation to illicit sexual behaviour, the onomatopoeic “’um, ’um, ’um” indicative of a simpering coyness or even sexual pleasure.

The annotator returns to this point on a subsequent reading as indicated by the almost overlapping placement of the two comments. Having written the first comment, the annotator adds a second comment above and squeezed into the space to the right of the first, with a line separating the two (see fig. 6). In this second comment, he draws a distinction between youth and virginity: “Virgo pudicitiam notat aetatemq[ue] puella. You speak like a mayd, not like a Virgin” (sig. F1). Lewalski translates the Latin as “A

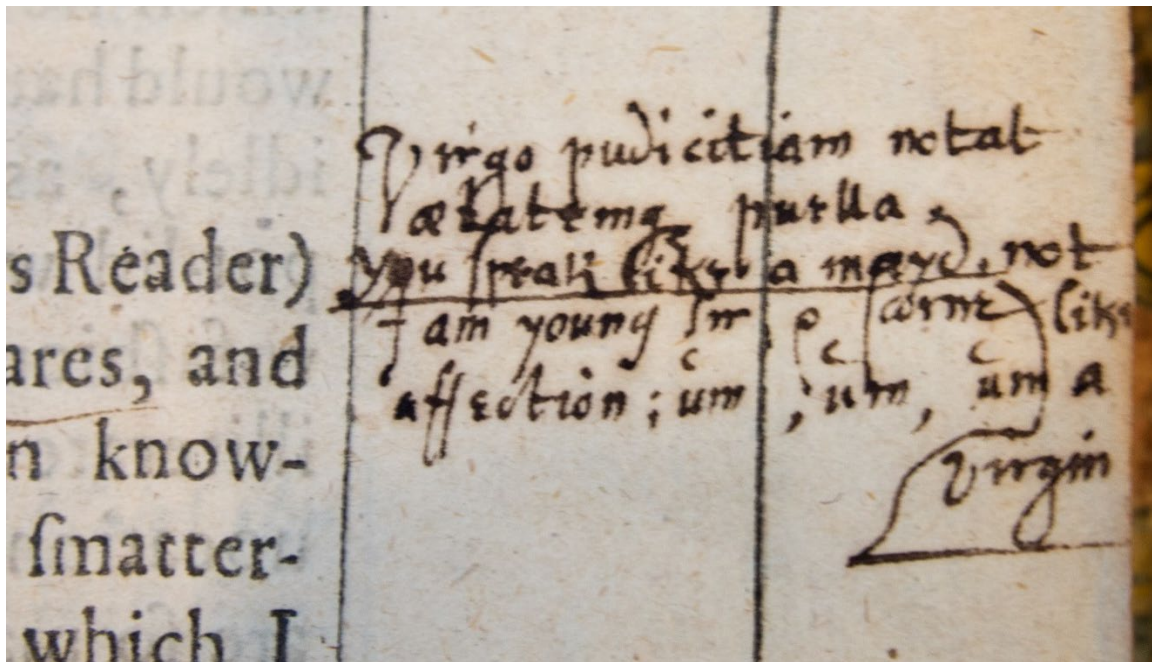


Figure 6: Sig. F1. Source: Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University.

virgin is characterized by chastity, a young girl simply by age” (107). In other words, Speght may be young, but her youth has nothing to do with her chastity. What he takes issue with here is her speech—she speaks “like a mayd, not like a Virgin” (sig. F1)—and finds fault likely both in how much she speaks and in the subjects with which she concerns herself. He makes a similar point in an earlier comment when Speght refers to men’s “duties” in marriage (sig. E1, ms. underline in Beinecke copy). Taking these “duties” as sexual in nature, the annotator chides her for speaking of a subject about which she is not supposed to have any knowledge: “Surely now I must thinke that either you are married, or fayrely promised for now you commende these and I wishe that your hu[s]bande, will learne this good lesson” (sig. E1). Speaking about sex indicates that she cannot be a virgin—she must have attained her sexual knowledge from a husband or at least a man who promised to marry her. For the annotator, Speght’s performance of modesty has clearly faltered enough by this second part of her refutation of Swetnam that he no longer believes it to be genuine: her knowing speech negates her claims to chastity.

**“All others of Hevahs sex”**

Speght’s annotator may counter, overwrite, and eroticize her voice, but he cannot counteract the connection she establishes with “*all other of Hevahs sex fearing God, and loving their just reputation*” (3). Speght presents herself as a champion, ready to take on Swetnam on behalf of other women, both because she sees no one else “enter[ing] the Lists” (4), and so that others—the aristocratic women and the wives of city officials to whom she specifically dedicates her pamphlet—do not need to. Where she risks “the persecuting heate of this fierie and furious Dragon” (5) by speaking out against Swetnam, she invites other women to “be joynt spectators of this encounter” (5), allowing them to benefit from her efforts without jeopardizing their performance of a chaste—silent—femininity. This relationship, however, is reciprocal. She speaks on their behalf but also requests protection from them in the form of patronage (5). Regardless of whether this patronage was ever established, her dedicatory epistle establishes a protective connection of sorts, pre-emptively claiming strength in numbers.

In the end, Speght’s voice was joined by others who responded to Swetnam, including Ester Sowernam and Constantia Munda. Both names are obviously pseudonyms, but their voices are still decidedly feminine, even if that femininity is a performance along the same lines as Lorenzo disguised as the “Amazon” Atlanta in the anonymous play *Swetnam the Woman-hater, Arraigned by Women*. As Purkiss suggests, these pseudonyms are “taken from the terms of the debate’s citations,” and it is a device that “foregrounds feminine unruliness” (83), participating in the carnivalesque game of inverting gendered hierarchies. Though Purkiss argues that this “theatrical performance of femininity . . . indicates a joke at women’s expense” (84) in order to reinforce the status quo, they still represent a voice in favour of women, however unruly. The image of

unruly women in *Swetnam the Woman-hater*, however, is one of collective solidarity, where together with their prince-in-disguise advocate, Atlanta/Lorenzo, the women form a “Female Court” (5.2.221) in which they try Swetnam for his crimes. Unruly they may be, but they are united against Swetnam’s misogyny.

Defending reputation is tricky, however. Once lost, a spotless reputation cannot be re-established, and it is the need to counteract Swetnam’s potential influence that, Speght argues, drives her to speak out against him. But reputation is, by definition, established through a community of speakers sharing stories about a person’s character or behaviour. It is impossible to repair a tarnished reputation alone. Though Swetnam’s voice, Speght argues, rings out like “the emptiest Barrell [that] makes the lowdest sound” (7), she raises hers to match it and importantly is joined by others who do the same. Speght’s own reputation may have been questioned by her anonymous annotator, but it is not her own reputation that concerns her. Instead, like the women of *Swetnam the Woman-hater*’s female court, the collective feminine response to Swetnam’s pamphlet creates and represents a community of speakers whose voices resonate against a common enemy to establish an alternate account of the character of women.

## Chapter 2

### “Tongue-Tied, Our Queen?”: Courtly Eloquence and Female Alliance in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*

[T]his Lady in conversation is singuler, and mervellous: for all the noble partes in her, you shall see her make a most delightfull harmony. For first, to the gravenesse of her wordes, agreeth the sweetnesse of her voyce, and the honestie of her meaning: so that the mindes of the hearers intangled in those three nets, feele themselves at one instant to bee both mooved with her amiableness, and bridled by her honesty. Next, her talke and discourses are so delightfull, that you wyll only then beginne to bee sory, when she endeth to speake: and wish that shee would bee no more weary to speake, then you are to heare. Yea, shee frameth her jestures so discretely, that in speakyng, shee seemethe to holde her peace, and in holding her peace, to speake.

—Stefano Guazzo, *The Civile Conversation* (1574, trans. 1581-1586)

Stefano Guazzo’s ideal court lady is not a woman who abides by the usual injunctions to silence for early modern women. Instead she is a woman who is so adept at conversation that she can infuse her amiable words with such honesty, that while the sweetness of her voice may move desire in her male interlocutor, her words and gestures cut off any suspicion of her lack of chastity. Guazzo’s words, however, indicate that the expectation of feminine silence is no less important for a lady of the court. Instead, she must achieve the impossible: she must speak without seeming to speak to create the impression of chaste silence with her carefully crafted combination of words and gestures. In Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, King Leontes’ jealousy stems from the impossibility of a woman ever truly fulfilling this ideal. Though Hermione speaks only at her husband’s behest and skillfully employs her considerable wit to convince the Bohemian king to stay in Sicilia, Leontes interprets her success where he had failed as evidence of her unfaithfulness. In Leontes’ jealousy, every word and gesture of friendship become more proof of their “mingling bloods” (1.2.108). When Leontes accuses her of adultery,



Hermione is caught in a double bind: to convince her husband of her innocence she must at once use her already-suspected voice to defend herself while performatively demonstrating a chastity that is, almost by definition, “tongue-tied” (1.2.27). In the play’s famous trial scene, Hermione recognizes the difficulty of this task. She knows that her eloquent statement of her own innocence will not change anything, since, as she explains, “my integrity, / Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it, / Be so received” (3.2.25-27). For Leontes, Hermione’s suspected voice can only confirm her guilt.

Hermione’s is not the only female voice in *The Winter’s Tale*, however, and the play’s two other female voices serve as important counterpoints to Hermione’s. Paulina’s voice is shrewish, scolding, and unruly. She takes seriously her vow to be Hermione’s “advocate to th’ loud’st” (2.2.38) and eschews the expectations of the ideal court lady to berate Leontes when he refuses to see that Hermione is innocent. Speaking where, when, and how Hermione cannot, her voice amplifies Hermione’s and, in a sense, allows Hermione to speak without speaking. Perdita, lost to both her mother and the court, is no less notable in her speech. She too must navigate the double bind that connects her speech with her sexuality even outside the court. Though the structure of *The Winter’s Tale* is such that each female voice—Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita—stand somewhat in isolation, in points of connection and apart these female voices operate in concert with, and in contrast to, each other to suggest the importance of a chorus of female voices to collectively support individual performances of chastity. Where the debate between Swetnam, Speght, and her anonymous annotator illustrates the polyvocality of the debate about women in the period, expectations for courtly eloquence for women at court further compound the already-contested view of how women should behave and place Hermione in a double bind where she cannot adequately defend her own chastity. Hermione is not

alone, however. Together, Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita establish their own community of female voices out of the need to speak for each other, interpret their own silences, and find their own conversational space.

**“Just to certaine limittes”**

Ann Rosalind Jones highlights the contradiction between the social expectations of the court and contemporary ideals of femininity that advocated for women’s silence.

She explains that

Public self-display was the norm at court and in the urban coteries in which ambitious men (and, less frequently, women) met and competed for recognition and patronage. But the most widely disseminated feminine ideal was the confinement of the bourgeois daughter and wife to private domesticity in the households of city merchants, professional men and, in England, Protestant fathers and husbands. The court lady was required to speak; the bourgeois wife was enjoined to silence. (40)

But, as Jones notes, the norms of the court which required women’s participation in lively and witty conversation did not exempt court ladies from widely held beliefs about the connection between female speech and sexuality (42-43). Instead, as contemporary courtesy books suggest, court ladies were required to strike a delicate balance between courtly self-display and modest feminine decorum. The most influential of these was Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier*, first published in Italian in 1528 and translated into English by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561. Castiglione depicts a fictional conversation between a group of courtiers at the court of Urbino (or “Urbino” in Hoby’s translation [18]) that takes place over the course of several nights. As a form of

entertainment, the assembled courtiers attempt “to shape in wordes a good Courtier, specifying all such conditions and particular qualities, as of necessitie must bee in him that deserveth this name” (29). Though Castiglione’s *The Courtier* by no means represents a prescriptive code of behaviour for court life, as Daniel Javitch notes, “for late sixteenth-century Englishmen, Castiglione’s perfect courtier had become an important and appealing model of civilized conduct” and “tended to be mistaken by Tudor readers as a practical handbook of manners” (vii). Castiglione’s courtly ideal inspired emulation (ix).

Castiglione dedicates three out of the four books of *The Courtier* to the male courtier, but the third describes the ideal “gentlewoman of the pallace” (187-88). Here Castiglione details a long list of qualities that the ideal court lady should possess and rules which she must follow. He argues that she should possess many of the same qualities as his male courtier, but importantly, she should also “be more circumspect, and take to better heede that she give no occasion to be ill reported of, and so behave her selfe, that she be not onely not spotted with any fault, but not so much as with suspition. Because a woman hath not so manie waies to defend her selfe from slanderous reportes, as hath a man” (190). Like many conduct book writers in the period, Castiglione places a great deal of importance on a woman’s reputation for chastity. He later acknowledges, however, that this requires the gentlewoman of the court to strike a delicate balance between witty conversation and her feminine modesty:

I say that for her that liveth in Court, me thinke there belongeth unto her above all other thinges, a certaine sweetnesse in language that may delite, whereby she may gently entertain all kinde of men with talke worthie the hearing and honest, and applyed to the time and place, and to the degree of person she c[om]muneth

withal. Accompanying with sober and quiet manners, and with the honestie that must alwaies be a stay to her deedes, a readie livelinessse of wit, whereby she may declare her selfe far wide from all dulnesse: but with such a kinde of goodnesse, that she may bee esteemed no less chaste, wise and courteous, than pleasant, feate conceited and sober: and therefore muste she keepe a certaine meane verie hard, and (in a manner) derived of contrary matters, and come just to certaine limittes, but not to passe them. (190-191)

For Castiglione, the court lady's role is to entertain and delight her fellow courtiers. He advises his gentlewoman of the court to infuse her language with "a certaine sweetenesse," gentleness, and above all, "the honestie that must alwaies be a stay to her deedes." Here his recommendations point to the potential for the court lady's duty to "gently entertain all kinde of men" to put a strain on her continued appearance of chastity. His advice to use "sober and quiet manners" and "such a kinde of goodnesse," however, indicates that she is also responsible for preventing against any assumptions of her lack of chastity through her own behaviour. In his advice, Castiglione acknowledges the difficulty of this task since these requirements are often "derived of contrary matters." He advises, however, that while she is expected to be witty and potentially flirtatious, there is always a line that she absolutely must not cross. She can and should approach it—in Castiglione's words, "come just to certaine limittes"—since this is the source of much of the delight of flirtatious courtly banter, but she must never actually cross that line.

There is evidence to suggest that at least one contemporary reader read Castiglione's *Courtier* for practical rules for courtly behaviour. The British Library manuscript, MS Harley 922, no. 3, includes, in what Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben describe as "a tiny hand" a "lengthy summary of Castiglione's four books" in

both English and Latin (15), and what the reader titles “A brief rehersall of *the* chiefe conditions & quality required in a Courtier” and “The Chiefe Conditions in a wayting gentlewoman” (qtd. in Akkerman and Houben 15). Of the thirty characteristics that Castiglione’s reader lists for “a wayting gentlewoman,” a few detail the qualities that a court lady must possess—i.e. “To be well borne, & of a good house,” “To be witty & not heady,” “To be learned” (qtd. 15-16)—while roughly half involve the avoidance of certain behaviours. Castiglione’s reader does seem to find some practical suggestions for how to navigate the competing requirements for women of the court. The reader notes that the gentlewoman should “giue all times idle talk *the* hearing with blushing & bashfullness” and “To shape him *that* is ouersaucy *with* hir such an answeare that he may vnderstand that she is offended with him” (qtd. 16). It seems that a certain amount of bawdy talk, flirtation, and potentially unwanted advances are to be expected at court, but Castiglione offers the reader suggestions for how to discretely deal with them without jeopardizing her appearance of chastity. In *The Courtier*, Castiglione suggests the way to “beware of giuing any occasion to be ill spoken off” (qtd. 15) when she encounters the “wantonest” talk. He warns that she should not simply remove herself from the conversation since “a man may lightly gesse that she fained to be so coye to hide that in her selfe which she doubted others might come to the knowledge of: . . . but being present at such kinde of talke, she ought to give the hearing with a litle blushing and shamefacednesse” (Castiglione 191). Act too prudish and she may seem coy; act too interested or unconcerned and she may seem unchaste. Instead Castiglione recommends blushing in the presence of such talk. As Jones suggests, Castiglione’s prescription here requires “a particularly tricky performance” involving “an artfully produced version of what is naturally an involuntary symptom of embarrassment” (46). In order to protect her

appearance of chastity, the court lady must produce the effect of embarrassment even if she is no longer shocked by bawdy talk at court without letting the artifice of such a performance show.<sup>11</sup>

As I mention above, Stefano Guazzo's *The Civile Conversation*, first published in Italian in 1574 with the first three books translated into English by George Pettie in 1581 and the fourth by Bartholomew Young in 1586, similarly describes the delicate balancing act required of the court lady. Though Guazzo directs his work to what Jones calls the "sub-aristocratic classes" (42), he specifically describes the court lady in conversation.<sup>12</sup> As Martine van Elk explains, Guazzo's words, which I have chosen as my epigraph, are the "perfect illustration of the double injunction, to speak and remain silent at the same time, placed on the female voice in early modern representations of the Renaissance court" (429). The court lady here is required to simultaneously balance both her social role in the court with the ideal of feminine silence even though they are fundamentally at odds. Like Castiglione, Guazzo suggests that the court lady should not shy away from engaging in potentially flirtatious behaviour with courtiers. She must, however, make it

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<sup>11</sup> Castiglione calls this "*sprezzatura*," which Javitch defines as "that ability to disguise artful effort so that it seems natural, spontaneous, effortless" (x). In his 1561 translation of *The Courtier*, Sir Thomas Hoby translates *sprezzatura* as "disgracing" and "recklessness" whereas later English translators like Robert Samber in 1724 used "an easy Carelessness" and French translators used "nonchalance" which was not used in English until 1678 (Burke 70-71). For more information on *The Courtier* in translation see Burke 55-80.

<sup>12</sup> Evidence suggests that at least one lady-in waiting also read Guazzo's work as a practical guide for her manners at court. In his *Discourse to Lady Lavinia his Daughter* (1586), Annibal Guasco advises his daughter, a young lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Savoy, that in addition to the advice he gives her in his *Discourse*, she should also study Castiglione's *The Courtier*, della Casa's *Galateo*, and Guazzo's *Conversation*, describing the latter as "so useful a book that there is no one professing a knowledge of letters and social customs who does not keep a copy of it in his study, and a work all the more to be valued by you in that it is written by an honorable neighbor of ours and a dear friend of mine" (85). Though Guasco's *Discourse* was not originally written in English, John Leon Lievsay argues that Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*, or at least "Pettie's translation of it, contributed to the depiction of women and of social diversions in the euphuistic romances of Lyly, Lodge, Whetstone, and Greene" (205-206) and that excerpts, taken completely "out of context," were a "chief source" for Swetnam's *Arraignment of Women* (212). Gabriel Harvey also references Guazzo's *Civile Conversation* twice in his manuscript annotations on his copy of Castiglione's *The Courtier* now at the Newberry Library (Vault Case Y 712 C27495).

clear that she will not cross the invisible line that would make her words and actions unchaste:

She wyll also in talke cast oft times upon a man such a sweete smyle, that it were enough to bryng him into a fooles Paradise, but that her very countenance containeth such continencie in it, as is sufficient to cut of[f] all fond hope. And yet shee is so farre from solumne lookes, and distributeth the treasure of her graces, so discretely and so indifferently, that no man departeth from her uncontented. Yet for all that, you must not thinke that she is over prodigall of her curtesie. For I can assure you this, she winneth moe heartes even with very slender rewardes, then other women doe with the greatest favours they can possibly shewe. (1: 242)

Here Guazzo outlines the finely tuned balancing act that is required of the lady at court. Her voice is sweet and alluring, her words potentially flirtatious, but her gestures convey her steadfast honesty. Her smile, however, continues to evoke desire in her male interlocutor, while her countenance places limits on his hope for the fulfillment of his desires. Yet, Guazzo continues, she must also not be too solemn or her task to be welcoming and congenial to everyone (though not “over prodigall of her curtesie”) cannot be accomplished. The court lady’s chastity is a line drawn in the proverbial sand that she should not and must not cross, but all the while her words and gestures flirtatiously suggest and approach this boundary.

### **“Tongue-tied, our queen?”**

As Queen consort to Leontes, Shakespeare’s Hermione is the fictional Sicilia’s preeminent court lady and from her first appearance on stage in *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare shows her negotiating the competing social requirements of a lady of the

court: chaste silence on the one hand, obedience to her husband on the other, combined with the courtly requirement to entertain with clever conversation. Until Leontes calls on her to participate in the conversation—“Tongue-tied, our queen? Speak you” (1.2.27)—she defers to her husband’s attempts to convince Polixenes to stay in Sicilia. The difficulty arises, however, when she proves to be more persuasive than Leontes despite Polixenes’ assurance to him that “There is no tongue that moves, none, none i’th’ world, / So soon as yours could win me” (1.2.20-21). When Hermione is the one to convince Polixenes to stay longer, Leontes is jealous of not only her persuasiveness, but her preferment, noting “At my request he would not” (1.2.86) before seizing on sexual infidelity as the only possible explanation for Hermione’s success when she refers to Polixenes as “for some while a friend” (1.2.107).

The play’s opening scene primes the audience to pick up on the competing expectations of Hermione’s court life. David Ruitter reads the exchange between Camillo and Archidamus in terms of the hospitality that Bohemia has received from Sicilia. In hosting the King of Bohemia and his entourage, Leontes and Hermione open their court to them, and, as hostess, Hermione is expected to welcome and entertain their guests. Not only does this hospitality create a feeling of indebtedness on the part of the guest, as Ruitter describes in his reading of the play’s opening scene (159), but it also places Hermione in the role of hostess to the Bohemian King as they open their court and home. For Ruitter, this atmosphere of gift giving, indebtedness, and competitive hospitality also gives rise to Leontes’ fears about the risks of such hospitality.<sup>13</sup> In opening his home to

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the role of hospitality in *The Winter’s Tale* see also Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Hospitality and Risk in *The Winter’s Tale*”; John D. Cox, “Hospitality as a Virtue in *The Winter’s Tale*”; James A. W. Heffernan, “Staging Hospitality: Shakespeare.”



Polixenes, Leontes also opens himself up to the possibility that “the welcomed guest becomes hostile and, because of the host’s own openness or exposure, ultimately gains the power to become [in Derrida’s words,] ‘the Other [who] may ruin my own space’” (169-170). Polixenes may take advantage of Leontes’ hospitality and Hermione’s offer of entertainment to claim carnal pleasures from his hostess.

Apart from introducing the courtiers’ concerns about hospitality, however, this opening scene also outlines the usual form of communication between the two kingdoms and suggests yet another, more innocent, interpretation of Hermione’s relationship to Polixenes. Despite the early friendship between the kingdoms’ two sovereigns, as Camillo makes clear in this first scene, “more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society” (1.1.23-25)—ruling a kingdom does not leave kings much time to visit their friends. Instead, Camillo notes, “their encounters, though not personal, hath been royally attorneyed with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies, that they seemed to be together, though absent, shook hands as over a vast, and embraced as it were from the ends of opposed winds” (1.1.25-30). Rarely together, Polixenes and Leontes communicate by proxy—the love, wishes, and even presence of the other conveyed through the words and actions of emissaries and attorneys. In this sense, Hermione, prompted as she is by her royal husband to speak on his behalf in the next scene, acts as an ambassador of sorts to Polixenes. Their exchange then follows the usual pattern for communication between the two countries: Hermione as emissary is bestowed with Sicilia’s wishes and the authority to negotiate on behalf of the king, and it is understood that as proxy, her words are akin to Leontes’. Polixenes’ assurance that “There is no tongue that moves . . . / So soon as yours could win me” (1.2.20-21) is therefore not false. For Polixenes, Hermione’s words are, in effect, Leontes’.

The difficulty that arises in this exchange is that Hermione is a woman whose pregnant body is, as A. E. B. Coldiron suggests, “a silent witness to [her] sexuality and . . . generative power” (33) and as such is a constant reminder of Leontes’ patriarchal fears about her sexual fidelity.<sup>14</sup> Acting as an informal emissary places Hermione in conversation with men as she attempts to participate in a homosocial world in which she does not truly belong. In Julia Reinhard Lupton’s words, “Hermione has *become public* by entering into persuasive speech” (171)—in her role as hostess and informal emissary, Hermione is forced out of her normal “reserve” and into a more public role (171).<sup>15</sup> Addressing one another as “brother” (1.2.4, 15), the two kings exchange in the friendly homosocial banter that is characteristic of many exchanges between men in Shakespeare’s plays, each taking up and adeptly manipulating the words of the other in a rhetorical fencing match. Castiglione argues that such skirmishes of wit, which Hoby translates as “jesting,” provide excellent entertainment for the ideal courtier, noting that “they have a verie good grace, that arise when a man at the nipping talke of his fellow, taketh the verie same words in the selfe same sense, and returneth them backe again, pricking him with his owne weapon” (150). Though not as lively or indeed as raunchy as, for example, the exchanges between Romeo and Mercutio, Polixenes’ words set the stage for this rhetorical game and carry sexual overtones that draw attention to Hermione’s

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<sup>14</sup> In “Hermione’s Suspicious Body: Adultery and Superfetation in *The Winter’s Tale*,” Michelle Ephraim argues that Hermione’s pregnancy could hide any physical evidence of illicit sexual activity, and “the play . . . validates Leontes’s anxiety about the inscrutability of Hermione’s potential adultery” (46). For more on Hermione’s pregnant body, see also Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest*; Monika Karpinska, “Early Modern Dramatizations of Virgins and Pregnant Women,” 438-441; and Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 264-267.

<sup>15</sup> Lupton sees Hermione as fundamentally “reserved,” which contributes to her virtuous modesty, and argues that when Hermione accuses Leontes of “publish[ing]” her (2.1.98), she not only refers to his public trial, but also “a more existential process of publication [that] begins as soon as Hermione extends the invitation to Polixenes at her husband’s behest” (171).

pregnant body (Coldiron 36; Adleman 220). Describing the thanks needed to repay Leontes' hospitality, Polixenes suggests that after nine months in Sicilia,

Time as long again

Would be filled up, my brother, with our thanks,

And yet we should for perpetuity

Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher,

Yet standing in rich place, I multiply

With one 'we thank you' many thousands more

That go before it. (1.2.3-9)

The image here is of Time in a stage of advanced pregnancy, made so with Polixenes' gratitude. He assures Leontes that his thanks, sure to multiply through the pregnant body of the personified Time, would still not be enough to repay his friend's hospitality.

Polixenes' words here not only draw attention to Hermione's pregnant body, but they place himself in the role of the father of a long line of Time's children. As Janet Adleman notes, "in Polixenes's opening lines, anxieties about indebtedness and separation are registered through the imagery of pregnancy, as though Hermione's body provided the language for the rupture in their brotherhood" (220). Leontes' response—"Stay your thanks awhile, / And pay them when you part" (1.2.9-10)—picks up on this language of debt, leaving aside the image of pregnancy, to insist that he stay longer in Sicilia.

Polixenes, in turn, insists that he must depart tomorrow before attempting another argument. Leontes responds to not only Polixenes' argument but his language as well, countering his excuse that "I have stayed / To tire your royalty" with "We are tougher, brother, / Than you can put us to't" (1.2.14-16). When Polixenes requests a reprieve by

beseeking Leontes not to press him further, Leontes looks to Hermione, in effect, as his rhetorical second.

Significantly, Hermione does not speak until Leontes requests it of her and initially responds to Leontes's command by joking about and therefore emphasizing her former silence. She speaks first to her husband, offering a light-hearted explanation for her silence before advising him on what he should say to persuade his friend. In acknowledgment of the back-and-forth of their verbal game, Hermione uses the language of fencing to talk strategy with her husband: "Tell him you are sure / All in Bohemia's well . . . / —say this to him, / He's beat from his best ward" (1.2.30-33). Leontes will gain the advantage if he cuts off Polixenes' access to his best defence—his concern for his kingdom in his absence. Her goal here is to get her husband to back Polixenes into a rhetorical corner and force him to admit that his desire to leave is because "he longs to see his son" (1.2.34). This, she admits, is a strong argument, but recognizes it is one that Polixenes is unlikely to use for fear it would come across as effeminate, which she emphasizes in her suggestion that "We'll thwack him hence with distaffs" (1.2.37)—an instrument used in spinning and emblematic of a "type of women's work or occupation" (*OED* n. 3a). Here Hermione deftly participates in the rhetorical match between the two monarchs but does so without engaging in direct conversation with anyone other than her husband. In effect she adds to the lively conversation between men without speaking in a way that would jeopardize her appearance of chastity.

For Castiglione, the ideal court lady is similarly capable of participating in these rhetorical battles of wit. His Lord Julian argues "I will have her to underst[an]d [all] that . . . these Lordes have willed [the] Courtier to know," and goes on to specify, "thus in conversation, in laughing, in sporting, in jesting, finally in everie thing she shal be had in

great price, and shall entertaine accordingly both with jestes, and feate conceites meete for her, every person that commeth in her company” (195). In her examination of the court lady in *The Courtier* and *Orlando Furioso*, Valeria Finucci explains that “Castiglione prescribes woman a new task: to produce discourse and excel in conversation in a heterosexual and charged environment—a task, unfortunately, that he strips away from her in the fiction of the text” (41). She argues that though the court lady is allowed to speak, “her comments are irrelevant to the discourse. . . . Yet, she must be present, because, through her silent association with the hegemonic discourse, she helps maintain the desired order within the group, an order dependent on her acquiescence” (36-37). While Finucci’s assessment of the function of women in Castiglione’s text and, by extension, the early modern patriarchal court illustrates the pervasiveness of the injunction to silence for women, I would argue that we can also look to *The Courtier* for examples of how court women could navigate these conflicting expectations in practice. Like Hermione at the beginning of her first scene, Castiglione’s court ladies, Lady Elizabeth Gonzaga and Lady Emilia Pia, are silent for the most part while the male courtiers converse and debate even when the ideal court lady is the subject of discussion. Though this could suggest that women of the court, like early modern women in general, were expected to remain silent, Castiglione introduces his female characters by emphasizing their place in the conversation. He notes

The like was betweene the woman, with whom we had such free and honest conversation, that everye man might commune, sitte, dallye, and laugh with whom hee had lusted.

But such was the respect which we bore to the Dutchesse will, that the selfe same libertie was a very great bridle. Neither was there any that thought it

not the greatest pleasure he could have in the world, to please her, and the greatest griefe to offende her. (20)

Like the later descriptions of the ideal court lady, here Castiglione begins by describing his female characters as successfully balancing the competing demands of courtly conversation and chastity. They are the ideal.

With the Pope and the Duke away from court, Castiglione's remaining courtiers and court ladies gather together in a circle with the Duchess and Lady Emilia presiding over the conversational "pastimes" (22). At first modestly refusing the responsibility for choosing the topic of conversation, Lady Emilia quickly gives in to solicit suggestions. She ultimately decides on Sir Fredericke's suggestion that they "take it in hand to shape in wordes a good Courtier, specifying all such conditions and particular qualities, as of necessitie must bee in him that deserveth this name" (29). She then goes on to assign conversational roles and tasks to various courtiers to keep the entertainment going over the course of their four nights together. Though the court ladies do not monopolize the resultant conversation, they are very much participants in it, chiming in with questions, challenges to, or comments on the points the courtiers make. For example, during their discussion of jesting on the second night, Lady Emilia responds to Lord Gasper's suggestion that women are often bawdier than men with an unexpected quip of her own:

Here the Ladie Emilia in like manner smyling, saide: Women neede no defender against an accuser of so small authoritie. Therefore let the Lorde Gasper alone in this his forward opinion, risen more because he could never finde woman that was willing to looke upon him, than for any want that is in women, and proceed you in your communication of jeastes. (158)

Her taunt not only effectively puts the group's resident misogynist in his place, but its delivery from a smiling and erstwhile silent woman also fits Castiglione's own description of "wittie sayinges that . . . make men laugh" because "we give eare to heare on[e] thing, and [she] that maketh answere, speaketh an other, and is alledged contrarie to expectation" (149). Like the ideal court ladies that Castiglione's Lord Julian describes, Castiglione's own examples may speak only sparingly, but are still active participants in the men's witty court conversation.

After Leontes has approved her witty speech (1.2.33), Hermione turns her attention to Polixenes. Picking up on their language of debt, she directly participates in their ongoing masculine banter by framing her request as a borrowing of Polixenes' "royal presence" to be repaid, with interest, with Leontes' prolonged presence in Bohemia (1.2.38-42). In this first speech to Polixenes, she is careful to reassure Leontes of her continued loyalty—and by extension, chastity—even while suggesting a separation: "yet, good deed, Leontes, / I love thee not a jar o'th'clock beyond / What lady she her lord" (1.2.42-44). When this does not work to convince Polixenes, however, Hermione goes on the offensive, picking up on his feeble attempt to parry her suggestion with the use of the word "verily" (1.2.45). Seizing on what she sees as an opening, Hermione suggests that Polixenes is putting her "off with limber vows" (1.2.46). In one sense, she claims he lacks conviction, but she also uses a now obsolete meaning of the word "limber" that goes beyond the usual meaning of "lithe and nimble" (*OED* adj. 1b) to suggest that this quality belongs to something that is "properly firm or crisp" (*OED* adj. 1c). Using this meaning of the word, available in the period,<sup>16</sup> Hermione makes a sexual joke about the virility of

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<sup>16</sup> The *OED* cites instances of limber meaning "in an unfavorable sense, of things which are properly firm or crisp: Limp, flaccid, flabby" in William Warner's *Albions England: A Continued Historie* (1596) and Thomas Dekker's *Blurt*

Polixenes' "verily". His vows are "limp, flaccid" (*OED* adj. 1c), which she extends to mean impotent when she suggests that "a lady's 'verily' [is] / As potent as a lord's" (1.2.49-50). She then proceeds to demonstrate this through her rhetorical performance.

David Schalkwyk describes Hermione's speech here as "a complex interchange of direct, indirect and quasi-direct speech," noting that she gains the upper hand in their exchange because "she sets up a hypothetical situation in which *she anticipates in direct speech her own future response* to any further oath he may resort to. It is thus impossible for him to counter an utterance that carries considerable force, but has not actually yet been made" (249, 250). Though Schalkwyk focuses on the rhetorical force of Hermione's verbal maneuvers and connects this to gender in terms of her distance from the word "verily" as "a claim to truth" (251), by framing the conversation as hypothetical, Hermione is also able to do as court ladies are expected—to speak without really speaking. By anticipating both her own and Polixenes' responses, her hypothetical dialogue becomes monologic, and she imagines herself as a forceful, commanding presence. Her hypothetical "'Sir, no going'" (1.2.48) imagines herself as a speaker with the authority to deny movement—king-like even—and here she does not allow Polixenes even a hypothetical response. Instead, she appropriates the word "verily" to state "Verily, / You shall not go" (1.2.49), in what Schalkwyk calls "her own emphatic and indicative use of the discredited word" that "[s]yntactically, . . . now carries a great deal of weight" (250). Though she claims she "should" command him to stay, she will not—and perhaps cannot—but instead states he "shall not go" (1.2.49). The statement is essentially equivocal—either indicating a strong assertion of her will upon his or simply a prediction

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*Master-Constable; or, The Spaniards Night-Walke* (1602). Though the *OED* only includes five examples, this meaning was in use at least until 1747 (adj. 1c).



of his future acquiescence or both. Not pausing for his response, she again speaks for him, anticipating his denial with the question “Will you go yet?” (1.2.50). She quickly counters this with an ultimatum, a false dilemma, in which she presents only two choices: he can be her prisoner, or her guest, but he does not have the option to leave.

Though Hermione beats Polixenes and Leontes at their own rhetorical game, it is in her manipulation of Polixenes’ language that her continual performance of chaste identity begins to falter. On one hand she expertly crafts her speech in a way that allows her to command without actually commanding and thereby accomplishes her task without compromising the jovial nature of their discussion—the task of any good hostess. On the other, she engages with Polixenes’ language according to the terms of their already established masculine banter. Picking up on the sexual meaning implied by Polixenes’ earlier assertion that he could make Time pregnant with his thanks, she uses sexual language to describe his oath. With regard to the debate at hand, this is an excellent tactic—not only does it playfully pick up on an earlier suggestion, but it continues their rhetorical game by turning Polixenes’ own words against him in a playful jab against his masculinity. However, by commenting on the sexual potency of Polixenes’ oath, Hermione makes an explicit connection between speech and sexuality while also implicating herself. Where Polixenes’ “verily” is “limber,” flaccid, impotent, Hermione’s speech is not—as she rightly proves “a lady’s ‘verily’ [is] / As potent as a lord’s” (1.2.45, 46, 49-50). Her speech proves to be even more virile than Polixenes’, but while that wins her the rhetorical sparring match, it also shows her in a sexually (because verbally) aggressive light. Combine that with her obviously pregnant body on stage and Hermione’s sexuality is undeniable.

Once Hermione receives Polixenes' assurance that he will stay in Sicilia, she shifts the conversation back to her husband—a more chaste topic. Polixenes' characterization of their early interactions with women—even with their respective wives as young girls—as a fall from the boyhood innocence of “twinned lambs that did frisk i'th' sun, / And bleat the one at th'other” (1.2.66-67) suggests a similar way of understanding Hermione's present intrusion into their homosocial banter. Just as the intrusion of the feminine into their idyllic world of pastoral boyhood marks the beginning of what Polixenes calls “Temptations” (1.2.76), Hermione's participation in their verbal sparring changes the character of that conversation. It moves from a bit of innocent fun between friends to a reminder of the postlapsarian world that includes devilish female sexuality. In keeping with the playful nature of their conversation, Hermione feigns offense at the idea that she and Polixenes' queen “are devils” (1.2.81). Instead she frames the tripping from grace to which Polixenes alludes as perfectly acceptable since their “offences” (1.2.82) are legitimized within the bonds of marriage. She seeks only confirmation of their continued fidelity:

Of this make no conclusion, lest you say  
 Your queen and I are devils. Yet go on;  
 Th'offences we have made you do we'll answer,  
 If first you sinned with us, and that with us  
 You did continue fault, and that you slipped not  
 With any but with us. (1.2.80-85)

Importantly, this is also the conversation that Leontes interrupts to inquire “Is he won yet?” (1.2.85).

**“Too hot, too hot!”**

The precise moment at which Leontes' jealousy begins is a topic that has been long debated among scholars of Shakespeare. Some scholars suggest that Leontes is predisposed to jealousy or that he is jealous from the beginning of the scene. Stopford A. Brooke suggests that Leontes' jealousy “had been brooding for a long time” by the time the scene opens: “Suspicious had arisen and been put aside. But at last they are concentrated, and then the volcanic forces, long repressed, broke into a full fury” (qtd. in Turner and Haas 60). Similarly, Philip Burton argues that Leontes is “jealous by nature before the play begins, and masochistically he arranges occasions on which his jealousy can feed” (qtd. in Turner and Haas 61). Offering advice for staging this interpretation in his 1931 edition, John Dover Wilson suggests that the actor playing Leontes should “display signs of jealousy from the very outset and make it clear . . . that the business of asking Polixenes to stay longer is merely the device of jealousy seeking proof” (qtd. in Turner and Haas 60). Here Wilson highlights a difficulty in staging this interpretation—it requires an explanation for Leontes' desire for Polixenes to stay in Sicilia. Ronald P. Draper notes that such a staging is possible but “[t]he difficulty . . . is that the audience must appreciate that Leontes' opening remarks are ironical, without the help of any clear indication in the dialogue. Alternatively, the actor must speak with a bitterness sufficiently strong to make the point clear to the audience, but without the characters on stage seeming to notice it” (qtd. in Turner and Haas 60).

Others see Leontes' jealousy beginning much later at Leontes' sudden jealous outburst, “Too hot, too hot!” (1.2.107). This suddenness has prompted many explorations

of the motivations of Leontes' jealous outburst, psychological or otherwise;<sup>17</sup> however, Reginald A. Foakes argues that the suddenness of Leontes' outburst is exactly the point: "Shakespeare made Leontes blaze out unexpectedly in a concern precisely to leave aside or ignore questions of motive or possible explanations for his behaviour" (qtd. in Turner and Haas 60). Similarly, Kenneth Muir argues that the "sudden destruction of love and friendship" is likely what Shakespeare intended (qtd. in Turner and Haas 62). On the other hand, William H. Matchett takes a different view, arguing that for an audience viewing the play for the first time, Leontes' outburst is not sudden at all. He argues that Polixenes' opening lines prime the audience to suspect that Polixenes and Hermione are indeed having an adulterous affair. He notes that when Polixenes first speaks "in staging, as opposed to reading, we don't yet know which [king] he is" (95). Although we are quickly able to sort out the identities of the two kings, Polixenes' language—"Nine changes of the watery star," "burden," "filled up," "I multiply" (1.2.1, 3, 4, 7)—makes us suspect their relationship almost immediately. In Matchett's words, "Shakespeare has filled this speech with the diction of conception, fertility and gratitude. We have come to the theatre expecting drama, which means plot complication, and we have already found it. We see the pregnant woman and we hear apparent allusions to adultery" (96).

Matchett locates the possible beginnings of Leontes' jealousy in his comment "At my request he would not" (1.2.86). He argues that while the audience may "wince" at the perceived dramatic irony, his line here not only confirms the audience's suspicions and "may [also] indicate the beginnings of his. Hermione's very playfulness with her husband

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<sup>17</sup> For psychological explanations of Leontes' jealousy see Murray M. Schwartz, "Leontes' Jealousy in *The Winter's Tale*" and Stephen Reid, "*The Winter's Tale*"; Paster, *Body Embarrassed*, 260-280. For a humoral explanation see David Houston Wood, "'He Something Seems Unsettled': Melancholy, Jealousy, and Subjective Temporality in *The Winter's Tale*."

should be striking us as shameless, so that his ‘Too hot, too hot!’ when it finally comes (line 10[7]), is a relief” (97). Locating the beginnings of Leontes’ jealousy about twenty lines before his first overtly jealous outburst is not a new reading. Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued that “At my request he would not” represents “the first working of Leontes’s jealousy” (Turner and Haas 52), and in 1855, Henry N. Hudson similarly argued that “There is a jealousy of friendship, as well as love. Accordingly although Leontes invokes the Queen’s influence to induce a lengthening of their visit, yet he seems a little disturbed on seeing that her influence has proved stronger than his own” (qtd. in Turner and Haas 52).

For my part, I agree with these readings, and would like to suggest that Leontes’ jealousy begins in its infancy as he interrupts the conversation between Hermione and Polixenes to find that she has won Polixenes’ consent to stay when he himself could not. Until now, he has not been jealous, but upon re-entering the conversation, Leontes searches for an explanation for Hermione’s surprising success. Interrupting precisely at the moment when his wife speaks to his friend about sinning, Leontes seems to take cues from their conversation. Though Hermione is careful to absolve herself and Polixenes’ queen from tempting the men to extra-marital affairs, as she inquires about her husband as a young man, her speech effectively conflates the two marriages, obscuring the boundary between the two. Her inquiry that “you slipped not / With any but with us” (1.2.84-85) does not preclude the possibility of an affair between herself and Polixenes. Her plural “you”, indicating both Polixenes and her own husband, is grammatically the same as the formal singular “you.” Further, her plural “us,” which she uses to indicate both herself and Polixenes’ wife, could also indicate her use of the majestic plural or royal “we,” adding to the ambiguity. When overheard by Leontes, these ambiguous

pronouns could also indicate Polixenes and his sexual relationship with both his own wife and Hermione, priming the beginnings of Leontes' jealousy which solidifies in his realization that she has won Polixenes' consent.

When Leontes suggests that Hermione “never spok’st / To better purpose . . . Never but once” (1.2.87-88), Leontes is still puzzling through his suspicions, and Hermione’s language does not help. She turns her attention back to her husband—the actual object of her desire—and demands that he “cram’s with praise, and make’s / As fat as tame things” (90-91). She then furthers this with an assertion about the effectiveness of praise on women: “You may ride’s / With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere / We spur with heat an acre” (1.2.93-95). Her appetite for her husband’s praise is gluttonous, prompting association with her sexual appetite and the cravings of her pregnant, and therefore overtly sexual body. Her description of women as horses spurred on by “one soft kiss” is also overtly sexual and, as we have already seen in Chapter 1, draws on a common sexual metaphor that puns on the word “ride.” Though her flirting language is directed toward Leontes, her husband, it does nothing to allay the beginnings of his jealousy especially since, as Coldiron notes, “the early modern pregnant body was a magnet for masculine fears, particularly fears of cuckoldry based in inheritance law,” which effectively “turn the pregnant wife’s body into a magnetic, swelling question mark” (33, 34). Her sexual language in the presence of another man simply confirms Leontes’ fears.

His jealous response focuses on acts of persuasion, which for Leontes, are sexual in nature. Comparing Hermione’s persuasion of Polixenes to his own efforts to persuade Hermione to be his wife, Leontes notes that he had more difficulty than she:

Three crabbed months had soured themselves to death

Ere I could make thee open thy white hand  
 And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter  
 “I am yours for ever.” (1.2.101-104).

In this image Hermione is figured as chaste—her hand is closed and white—and it takes Leontes three (clearly rather painful) months to convince her to figuratively open herself to him. Where the closed body and closed mouth are as Schalkwyk suggests, “a sign of chastity” (248 n8), the opening of Hermione’s hand, as Leontes describes it, is a sexual image. The touching of hands and exchanging of vows is an image of marriage and perhaps its consummation. Comparing this to Hermione’s persuasion of Polixenes, Leontes comments on the fact that she speaks “to th’ purpose” (1.2.99) not only more quickly, but with another man. Her open, persuading mouth, like her open hand, is a sexual invitation. When she then responds “Why, lo you now, I have spoke to th’ purpose twice. / The one for ever earned a royal husband, / Th’other, for some while a friend” (1.2.105-107), she takes Polixenes’ hand and unknowingly confirms Leontes’ suspicions, and prompts his first spoken expression of jealousy—“Too hot, too hot!” (1.2.107). Not only does she literally open her hand to Polixenes, but she also approves Leontes’ comparison. She places her husband and Polixenes in the same sentence and describes Polixenes as “a friend” (1.2.107). Literally this is true—her relationship with Polixenes is one of friendship—but a woman’s “friend” could also mean her lover (Williams 553) and as such, for Leontes, her words and gestures are tantamount to an admission of guilt.

**“Do not weep, good fools”**

When Leontes accuses Hermione of adultery at the beginning of Act two, he intrudes upon what could be considered a feminine space. Alicia Tomasian argues that

Hermione maintains a gendered court much like that of King James' queen consort, Anna of Denmark, and indeed there is a distinct separation of gendered spaces from Act two onward. In Act two, Scene one, Hermione, her ladies, and Mamillius occupy a feminine space that is shaped by Hermione's motherhood (Tomasian 150). They talk of Hermione's pregnancy and dote on Mamillius, and as Tomasian suggests, "their space and interests are so particularly feminine that even Mamillius talks of ladies' fashion, showing off his knowledge of painted brows" (151). Susan Snyder notes that in this nurturing space Mamillius "doesn't have to wait to be noticed by grownups or guess the right answers to their mystifying questions. He is fully at home, the center of attention" (1). Though the boy-actor playing Mamillius would likely be a boy of about ten, Snyder argues that since Mamillius is the same age as Florizel, the text suggests that Mamillius is about five years old in this scene. As such, it would not be surprising "to find him still at home in a nursery world populated by women" as it would be if he were older (2). At age five, he would still be "unbreached" and relegated to the care of women, having not yet "completed [his] gendering as male" (2).

The entrance of Leontes and the other men intrudes upon this space and interrupts Mamillius' "sad tal[e]" "Of sprites and goblins" which he argues is "best for winter" (2.1.25, 26, 25). The intrusion of the men upon this scene recalls theatrical conventions around framing narratives in which characters in the framing device tell a tale which is then brought to life onstage. This suggests that what follows with the intrusion of the men could be Mamillius' sad tale about "a man [who] . . . Dwelt by a churchyard" (2.1.29-30). This could account for the fantastical nature of the ensuing story, but though Shakespeare sets up this possibility, he does not follow through with it. Instead what follows is an abrupt change in tone and the nurturing atmosphere of the feminine space evaporates.



Hermione's response to Leontes' public accusation of adultery is disbelief: "But I'd say he had not, / And I'll be sworn you would believe my saying, / Howe'er you lean th' naywayrd" (2.1.62-64). Her words here are not a direct denial, however, and instead hinge on a conditional "I would." As Stephen Orgel suggests in his note in the Oxford edition, "Hermione's conditional implies a hypothetical situation, one that she has not yet taken seriously" (122 n62). Here Hermione imagines the situation she would expect *if* she were being accused of adultery: she would deny it, and her husband would believe her no matter how much he feared it to be true. This, of course, is not what happens. When he makes his accusation more explicit several lines later, stating outright, "She's an adultress!" (2.1.78), she seems to have collected herself and returns to her carefully constructed courtly speech. She argues,

Should a villain say so,  
 The most replenished villain in the world,  
 He were as much more villain—you, my lord,  
 Do but mistake. (2.1.78-81)

Though she suggests that such an accusation would make even the worst villain doubly villainous, she is careful to separate this accusation from her royal accuser. She deliberately stops short of accusing Leontes of villainy; instead, she states, matter-of-factly, "you, my lord, / Do but mistake" (2.1.80-81).

Undeterred, Leontes continues his accusation, calling her "O thou thing" (2.1.82) and "creature" (83), and questions her nobility (83-87). He calls her "an adultress" (88), "a traitor" (89), "a bed-swerger" (93), and suggests that she is "even as bad as those / That vulgars give bold'st titles"—a common prostitute (93-94). She categorically denies

his accusations, swearing on her life that she has no knowledge of anything Leontes suspects. She does not plead her case, however. Instead, she predicts,

how will this grieve you

When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that

You thus have published me! Gentle my lord,

You scarce can right me throughly then to say

You did mistake. (2.1.96-100)

She warns that though he will come to regret his actions, the damage to her reputation is irreparable. This, however, is a curious way to assert her innocence. She does not try to convince him of the truth of her denial—it is self-evident. Further, rather than outwardly lamenting the blow to her reputation, since it is undeserved, she seems instead to have faith that the truth will out. Instead, she warns him of his inevitable regret.

When Leontes suggests that those who attempt to speak on Hermione's behalf would themselves be considered guilty (2.1.104-105), she puts her faith in the heavens and turns her attention to the lords to interpret her reaction. She explains,

Good my lords,

I am not prone to weeping, as our sex

Commonly are, the want of which vain dew

Perchance shall dry your pities; but I have

That honourable grief lodged here which burns

Worse than tears drown. Beseech you all, my lords,

With thoughts so qualified as your charities

Shall best instruct you measure me, and so

The King's will be performed. (2.1.107-115)

Here Hermione explains away her lack of womanly tears which, she recognizes, could easily be interpreted as a lack of remorse. But as an outward sign of inward feeling, in the period, tears were not always considered a stable signifier. Misogynist pamphlets like Swetnam's *Arraignment* warned that women's tears should not be trusted. Swetnam argues that married women will vex their husbands with their words, "blubbering forth abundance of dissembling teares (for women doe teach their eies to weepe) . . . for they haue teares at command, so haue they wordes at will, and oathes at pleasure" (sig. B4v). Not only could women produce tears without the requisite emotion, women's tears could also indicate contradictory emotions. Much like how David Bevington describes the "shameful blush," tears "may represent one of two opposite responses: dismay and confusion at an undeserved accusation, or admission of guilt" (qtd. in Luckyj 92).

In contrast, Hermione's ladies weep openly, exhibiting the emotion that Hermione cannot lest it be taken as evidence of shame and further proof of her guilt. She urges them not to weep, arguing that there is no need since she is innocent:

Do not weep, good fools,  
 There is no cause. When you shall know your mistress  
 Has deserved prison, then abound in tears  
 As I come out; this action I now go on  
 Is for my better grace. (2.1.118-122)

In offering comfort to her ladies, she also categorizes their weeping as empathy rather than sorrow over her lost honour for the benefit of the men who are witness to the exchange. She thus ensures that she is the one to interpret their silent tears as proof of her innocence. By directing her comments to her ladies, she not only is able to comfort them, but she is also able to speak her mind without speaking directly to the men. Instead she

presents her innocence as self-evident and indirectly ensures that the men will speak for her when she is gone. She then exits with her ladies, citing her advanced pregnancy as justification for her requirement of them. This, however, creates an image of female solidarity that, while commonplace in late pregnancy and childbirth, is also suggestive of a gendered separation at court as Tomasian suggests. Hermione exits, taking her female court with her.

**“Her advocate to th’ loud’st”**

Though separate from the other court ladies, Paulina becomes Hermione’s chief advocate and ally, and from the moment we meet her it becomes clear that she is no ordinary court lady. Her voice, unapologetically authoritative and far from silent, marks her as a shrew. As Anna Kamaralli explains, the problem with the shrew is that she “usurp[s] an authority she is not supposed to have through her decision to speak” (7), deliberately going against the early modern injunctions to silence for women. In the drama of the period, shrews figure prominently as the lively, boisterous characters of comedy, but they are largely held up as objects of ridicule and often subject to some sort of taming by a male protagonist. As Kamaralli suggests, despite these attempts to “alleviate male anxieties,” the figure of the shrew remains “full of power because of her very ability to generate these anxieties. She is a marginalized figure but, like others who hold a similar place (the clown, the lunatic), her exclusion from the centre gives her the power to speak the truth about it” (29, 30). Paulina’s shrewishness marks her as outside the narrowly defined ideal of the early modern court lady. Though this opens her up to abuse from Leontes, it also allows her more freedom from these ideals than Hermione, who must rely on her performance of the courtly ideal for her innocence to be believed.

Paulina can be authoritative and voluble, speaking truth to power, where Hermione is—and must be—reserved.

Operating outside the confines of idealized femininity, Paulina’s voice takes on characteristics that are both feminine and conventionally masculine. In her first scene, she interrogates Hermione’s jailer, demanding to speak with the Queen, or at least one of her ladies. Speaking with Emilia, Paulina claims the responsibility of telling Leontes about the birth of his daughter as a feminine enterprise, noting that “the office / Becomes a woman best” (2.2.30-31). As many scholars note, Paulina here takes on “the role of a midwife reporting a birth as important evidence of Hermione’s chastity” (Tomasian 153). Indeed, many midwives were often called upon to provide testimony about the parentage of children especially with regard to single mothers (Gowing, *Common Bodies* 208). But how Paulina describes her intended speech goes beyond the typical “office” of a female midwife:

I’ll take’t upon me;  
 If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister,  
 And never to my red-looked anger be  
 The trumpet any more. Pray you, Emilia,  
 Commend my best obedience to the Queen;  
 If she dares trust me with her little babe,  
 I’ll show’t the King and undertake to be  
 Her advocate to th’ loud’st. (2.2.31-38)

She assures Emilia that her words on behalf of the Queen will be both angry and loud, and she uses a potential self-curse to prevent her implied oath from being broken.

Kenneth Gross explains that this type of curse “creates a ‘potential fact’ . . . catalog[ing]

pains that have not yet occurred, losses that have not yet been experienced . . . . Many formal curses, in fact, remain in the subjunctive mood, held in suspension by an ‘if’ or a ‘may’” (167). Here the oath and the curse are performative in that Paulina’s utterance speaks both the oath and potential curse into being, but the curse is set up as a fail-safe consequence should Paulina fail to uphold her end of the bargain. Paulina’s potential self-curse hinges on an “if”—“*If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister, / And never to my red-looking anger be / The trumpet any more*” (2.2.32-34, emphasis mine). She curses herself with a blistered tongue and potential speechlessness *if* she speaks with a sweetness that is typically feminine. The image that she uses in her self-curse is also distinctly masculine: her tongue is the trumpeter that precedes her anger, which she figures as “a military herald in his red uniform” (Orgel 130 n33-34). Her shrewish tongue is only the first signal of the full military might of her anger.

Paulina continues to place herself in masculine roles when she argues that she comes “with words as medicinal, as true—/ Honest as either—to purge him of that humour / That presses him from sleep” (2.3.37-39), figuring herself as a physician and later his “most obedient counsellor” (2.3.55). When Leontes responds by ordering her husband to silence her and thereby re-establish her subservient feminine position, she shifts tactics, instead seeking permission to speak by swearing her loyalty and showing deference to Leontes as her King. She attempts to frame her words again as medicine, acknowledging that her harsh words may “Less appear so in comforting your evils / Than such as most seem yours” (2.3.56-57). Here she sets her words in direct contrast to those of Leontes’ flattering courtiers. Unlike those of his flatterers, her words may be harsh, but they have restorative properties—the power to restore his “good Queen” (2.3.58). When Leontes reacts against her categorization of Hermione as a “good Queen” (2.3.58),

Paulina refuses to back down. Instead, she installs herself as Hermione's champion—again, a masculine role: “Good Queen, my lord, good Queen, I say good Queen, / And would by combat make her good, so were I / A man the worst about you!” (2.3.59-61). Here she attempts first to use her words as a performative declaration, speaking into being Hermione's official status as a “good Queen” rather than simply describing her as such. But, lacking Leontes' royal authority, her performative “I say good Queen” is what J. L. Austin would term “unhappy” (17)—her words do not have any performative force. Instead, Paulina also suggests that she will prove Hermione's worth through trial by combat, confident of an outcome based on divine justice, despite the lack of combat training afforded women (or men of the lowliest station).

Though Paulina's shrewish voice is on full display in this scene—especially when she threatens to scratch out the eyes of anyone who attempts to put his hands on her (2.3.62-63)—Leontes begins insulting her only when she produces his daughter and insists that the child is his. In providing testimony on the parentage of the child, Paulina presents Leontes with an irrefutable reminder of his wife's sexuality and his suspicions about the child's legitimacy. Though her testimony is meant to quell his fears, it has the opposite effect. Leontes responds by calling her “A mankind witch” (2.3.67) and “A most intelligencing bawd” (2.3.68)—both insults which question Paulina's chastity. Though potentially accurate, Leontes' accusation of witchcraft against Paulina is also an accusation that she has transgressed gendered boundaries. Such accusations, as Orgel notes, are “intimately related to that of both witchcraft and sexual licence” (135 n67). Witches were often considered to be hermaphroditic: not wholly feminine and not wholly masculine, but a bit of both and a stable signifier of neither. They transgressed gendered boundaries both in appearance (most famously the bearded weird sisters in *Macbeth*) and

in the illegitimate power that they claim as their own—power thought to be procured through sexual congress with the devil. The result is a woman who is dangerously and threateningly beyond the bounds of proper femininity. Her words have power and her sexuality is dangerously uncontrolled. By pairing a charge of witchcraft with the accusation that she is “A most intelligencing bawd” (2.3.68), Leontes places Paulina in the realm of the sexually licentious—not just a go-between or emissary from the Queen’s court, but Hermione’s pimp, procuring her sexual liaisons and attempting to pass off the offspring as legitimate.

In essence, Leontes suggests that since neither he, as King, nor Paulina’s husband can control her tongue, Paulina’s sexuality has the potential to be similarly unruly.

Paulina is quick to defend herself against these particular accusations:

Not so—

I am as ignorant in that as you

In so entitling me, and no less honest

Than you are mad; which is enough, I’ll warrant,

As this world goes, to pass for honest. (2.3.68-72)

Leontes’ accusations of unchastity do not stop Paulina from speaking because it is Hermione’s fidelity and not her own that she wishes to prove. Leontes’ insults, however, show the response that such forceful female speech provokes in him. If Hermione were to speak for herself in the same way, she would only further demonstrate her verbal and, by extension, sexual unruliness. Paulina here acts as a sort of buffer for Hermione, using her shrewish and unruly voice to say precisely what Hermione cannot say—in a way that she cannot say it—if her chastity is to be believed.



Paulina remains undeterred. She curses her husband if he follows Leontes' orders to pick up the baby (2.3.76-79), characterizes Leontes treatment of Hermione and their child as "slander, / Whose sting is sharper than the sword's" (58-86), and insists that Leontes look upon the child to see the familial resemblance (97-107). Each forceful speech is met with further insults from Leontes. He calls her "A callet / Of boundless tongue" (90-91), "A gross hag!" (107) and threatens to "ha' thee burnt!" (113)—a punishment "reserved for heretics and witches" (Schalkwyk 256). Her defiant reply turns the tables on Leontes:

I care not;  
 It is an heretic that makes the fire,  
 Not she which burns in't. I'll not call you tyrant;  
 But this most cruel usage of your Queen,  
 Not able to produce more accusation  
 Than your own weak-hinged fancy, something savours  
 Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you,  
 Yea, scandalous to the world. (2.3.113-120)

He is the heretic, not she. Not only is Paulina prepared to sacrifice her reputation, her life, for the reputation and life of her queen, but she does so by using the only weapon she has at her disposal—her shrewish voice. Here her voice is at the edge of control—she stops just shy of accusing Leontes of tyranny. Her angry words, however, bear an important warning for Leontes: his unfounded accusations against Hermione will hurt his own reputation as King.

### “Silence”

Paulina’s voice—angry, loud, and uncompromising—contrasts with Hermione’s particularly in the trial scene even as Hermione eloquently defends herself. In *Rescripting Shakespeare*, Alan C. Dessen explores an interesting textual issue in the Folio that has implications for how we understand Hermione and her voice in this scene. Textual studies scholars have long established that the Folio text for *The Winter’s Tale* was set from a transcript prepared by the scribe Ralph Crane.<sup>18</sup> Among other habits of punctuation and spelling, Crane is known for his massed entrances, which collect all the characters set to enter during the scene and list their entrances at the scene’s opening even though some enter much later (Werstine 28-29).<sup>19</sup> However, even within the Folio text of *The Winter’s Tale*, Crane’s massed entrances are not consistent. As T. H. Howard-Hill notes, in scenes 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, there is no evidence of “Crane’s methods since the characters named in the scene heading are on stage from the beginning” (*Ralph Crane* 129) and “[t]wo other scenes, 4.3 and 5.2, have conventional entries at the appropriate places” (129). In the remaining scenes with massed entries, some contain additional internal entries for characters who enter later and some characters like Paulina in 3.2 are not given entrances at all (130). Howard-Hill argues that the variety in Crane’s methods suggests “that the copy [of *The Winter’s Tale*] was prepared in some haste, under conditions which did not allow the scribe to adopt the massed convention completely,” citing that “the

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<sup>18</sup> See Paul Werstine, “Ralph Crane and Edward Knight: professional scribe and King’s Men’s bookkeeper” and T. H. Howard-Hill, *Ralph Crane and Some Shakespeare First Folio Comedies* for more detailed discussions of Ralph Crane’s scribal characteristics.

<sup>19</sup> Werstine argues that these massed entrances are Crane’s “flawed adaptation of the convention in neoclassical drama of opening a new scene every time there is a change in the major characters on stage and listing them all together at the head of the scene, a convention used by Jonson in his 1616 Folio” (29) and Howard-Hill similarly argues that Crane modeled his massed entrances on Jonson, suggesting that the texts that Crane prepared for the Folio “were literary by design not accident . . . With publication in mind, he wrote his copies on the best literary model available to him, Jonson’s 1616 Folio” (“Shakespeare’s Earliest Editor” 128).

printing of the last of the Folio comedies was delayed because copy for [*The Winter's Tale*] was not available" (131).

Taking his cue from Crane's mixture of conventional and massed entries, Dessen suggests that the entrance at the beginning of 3.2—"Enter Leontes, Lords, Officers: Hermione (as to her Triall) Ladies: Cleomines, Dion" (F1 f. Aa5v)—may not be one of Crane's added massed entrances, but instead could indicate that the characters are onstage from the beginning. Instead Dessen argues for the "potential theatrical effect of figures who are onstage but silent (though possibly active)" (226), noting that in 2.3, Paulina addresses lords who are onstage from the beginning of the scene but do not speak (227). At the beginning of 3.2, modern editors tend to split the massed entry into three separate entrances, taking their cue from Crane's use of colons to separate groups of characters.<sup>20</sup> The first entrance includes only Leontes, the Lords and Officers; Hermione and her ladies enter later when she is called to "Appear in person here in court" (3.2.10); and finally, Cleomenes and Dion enter just before they are called upon to speak (3.2.127). Paulina is missing from the massed entrance, but she enters along with Hermione and her ladies in modern editions. These appear to be straightforward emendations of Crane's massed entrance, but when Hermione's entrance is moved to just before she is called on to participate in the court proceeding, the Folio stage direction "*Silence*" that appears at line 10 becomes an issue.

As Dessen describes, as a result, "most editors change *Silence* . . . from a stage direction (as printed in the Folio) to a word spoken by the officer" (228), and indeed, this

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<sup>20</sup> Howard-Hill argues that "there can be no doubt" that Compositor A, who set the text for this page in the Folio, "reproduced the colons which were in Crane's transcript, for colons are used in a similar way in the massed entries of his [*A Game at Chess*] Malone transcript" (*Ralph Crane* 130).

stage direction seems to have been long contested by editors of Shakespeare. In the Folio text, the status of “*Silence*.” as a stage direction is quite clear—Compositor A formats the word in italics and separates it from the line spoken by the officer by a large space, much like his formatting for “*Exeunt*.” following the final line in the previous two scenes, also on the same page (f. Aa5v). Howard-Hill argues that this is a compositor error and that “the setting of “*Silence*” in italic . . . is an instance of [Crane’s] use of italic handwriting for emphasis” (*Ralph Crane* 132). Likely following this idea, N. Rowe’s 1704 and 1714 editions of *The Winter’s Tale* are the first to assign “Silence” as part of the Officer’s speech (Furness 118 n13; Howard-Hill, *Ralph Crane* 131), and E. Capell goes even further to introduce a Crier to proclaim “Silence!” in his 1765 edition (Furness 118 n13). Dessen explains this tendency by citing The New Penguin editor’s argument that *Silence* “would be a very unusual stage direction but is a traditional law-court cry. The entry of Hermione may be supposed to cause some stir in the court, which must be silenced before the indictment can be read” (qtd. in Dessen 228).

Dessen argues in favour of the First Folio stage direction, but he is not the first to do so. In 1842, J. P. Collier suggests that the textual history of “*Silence*” as a stage direction provides an important precedent to follow:

Modern editors have chosen to take “*Silence*” as an exclamation of the officer; so it might be; but the printer of F1, did not so understand it, and the editor of F2, when supplying an obvious omission,<sup>21</sup> did not think fit to alter the reading. The word *Silence* was probably meant to mark the suspense that ought to be displayed

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<sup>21</sup> This “obvious omission” is the stage direction “*Enter*” supplied immediately after the stage direction “*Silence*” (F2 f. Aa5v; F3 f. Aa6v; F4 f. Y1v), which was likely intended to emend Crane’s massed entrance. This stage direction does not indicate who enters at that moment.

by all upon the stage, on the entrance of Hermione to take her trial. (qtd. in Furness 118 n13)

Dessen's argument, however, is based on similarities between Hermione's trial scene in *The Winter's Tale* and the trial of Queen Katherine in *Henry VIII*. He notes that *Henry VIII* contains a similar—uncontested—stage direction. He notes that in *Henry VIII*, to be called to "Appear in person here in court" (3.2.10), as Hermione is in the *Winter's Tale*, has a formal, procedural meaning as opposed to "bring her to this room from some other place." Moments earlier, in response to a parallel call [in *Henry VIII*] ("Henry King of England, come into the court"), the king, without moving from his throne, had responded "Here" (6-9). At least in *Henry VIII*, 2.4., "to come into the court" is formally to acknowledge one's presence rather than to *enter* from offstage. (228)

Like Hermione, Queen Katherine is called to "come into the court" and like Hermione her response to this request is silence: "*The Queen makes no answer, rises out of her chair, goes about the court, comes to the King, and kneels at his feet; then speaks*" (2.4.12 qtd. in Dessen 229). For Dessen, this suggests that the similar stage direction in *The Winter's Tale* "may not be an error . . . but rather is a signal that Hermione initially should not speak (presumably, an appropriate response would have been: 'Here') and thereby like Katherine does not recognize the authority of Leontes's court" (229).

Interestingly, the direction for Katherine's delayed speech comes shortly after one of *Henry VIII*'s very lengthy and detailed stage directions:

*Trumpets, Sennet, and Cornets.*

*Enter two Vergers, with short siluer wands; next them two Scribes in the habite of Doctors; after them, the Bishop of Canterbury alone; after him, the Bishops of*

*Lincolne, Ely, Rochester, and S. Asaph: Next them, with some small distance, follows a Gentleman bearing the Purse, with the great Seale, and a Cardinals Hat: Then two Priests, bearing each a Siluer Crosse: Then a Gentleman Vsher bare-headed, accompanied with a Sergeant at Armes, bearing a Siluer Mace: Then two Gentlemen bearing two great Siluer Pillers: After them, side by side, the two Cardinals, two Noblemen, with the Sword and Mace. The King takes place vnder the Cloth of State. The two Cardinalls sit vnder him as Iudges. The Queene takes place some distance from the King. The Bishops place themselues on each side the Court in manner of a Consistory: Below them the Scribes. The Lords sit next the Bishops. The rest of the Attendants stand in conuenient order about the Stage. (F1 f. v2)*

Gordon McMullan notes in his introduction to the Arden edition, the detailed stage directions in *Henry VIII*, though rare for Shakespeare, in this case represent “detailed descriptions of state ritual drawn direct and at some length from Holinshed” and are unlike “the kind of terse, practical directions usually found in play-texts which can be seen to have stemmed from prompt copy” (155), or as in the case of *The Winter’s Tale*, a Ralph Crane transcript. But, despite the greater detail provided for the courtly display, this entrance is also very similar to Crane’s massed entry at the opening of *The Winter’s Tale* trial scene as multiple groups of characters enter one after another, creating what Warren Chernaik calls “a pronounced element of spectacle” (168).<sup>22</sup> The similarity of

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, in the Folio text, these multiple entrances are separated by either by a semicolon or a colon, much like the entrances at the opening of *The Winter’s Tale* trial scene. Though I certainly do not wish to hinge my argument here on punctuation that could be the result of scribal or compositorial invention, it is important to note that this page in the Folio is thought to have been set by Compositor B (McMullen 448) rather than Compositor A as in the corresponding scene in *The Winter’s Tale*. Howard-Hill argues that the colons in Crane’s massed entries in *The Winter’s Tale* were Crane’s in origin and then reproduced by Compositor A, surmising that “Compositor B was apparently unwilling to print colons from copy which must have been in the headings to 2.2, 2.3, 3.3 and 4.4” (130), but Compositor B uses similar—though not consistent—punctuation here.

these entrances seems to lend further support to Dessen's argument for the Folio reading. If treated as ceremonial rather than massed entrances, both scenes include many silent spectators on stage—all waiting for the accused to speak.

“*Silence*” as a stage direction then has some interesting implications for how Hermione uses speech and silence in this scene. Though it is Hermione's sexuality that is on trial here, it is her voice—and the promiscuity of that voice—which led to Leontes' jealousy: speaking persuasively to more than just her husband, even when directed to do so, is what got her into this mess. While this silence when she is asked to speak can come to seem a form of defiance as Dessen suggests (229), it also shows a recognition of the danger of too much speech even when required. Instead she responds with the silence that would ordinarily signify her chastity. Christina Luckyj argues that though silence was prescribed for women, “early modern misogyny invests feminine silence with significant power and danger. . . . Feminine silence can be constructed as a space of subjective agency which threatens masculine authority” (60). Hermione's silence should then be read as a form of resistance to the masculine court's imperative that she speak. This highlights the double bind in which she finds herself: if speaking indicates promiscuity, silence should disprove it, but it does not. Instead, her silent body remains an unstable signifier of her chastity, and her silence illustrates that the patriarchal structure of the court, much like her husband's authority, compels her to speak.

In performance, treating “*Silence*” as a stage direction can be quite powerful no matter the timing of Hermione's entrance or whether “*Silence*” is also called for by the Court Officer. In the Globe's 2018 production of *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione, played by Priyanga Burford, enters with her ladies as she is called into the court (following the emendations of editors from the Second Folio onward), and though “*Silence!*” is given as

a line to be spoken by the Court Officer, it is also used as a stage direction for Hermione. Having been called into the court, Hermione leaves the company of her ladies and moves centre stage where she remains silent for a few moments as though trying to figure out what she could possibly say to save herself. Her silence is almost audible as expectation mounts from the spectators on stage and in the audience. Her silence here, even more than her words, captures the difficulty of Hermione's double bind.

**“To say ‘not guilty’”**

In order to prove her chastity, Hermione must speak, but she recognizes her words—already suspect—will not be believed:

Since what I am to say must be that  
 Which contradicts my accusation, and  
 The testimony on my part no other  
 But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me  
 To say “not guilty”; mine integrity,  
 Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,  
 Be so received. (3.2.21-27)

Though she is compelled to speak, “To say ‘not guilty,’” she argues, in the very act of speaking—literally “as I express it”—that her words will be counted as further evidence of her guilt. Instead she frames her speech so that she can seem to speak without speaking. She demonstrates her reluctance to speak and distances herself from the motive of self-preservation, which could call her words into question, while still providing evidence of her chastity and honour. She calls on “powers divine” (3.2.27) to aid her and submits her “past life” (32)—her reputation—and status as “a great king’s daughter / The



mother to a hopeful prince” (38-39) as evidence of her chastity. She notes, however, that it is not to save her own life (41) that she defends herself, but “for honour, / ’Tis a derivative from me to mine, / And only that I stand for” (42-44). It is for her children’s honour—their legitimacy—that she speaks, not for herself. To further distance herself from the motive of self-preservation, she, like Paulina before her, emphasizes the truth of her words by cursing herself if she proves unchaste:

if [I acted] one jot beyond

The bound of honour, or in act or will

That way inclining, hardened be the hearts

Of all that hear me, and my near’st of kin

Cry ‘fie’ upon my grave. (3.2.49-53)

Here Hermione’s potential self-curse hinges on her complete innocence of the charge she faces, and even sets a higher standard for herself: if she is not absolutely chaste—in action and even in inclination—the curse would enact the social consequences due to an adulteress. These consequences underscore her stated motive of preserving the legitimacy and honour of her children who, if she proved unchaste, would have reason to “Cry ‘fie’ on [her] grave” (3.2.53).

Ari Friedlander argues that Hermione’s speech constitutes an oath similar to that required as part of the ecclesiastical court procedure of “purgation” (495). This procedure, he argues, is suggested by Leontes’ assurance that the trial will “Proceed in justice, which shall have due course / Even to the guilt or the purgation” (3.2.6-7). Purgation required defendants, particularly in cases of “suspected immorality” where the evidence was largely circumstantial (Ingram 332; Friedlander 495), to swear an oath of innocence. They then had to provide a specified number of community members—called compurgators—

to swear complementary oaths of compurgation to confirm the defendant's claims. As Martin Ingram notes, these oaths established "a presumption of guilt or innocence by testing local opinion" (332). In cases of suspected adultery by married women, "the majority of convictions were secured through the procedure of compurgation" (250) where the defendant failed to produce the number of required compurgators willing to swear on her behalf.

For Friedlander, viewing the trial scene through the lens of ecclesiastical court procedures, Cleomenes and Dion, the courtiers accompanying the oracle's pronouncement, become compurgators through the "elaborate testimonial ritual in which a sword is produced for them to swear upon" (495), but others perform the same function well before the trial scene. As Ingram explains, "It was not necessary to await a summons from the courts before these procedures could be used: a steady trickle of people made *voluntary* appearances and offered to undergo compurgation to clear their names" (293). In *The Winter's Tale*, immediately upon hearing Leontes' accusation against her, both the unnamed lord and Antigonus swear to the honour of their queen: the unnamed lord offers to "lay down" his life (2.1.130), and Antigonus swears to "geld" his three daughters if Hermione proves false (2.1.143-150) since "every inch of woman in the world, / Ay, every dram of woman's flesh, is false / If she be" (2.1.137-139). Their oaths, though not part of the trial scene, serve to establish Hermione's public reputation for chastity, and as such are also a form of compurgation when understood through ecclesiastical court procedures. Similarly, though Paulina does not speak in the trial scene until she draws attention to Hermione's collapse, her earlier vehement defence of Hermione to Leontes then becomes a necessary aspect of Hermione's legal defence. In a way, through

compurgation Paulina makes good on the legal sense of her vow to be Hermione's "advocate to th' loud'st" (2.2.38).

Like the defendants who could not gather enough neighbours to swear to their innocence, Hermione's compurgation ultimately fails because Leontes is both her accuser and judge. Despite the oaths of her peers Leontes is unable to accept the evidence of her previously spotless reputation since the fundamental causes of his jealousy persist. Her body, having just given birth to the baby in question, remains a persistent though slightly less overt reminder of her sexuality, while her voice still recalls her ability to speak to and lie with other men in both senses of the word. Though Hermione persuasively argues that she is and always has been chaste, neither her body nor her voice are stable signifiers of that chastity. For Leontes, the compurgation procedure that filters "women's testimony through communal testimony, [so] husbands did not have to rely solely on their wives' honesty for reassurance that their children were their own" (Friedlander 495) is not enough to assuage his jealousy. Instead, it is only with their son's death and subsequently Hermione's own supposed death that Leontes revises his image of her.

Ultimately, Leontes confirms Hermione's fears: he does not believe her or the oracle which should clear her name. Though Leontes recognizes his error when he receives word of their son's death, interpreting it as divine punishment for disbelieving the oracle, Hermione's death compounds that loss, and Paulina's voice is instrumental in its interpretation. Paulina is the one to interpret Hermione's initial swoon not only as her death, but as directly related to the news of her son's demise (3.2.146-147). Leontes, however, dismisses it: "Her heart is but o'ercharged; she will recover" (3.2.148), admitting "I have too much believed mine own suspicion" (3.2.149). It is only when Paulina returns with the news of Hermione's death that Leontes begins to listen to her.

She frames Hermione's death as a direct result of Leontes' accusations. She categorizes his actions as tyrannical—"Thy tyranny, / Together working with thy jealousies— / . . . O think what they have done" (3.2.177-180)—before listing his faults, dismissing each one as "'twas nothing" (3.2.183) and "Nor was't much" (3.2.185) compared to what he has done to his daughter. Though Paulina absolves Leontes of the guilt of being directly responsible for his son's death, she argues that none of these things compares to the death of the Queen and, she warns, "vengeance for't [is] / Not dropped down yet" (3.2.199-200).

In scolding Leontes, Paulina foregrounds Hermione's innocence in her absence, but Hermione's silence here is important. As Luckyj suggests, "There seems to be no way out for women: speaking, they are shrews or whores; silent, they are blanks to be inscribed by others" (71). Instead of letting men interpret Hermione's silence for their own ends, Paulina is the one to interpret Hermione's death. Paulina reinterprets Hermione as the innocent, slandered woman, refiguring her as "the sweet'st, dear'st creatur[e]" (3.2.199), the Prince's "blemished . . . gracious dam" (3.2.196). In death, Hermione's silence can once again be interpreted as signifying her chastity with Paulina speaking for her.

It is also once Hermione is dead that Leontes' opinion of Paulina's shrewish voice changes. When she argues that he must seek forgiveness from the gods by way of penance, he asks her to "Go on, go on. / Thou canst not speak too much; I have deserved / All tongues to talk their bitt' rest" (3.2.212-214). Rather than attempting to silence her as he did before, here Leontes gives Paulina permission to speak regardless of the fact that her scolding speech transgresses the rules of both courtly and feminine decorum (3.2.215-216). In a way, Paulina's scolding voice becomes Leontes' penance and she gains a kind

of license to speak the truth as she sees it. Constantly reminding him of his tyranny, Paulina guarantees that Leontes recognizes the damage his jealousy has caused, feels sorrow and regret, and, as Carolyn Asp suggests, “insure[s] his fidelity to the oracle which equivocally promises final reconciliation and restoration” (154).

**“O pardon that I name them!”**

Fast forwarding sixteen years as the play itself does, we encounter another distinct female voice. Perdita resembles her mother, both in appearance, as we are explicitly told later in the play (5.2.35-36), and in how she speaks. Though many critics remark that she speaks with “a frank independence” (Schalkwyk 261) that makes her speech seem natural and untaught, her words emphasize her chastity, modesty, and constancy. When Florizel dubs Perdita the “queen” of the sheep-shearing festival, she objects to his disguise as the pastoral Doricles:

Sir, my gracious lord,  
 To chide at your extremes it not becomes me—  
 O pardon that I name them! Your high self,  
 The gracious mark o’th’land, you have obscured  
 With a swain’s wearing, and me, poor lowly maid,  
 Most goddess-like pranked up. (4.4.5-10)

She begins by excusing her words so that she speaks without intrusion, arguing that she could “chide” or scold him for these extremes, but instead she simply names them, begging pardon for that as well. Like her mother before her, she highlights the difference between how she speaks—here simply naming Florizel’s extremes—and how she could speak if she were to scold him. In effect, she chides without seeming to chide Florizel, an

image of desirable female speech that becomes important later in the play and is a point to which I will return.

The scene that unfolds is a parallel to the action of Act one, Scene two. Like Hermione, Perdita is urged to speak. Her shepherd father remarks on her reluctance:

You are retired,  
 As if you were a feasted one and not  
 The hostess of the meeting. Pray you bid  
 These unknown friends to's welcome, for it is  
 A way to make us better friends, more known.  
 Come, quench your blushes and present yourself  
 That which you are, mistress o'th' feast. Come on,  
 And bid us welcome to your sheep-shearing,  
 As your good flock shall prosper. (4.4.62-70)

As hostess of the sheep-shearing feast, her role resembles that of the court lady. She is required to make her guests feel welcome and to entertain them with conversation in order to make connections and facilitate alliances. Though these alliances are not between sovereign nations as at court, they are just as essential to prosperity in this pastoral world: they will “make us better friends, more known” (4.4.66). He argues that she must overcome her feminine modesty—her blushes—to present herself in a different way in this new role as “mistress o'th' feast” (4.4.68). Instead of remaining a silent participant in the festivities, she must speak and entertain her guests, which though it serves a necessary purpose, puts her performance of chaste, pastoral femininity at risk as it necessitates that she “quench [the] blushes” that signify her modesty.

Like Hermione, Perdita speaks to Polixenes—here disguised and unknown—after she is requested to do so. Excusing her speech, she cites her father’s request and gives the disguised Polixenes and Camillo flowers that “savour all the winter long” (4.4.75). When Polixenes comments that the winter flowers are perfect for old men, she attempts to excuse the potential insult by explaining why she does not have any others. She argues that

the fairest flowers o’th’ season

Are our carnations and streaked gillyvors,

Which some call natures’ bastards; of that kind

Our rustic garden’s barren, and I care not

To get slips of them. (4.4.81-85)

Her speech here is frank, which suggests that she speaks without thinking and without art, which lends support to scholars such as Friedlander who argue that her refusal to plant these flowers is important “in signalling her natural chastity: not only is she not a bastard, but she would never bear one” (501). Polixenes responds by testing her motives. He muses on the naturalness of horticultural arts in a thinly-veiled analogy to his perception of her relationship with his princely son. He explains,

You see, sweet maid, we marry

A gentler scion to the wildest stock,

And make conceive a bark of baser kind

By bud of nobler race. This is an art

Which does mend nature—change it rather—but

The art itself is nature. (4.4.92-97)

Florizel here is the “scion” to Perdita’s “wildest stock” as Polixenes imagines the conception of a base-born heir to his noble kingdom. Though he attempts to argue that such art “does mend nature” he quickly emends his statement to “change it rather,” not quite able to lie about his position on the matter. Perdita averts Polixenes’ attempts to trap her into an admission of her designs upon his son, and instead returns his gardening image, arguing “I’ll not put / The dibble in the earth to set one slip of them” (4.4.99-100). There is no indication in the text as to whether she has caught on to the underlying meaning of Polixenes’ words, but the image of the dibble (trowel) in the earth is an image that suggests sexual penetration which she then refuses. She then matches his rhetorical trap with her own hypothetical situation: she argues she would no more plant these flowers than “were I painted, I would wish / This youth should say ’twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me” (4.4.101-103). She argues that pairing plants unnaturally simply to produce pretty flowers is akin to the deceptive art involved in painting her face with cosmetics in order to trap a husband with false beauty. Her disavowal of this image is a statement of her chastity and her commitment to the naturalness of her self-presentation. In this statement, however, she also draws attention to her beauty and youthful fertility, which likely prompts Camillo’s amorous remark that “I should leave grazing were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing” (4.4.109-110). Perdita quickly rejects his advances by adeptly returning his metaphor. Here her rhetorical prowess recalls the witty repartee that Hermione engages in with Leontes and Polixenes earlier in the play: “Out, alas! / You’d be so lean that blasts of January / Would blow you through and through” (4.4.110-112). Such expressions of courtly love are out of place in a literal herd of sheep—you must eat, or you starve.



Martine van Elk suggests that the naturalness of Perdita's self-presentation is something that separates her from the court lady. She argues that

Unlike the highly sophisticated court lady, who has to give the impression of chastity while calculating the effect of her behavior on her audience, Perdita manages to combine the image of modesty, obedience, and chastity with a new type of courtly self-display: a physical and pastoral performance that denies that it is a performance, presenting the audience with social behavior that is the result of 'being' rather than 'showing' and a rhetoric that hides its own rhetoricity. (443)

While I agree with van Elk that Perdita is a master of Castiglione's *sprezzatura*—her performance indeed denies that it is a performance, but I would argue, however, that Perdita is no less aware of the importance of her behaviour on her appearance of chastity than is Hermione. The only difference in Perdita's performance of chastity is that it is presented as natural with the help of the pastoral setting.

Like her mother before her, Perdita's performance of chastity also falters for a moment. Having soundly rebuked Camillo's attempt to woo her, Perdita draws others into the conversation, turning her attention to Florizel and the other young women, likely to quell the older man's advances. Though she emphasizes their "virgin branches" upon which their "maidenheads [are] growing" (4.4.115-116) in an image of chastity and fidelity, her subsequent exchange with Florizel is much more flirtatious. When Florizel takes her suggestion that she would "strew him o'er and o'er" with flowers "like a corpse" (4.4.129), she explains that she meant that his body would be "like a bank for love to lie and play on / Not like a corpse; or if, not to be buried, / But quick, and in mine arms" (4.4.130-132). Here, her performance of chastity seems to falter for a moment as she, as Schalkwyk suggests, "speaks so frankly of her own sexuality that she is herself

taken by surprise and consciously attributes it to the release offered by the occasion and role that carnival allows her” (261). Quickly catching herself, she excuses her behaviour as an anomaly and returns to her usual display of chastity (4.4.13-15). This momentary “failure to repeat” her performance of chaste femininity (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 192) suggests that it too is performative, something compelled by the norms of her society. She polices herself against such open expressions of desire, which are incompatible with her performance of pastoral chastity. Instead she attributes this expression of desire to a change in costume, casting it as a role she puts on—performs—and so disavows it as part of her identity.

For his part, Florizel is less concerned with Perdita’s continued performance of chastity; he just likes to hear her voice and watch her move:

When you speak, sweet,  
 I’d have you do it ever; when you sing,  
 I’d have you buy and sell so, so give alms,  
 Pray so, and for the ord’ring of your affairs,  
 To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you  
 A wave o’th’ sea, that you might ever do  
 Nothing but that; move still, still so,  
 And own no other function. Each your doing,  
 So singular in each particular,  
 Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,  
 That all your acts are queens. (4.4.136-146)

For Florizel, Perdita is like Guazzo’s court lady—so enticing in her speech that he never wants her to stop speaking. Here the speaking, singing, and dancing he imagines for

Perdita suggest the court life that he hopes to give her. Though he would have her “buy and sell so,” which indicates economic exchange in the pastoral marketplace, Florizel also imagines Perdita doing nothing but dancing, singing, and conversing, and in his words, “own no other function.” He imagines her at court, where he imagines she would excel.

In pastoral Bohemia, however, Perdita is contrasted by her counterparts Mopsa and Dorcas. Where Perdita explains away her expression of desire, Mopsa and Dorcas speak suggestively and unapologetically about their sexual relationships with Perdita’s supposed brother, the Clown. When Dorcas suggests that the Clown “hath promised [Mopsa] more than [ribbons]” (4.4.236), Mopsa retorts, “He hath paid you all he promised you; maybe he has paid you more, which will shame you to give him again” (4.4.238-240), suggesting that Dorcas may have become pregnant as a result of their relationship. Rather than setting the record straight, the Clown comments on their speech:

Is there no manners left among maids? Will they wear their plackets where they should bear their faces? Is there not milking-time, when you are going to bed, or kiln-hole to whistle of these secrets, but you must be tittle-tattling before all our guests? ’Tis well they are whisp’ring. Clammer your tongues, and not a word more. (4.4.241-247)

As Orgel notes, “A placket is both a petticoat and the slit (or pocket) in a petticoat,” which is suggestive of female genitalia (182 n141-142). The Clown equates their uncontrolled speech with sexual exhibitionism to suggest that they should not be speaking of such private things. Instead, he insists that they “Clammer [their] tongues, and not a word more.” Not only is Mopsa’s and Dorcas’ speech uncontrolled and unchaste where Perdita’s is the opposite, the Clown argues that they should remain silent where Florizel would have Perdita speak and sing in every aspect of her life.

When Florizel and Perdita attempt to make their relationship official by getting the Old Shepherd to “contract [them] fore these witnesses” (4.4.385), Polixenes reveals himself as Florizel’s father, the King, and loses his temper in a way that distinctly recalls Leontes’ public accusation of Hermione. Threatening to disown and disinherit Florizel, he turns his attention to Perdita. He calls her a “sheep-hook” (4.4.417), a “knack” (425)—literally a toy to be played with, something of no consequence—a “fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft” (419-420), an “enchantment” (431) and threatens to “have thy beauty scratched with briars and made / More homely than thy state (421-422). His insults here focus on her social rank to suggest that she uses her beauty and her sexuality as an enchantment for Florizel where she should only be a dalliance for him. His accusations of witchcraft also recall Leontes’ earlier categorization of Paulina as a witch. Schalkwyk argues that like Paulina, Perdita’s “witchcraft threatens the established degree and health of the patriarchal state itself. It therefore comes as no surprise that both Paulina and Perdita should be reviled as witches for the potency of their word and their perceived conspiracy against the maintenance of ‘fair issue’” (264). As the Old Shepherd’s beautiful, but low-born daughter, Perdita is a significant threat to Polixenes’ lineage, which he makes explicit in a vivid image that highlights the sexual nature of this threat:

And you, enchantment,  
 Worthy enough a herdsman—yea, him too  
 That makes himself, but for our honour therein,  
 Unworthy thee—if ever henceforth thou  
 These rural latches to his entrance open,  
 Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,  
 I will devise a death as cruel for thee

As thou art tender to't. (4.4.431-438)

Here Polixenes figures Perdita herself as an enchantment, not just her words. He follows his accusation with a sexual image of Perdita opening her body to Florizel the way that a latch opens as soon as someone tugs on it. Her sexuality—here figured as “rural”—is yielding and unchaste as soon as it is tested. Her embraces “hoop his body,” trapping Florizel with her sexuality, potentially forcing their marriage and her upward social mobility. Despite her performance of chaste femininity, Polixenes’ sexual imagery paints Perdita’s behaviour as unchaste. However, given the parallel with Leontes’ earlier outburst and the truth of Perdita’s parentage, the audience knows that Polixenes, like Leontes, will come to regret his words.

When Florizel declares his intention to run away with Perdita, Camillo helps them to get to Sicilia. Camillo warns that their path will be difficult and will likely test their relationship, but Perdita’s response demonstrates both her constancy and natural nobility. Camillo warns

Besides, you know

Prosperity’s the very bond of love,

Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together

Affliction alters. (4.4.569-572)

Not missing a beat to finish the rest of his verse line, Perdita argues “One of these is true; / I think affliction may subdue the cheek, / But not take in the mind” (4.4.572-574). She argues for the constancy of the mind in love even when the appearance of that love alters under adversity. Only the surface of that love changes. She loves Florizel and no amount of hardship will change her feelings, her constancy, her fidelity to him. Her argument that “affliction may subdue the cheek” picks up on Camillo’s use of the word “complexion”

and turns it around to prove her point by using his words in a slightly different sense. Camillo's subsequent remark on the incongruity of her social status, "I cannot say 'tis pity / She lacks instructions, for she seems a mistress / To most that teach" (4.4.578-580), is therefore both a comment on her chastity—she is as chaste as a noble woman should be—as well as on her rhetorical prowess. Though she has no formal training or experience with courtly rhetoric, she engages in exactly the kind of demonstration of wit that Castiglione advocates for his ideal courtier. Her appearance of "natural nobility" is her untaught performance of courtly femininity.

### **"Chide me, dear stone"**

Perdita learns of her parentage and reunites with her father in a scene that takes place offstage, which effectively delays the play's emotional climax until the final scene where Paulina leads Leontes and Perdita to view the statue of Hermione in her gallery. Here again, female voices are of central importance—an importance highlighted by Hermione's statuesque silence. Leontes' first words upon seeing the statue express a longing for Hermione's voice:

Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed  
 Thou art Hermione—or rather, thou art she  
 In thy not chiding; for she was as tender  
 As infancy and grace. (5.3.24-27)

Leontes wants the statue Hermione to speak to prove that she is real—he wants her to chide him as Paulina has done for so many years. Paulina's scolding voice has become a substitute for Hermione's in her silence and has brought about a change in him. Now penitent, he wishes that scolding could come from Hermione because, in speaking, she

would be alive. Though Leontes links Hermione's voice, as he imagines it, with Paulina's chiding, he also recognizes the difference between their two female voices. In life, Hermione was never a shrew or a scold. Instead Leontes remembers that "she was as tender / As infancy and grace"—her speech was always feminine, reflecting the chaste innocence of infancy, which he could not recognize when he accused her of infidelity. Leontes' use of the word "chide" also recalls Perdita's use of the word when she insists to Florizel that "To chide at your extremes becomes not me" (4.4.6), excusing her speech as she names the "extremes" in question. Perdita, like Hermione before her, speaks without chiding. She resembles her mother in speech as well as appearance: to use her father's words, Perdita's voice is similarly as "tender / As infancy and grace."

As Paulina brings Hermione to life through a "spell" (5.3.105) which Leontes deems to be "an art / Lawful as eating" (5.3.110-111), Leontes and the other men remain focused on Hermione's speech as part of her reanimation. Leontes insists that "'tis as easy / To make her speak as move" (93-94), and as Hermione begins to move, Camillo similarly argues, "If she pertain to life, let her speak too!" (5.3.113). Here Camillo's language has legal overtones—if she is entitled to life, she is entitled to speech. In effect, Camillo's legal language connects speech with living subjectivity, which inadvertently highlights the cruelty of Hermione's former double-bind. The speech the men wish of her, however, is speech on their terms. Polixenes furthers Camillo's assessment with a request that could easily be a command: "Ay, and make it manifest where she has lived, / Or how stol'n from the dead" (5.3.114-115). Again a "tongue-tied" (1.2.27) Hermione is compelled to speak—but this time her actions remain outside of masculine control. Instead, Paulina interprets her silence—attributing to Hermione a silent, and therefore

“inscrutable” subjectivity (Luckyj 7)—and advises patience: “it appears she lives, / Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while” (5.3.117-118).

Polixenes and Camillo narrate the scene as “she embraces [Leontes]” (5.3.111) and in performance the reunion between Hermione and Leontes is often beautiful and poignant. Hermione, however, remains silent even as the men continue to call for her to speak. Miranda Fay Thomas argues that “nonverbal communication is misread within the play” (92), suggesting that Camillo’s description of this scene—“She hangs about his neck” (5.3.112)—recalls Leontes’ jealous misinterpretation of Hermione embracing Polixenes: “Why, he that wears his like her medal, hanging / About his neck” (1.2.305-306). Thomas argues here that if such a gesture could be misinterpreted the first time, “we should also question whether this action means what we think it does. Is the embracing of her jealous husband a sincere sign of Hermione’s love and forgiveness? Or is it perhaps merely the *performance* of reconciliation?” (92). Without Hermione’s speech to confirm her forgiveness of Leontes, their embrace, as a gesture, remains ambiguous in its meaning and is subject to interpretation.

When Hermione does speak, it is to her daughter, Perdita, in a conversation orchestrated by Paulina. Paulina instructs Perdita to ask for her mother’s blessing and indicates to Hermione that “Our Perdita is found” (5.3.121). Ignoring the patriarchal calls for speech and the explanations that they require, Hermione speaks only to Perdita and the gods, and her silence in the face of the men’s demands creates what Luckyj describes as “a space of subjective agency which threatens masculine authority” (60). She does not speak on their terms. Her silence here is in direct defiance of masculine demands. Instead she makes her own requests for information, while only hinting at the mysterious circumstances of her preservation. Here the audience is conditioned to side with



Leontes—this is not what we want since the audience is already privy to the information that Hermione requests. However, having witnessed these scenes unfold, the audience is included in the private female conversation that excludes the men at court. Like Perdita, the audience has the information Hermione seeks. Just as Hermione controls the conversation, she also claims responsibility for preserving herself in statue form, giving Paulina credit for reminding her of the oracle's prediction (5.3.125-128). Here Hermione makes their alliance explicit as she explains to her daughter how she and Paulina worked together to ensure her own preservation.

With Hermione's reanimation and the return of her voice, Paulina's voice is no longer needed to amplify Hermione's. Instead, she imagines voicing her own laments in solitude:

I, an old turtle,  
 Will wing me to some withered bough, and there  
 My mate, that's never to be found again  
 Lament till I am lost. (5.3.132-135)

Here she figures herself as a turtledove, the image of constancy and fidelity (Orgel 230 n132). Though the turtledove represents a direct contrast to the image of uncontrolled female sexuality that typically accompanies the figure of the shrew, it is consistent with how Paulina has always described herself. Despite her shrewish voice, Paulina's chastity, like Hermione's, is constant even when doubted. Leontes, however, has the last word, and with "O peace, Paulina" (5.3.135), he attempts to finally take control of the unruly female voice that no longer serves his purpose. Advising her to take Camillo as her husband, Leontes attempts to return Paulina to her rightful place, assigning her a new husband who must manage her unruly tongue. While this comedic convention ostensibly contains the

threat that Paulina's shrewish voice poses to the social order, all evidence points to the contrary—if Antigonus could not control Paulina's voice, how can Camillo expect to do any better?

By the end of the play, Hermione has yet to speak to Leontes and her voice is conspicuous in her refusal to submit to masculine demands. Instead, what we are left with is a long-standing alliance between two very different female voices, and the addition of a third in the next generation. These voices, aligned against the patriarchal structures which seek to limit and control them, remain potentially unruly: Paulina in her potential garrulity, Hermione in her chaste but defiant silence, and Perdita poised to learn from their experience.

### Chapter 3

#### “Revenged by Sleight”: Slander, Performance, and Homosocial Discord in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*

Her mouth, though serpent-like it never hisses,  
Yet, like a serpent, poisons where it kisses.  
—Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)

In the opening lines of Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the play’s titular character muses about “How oft [she] with public voice run[s] on” (1.1.1),<sup>1</sup> a fitting point of entry into a play that is fundamentally concerned with the female voice. Not only does the play open with a woman’s voice, there are no men onstage for a full 324 lines (Reimers and Schafer 670; Schafer par. 2).<sup>2</sup> Instead, Cary presents us with a predominantly female space created in the absence of the tyrannical King Herod, who is presumed dead. Unlike *The Winter’s Tale*, however, there is no female solidarity in this play. Instead Cary’s female voices are discordant and antagonistic, frequently sounding against one another in complaint, insult, and ultimately slander. Another woman, Salome, is the author of Mariam’s destruction, and she uses the supposed connection between female speech and sexuality against Mariam even as the play itself dismantles that connection. While Mariam pays the ultimate price for not conforming to patriarchal expectations of feminine obedience, the unchaste and far from silent Salome continues to thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all citations from Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* are taken from the Arden edition, edited by Ramona Wray.

<sup>2</sup> A possible exception to this all-female space is the Chorus, which scholars tend to think of as predominantly male because of its patriarchal views (Roscoe 771; Bell 30). As Ilona Bell notes, “The stage directions include no entrances or exits for the chorus, so the chorus presumably remained onstage throughout” (30). In a play written primarily for reading, however, the play-text gives no indication that the Chorus is onstage until the appearance of the Chorus at the end of Act 1. In fact, the 1613 Quarto’s initial stage direction reads “*Mariam sola*” (sig. A3)—she is alone onstage. With this in mind, for a first-time reader of the Quarto, the imagined stage would remain a feminine space until Silleus’ entrance in 1.5. See Ramona Wray, “Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Constructing Stage History” (154) for a discussion of a wider range of staging possibilities for the Chorus.

This often troubles scholars of the play, and it is for this reason that this chapter will focus on the figure of Salome, the function of her voice and strategic performance of femininity in her slander of Mariam, and her ability to survive under Herod's tyrannical patriarchy. While Mariam seeks to adhere to a broader definition of virtue for women characterized by personal integrity, Salome does not. She has already lost her chastity, her feminine virtue as narrowly defined. But instead of condemning Salome, Salome's disregard for reputation gives her a kind of freedom to operate without concern for consistency in her performance of idealized femininity. Instead, Salome is strategic. She observes. She plots. She modulates her voice. Her performance of femininity and its degree of deference to male authority changes according to her audience of men and their access to power. As Stephanie J. Hodgson-Wright briefly points out in her discussion of her 1994 production of *Mariam*, Salome's "key to . . . success" is her "consummate performance skills and acute awareness of her audience" (Findlay et al. 136).

It is through this lens of performance and voice that I wish to consider the difference between Salome and Mariam. Their relationship to the performance of gendered identity is different: Mariam wishes her inner thoughts to match her outward presentation of herself; Salome masks her personal desires with strategic performances of feminine humility to achieve her ends. By juxtaposing Salome's strategic use of speech, silence, and the performance of femininity with Mariam's outspokenness and refusal to dissemble, I trace how Salome's strategic use of her voice works to both maintain her appearance of chastity even where chaste behaviour does not exist and support her slanderous destruction of Mariam's reputation for chastity where such a performance is not maintained. As Mariam goes to her death, she wishes she had "proved . . . wise" to ensure that "humility and chastity / Doth march with equal paces, hand in hand,"

acknowledging instead that she “had singly one” (4.8.36, 40-41, 43). Though chastity and humility together are the feminine ideal, the figure of Salome suggests that, under Herod’s tyrannical patriarchy, women can indeed survive with only one—wisdom, in this case, is to know which is more important in the context. While this may be Mariam’s *hamartia*, Cary’s play shows that the tragedy also stems from the conditions of tyrannical patriarchy that set women against each other. Where Rachel Speght risked her own reputation for chastity to defend the reputation of women in general, and Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale* looked to her female support network in Paulina to protect her when accused of adultery, Salome and Mariam are against each other from the start. This setting creates the conditions for Salome’s survival and Mariam’s fall, as each woman uses gendered ideals to keep the other from an already limited access to power.

### “With public voice”

In addition to Cary’s female characters, there is another female voice in operation in *The Tragedy of Mariam*: Cary’s own. While I do not wish to consider Cary’s play in a way that minimizes “women’s writing” as a product of the author’s gender or simply as a work of autobiography, in an examination of the female voice and negotiations of reputation, the genre of *The Tragedy of Mariam* and its publication history have some interesting connections to this project. It is well known that *The Tragedy of Mariam* was not performed on the English commercial stage in the early modern period. Indeed, women are not known to have written for the professional stage until the Restoration.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup> Though she admits her argument is purely speculative, in her chapter “Anonymous was a Woman,” Phyllis Rackin argues that it is possible that women wrote for the English professional stage. She cites evidence that “women were actively and visibly engaged in the business of the early modern English professional theater companies” (36), including as shareholders (37) and were important contributors to household artisanal production which could include playwriting (39). She argues that the names of these women playwrights or collaborators could have remained anonymous for a variety of reasons including differences in early modern attribution of authorship of plays (38); the fact that plays were written for profit (42) and considered the “stock-in-trade” of theatre companies (38); ideas of

1959, W. W. Greg categorized plays “that were never acted, and were never meant to be” (xii) as closet dramas. This term, however, is somewhat anachronistic. As Marta Straznicky explains,

The opposition between closet and stage implied by this definition . . . was not a feature of Renaissance dramatic discourse, at least not with the kind of regularity that might allow us to take the term itself as current in the period. In fact, it was not until the late eighteenth century that the closet/stage dichotomy became embedded in critical language as a way of distinguishing certain types of plays as appropriate for performance and others for reading. Eighteenth-century playwrights and critics also infused the closet/stage dichotomy with the related distinction of private/public, a closet play being designed for solitary reading while a stage-play was meant to be performed at a commercial playhouse.

(“Closet Drama” 416)

Early modern closet drama or “dramatic poetry,” Straznicky notes, “was not understood as antithetical to the stage . . . nor was it in any fixed sense a private mode” and instead these plays sought to participate in a literary culture that engaged with ideas that were politically relevant in public spheres (417).

Given the predominant critical assumption of a fundamental difference in privacy between the closet and the stage, it is very tempting to think of closet drama as a fitting genre for women writers because of its supposedly inherent domesticity and privacy.

However, women were not the only ones to participate in this genre. As Nancy A.

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feminine propriety, which would make it more likely for female authors to remain anonymous (41); and the possibility that the work of women writers was attributed to men much like how Elizabeth Cary’s *Edward II* was attributed to her husband because the manuscript was found among his papers (41).

Gutierrez notes, “a number of men used this genre as a vehicle for strategic political comment, even protest, [which] suggests that closet drama is actually a form of effective mainstream cultural engagement” (106). It is therefore important to remember that this kind of dramatic poetry is not exclusively a feminine endeavour, nor is it an inherently private genre. This type of dramatic writing could, however, afford women an avenue to participate in public discourses from the appearance of a socially acceptable position of relative privacy. Linking the genre of closet drama to Cary’s character Graphina, Miranda Garno Nesler suggests that “the closet drama form . . . provided a socially protected space for women’s public authorship and acting. Within closet spaces, writing was considered silent and admissible performance for women because it occurred in ostensibly isolated locations” (364). But since the genre also offered the potential for wider influence, women could take advantage of the genre’s apparent privacy to “licenc[e] their public expression by seeming safely enclosed” (364). In this way, Nesler argues, these women writers could appear to conform to idealized expectations of feminine behaviour “while simultaneously undermining those rules, . . . generat[ing] disruptive compliance” (364-365). Women writers of closet dramas could more safely participate in wider social and political discourses by seemingly confining their sphere of influence to the household and private entertainments.

The reading of play-texts, even closet dramas, within the household did not preclude possibilities for private performance. Closet dramas tend to be known for their distinctly literary features including long speeches, arguments summarizing the play’s action, and an emphasis on elements of classical drama that Straznicky calls “‘readerly’ devices” that help to “orien[t] the reader . . . in the process of moving through the text or [are] particularly well suited to the intellectual focus that reading affords” (“Closet

Drama” 422). These features have led many critics to think of closet dramas as anti-theatrical, emphasizing the supposed divide between the closet and the stage.<sup>4</sup> However, if we can take Margaret Cavendish’s note to the readers of her collection of closet dramas published in 1662 as any indication, even the private reading of plays was highly attuned to performance:

Playes must be read to the nature of those several humours, or passions, as are  
 exprest by Writing: for they must not read a Scene as they would read a Chapter;  
 for Scenes must be read as if they were spoke or Acted. Indeed Comedies should  
 be read a Mimick way, and the sound of their Voice must be according to the  
 sense of the Scene; and as for Tragedies, or Tragick Scenes, they must not be read  
 in a pueling whining Voice, but a sad serious Voice, as deploring or complaining  
 . . . an ill Reader is, as great a disadvantage to wit as wit can have, unless it be ill  
 Acted, for then ’tis doubly disgraced, both in the Voice and Action, whereas in  
 Reading only the voice is imployed; but when as a Play is well and skillfully read,  
 the very sound of the Voice that enters through the Ears, doth present the Actions  
 to the Eyes of the Fancy as lively as if it were really Acted[.] (sig. A6v)

Here Cavendish emphasizes the importance of the reader’s voice to convey the emotion of the scene in its connection to imagination. For Cavendish, the reader’s voice stands in for the moving bodies of the actors on stage, the voice embodying the emotion of the scene so that the reader (or listener) may imagine the action. The voice, speech, and

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<sup>4</sup> Some writers of stage-plays similarly sought to use readerly features to connect their printed plays to this literary culture so as to help market them toward a more elite, educated, and literary audience (Straznicky, “Closet Drama” 421-422). Ben Jonson emphasized the literary qualities of his plays as they went to print. In *Sejanus* (1605), Jonson claims the role of “a Tragic writer” by arguing that his play adheres to literary principles of “truth of Argument, dignity of Persons, gravity and height of Elocution, [and] fulness and frequency of Sentence” (qtd. in Straznicky, “Closet Drama” 422). For Jonson, printing plays for an educated readership could give his work the literary status that commercial plays did not have (422).



listening all play an important part in the act of reading a closet drama. Therefore it may not be much of a coincidence that Cary chose women's speech as the prevailing subject of her play.

Court masques and private performances in aristocratic households provided significant venues for women's participation in dramatic performances (Findlay et al. 131). As Straznicky notes, household theatre included women at all levels including patronage, writing, and performance ("Private Drama" 250-251). Though we do not have direct evidence that Cary participated in more elaborate household performances, we know that she did at least enjoy these performances as a spectator. Cary's dedicatory poem to her sister-in-law references her husband's performance as Apollo in Thomas Campion's *The Lord Hays Masque* in 1607 (Wray, Introduction 11), and we know from Cary's biography written by one of her daughters that after her husband's death she no longer "went to masques nor plays, . . . though she loved them very much, especially the last extremely" (*The Lady Falkland* 224). That Cary's plays could have been performed at least in the form of dramatic readings, for many scholars, seems highly likely (Kegl 123).<sup>5</sup>

There are many elements of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, in particular, that are highly theatrical. As Liz Schafer notes, *The Tragedy of Mariam* "includes several effects that work only visually" including Mariam's "black clothes or 'dusky habits' that upset Herod but which are hard to keep in mind in a reading" (par. 5). Ramona Wray similarly notes

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<sup>5</sup> In his chapter, "Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke," Coburn Freer suggests that "educated guesses" as to how Elizabethan literary circles read and/or performed closet dramas could come from the treatment of classical drama in university settings. He argues "One might infer from that analogy that a play like *Antony* would have been read in the manner of a production in reader's theatre, with different voices taking different parts, and treating them as if they were the expression of dramatic characters undergoing changes in their lives. It is most unlikely that in such a performance there would have been either costumes or action, but in a sense this is liberating" (486).

that the play contains what she calls “obvious indications of action”: the play’s fight scene requires blood and choreographed movement and, she notes, “The vacillations of the soldiers in 4.4 in response to Herod’s contradictory injunctions—they enter only to begin to leave and then to be recalled—are further indications of choreographed stage actions” (Introduction 67).<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere Wray also notes that Cary’s setting “consistently identifies details of situation which possess a theatrical charge,” citing Herod’s return to Jerusalem in 4.1 as an example (“Performing” 153). His lines “Hail, happy city! Happy in thy store, / And happy that thy buildings such we see!” (4.1.1-2), Wray argues, “explicitly prompt[t] thinking in terms of stagecraft” (“Performing” 153). For Wray, this is evidence that Cary “shares a theatrical vocabulary around architecture with her male peers writing for the public stage” (“Performing” 154). These elements combine to form a text that is simultaneously rhetorically complex and literary, and also attuned to matters of dramatic performance.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wray also notes that while stage directions are not consistently used in closet dramas more generally, and their use in *The Tragedy of Mariam* in particular is occasionally inconsistent, it also includes the stage direction “they fight” (2.4.92), which, she argues “means that this play goes one step further than the majority of closet dramas written and printed before it.” She notes however that such stage directions in plays now classified as closet dramas “is not unique” to *Mariam* (Introduction 62).

<sup>7</sup> Attempts by modern theatre practitioners to stage *The Tragedy of Mariam* also attest to its theatricality. In her discussion of her 1994 production of *Mariam* with the Tinderbox Theatre Company, Stephanie J. Hodgson-Wright notes that the play’s stage directions “provided [a] full stage-management apparatus with respect to the movement of the characters” (Findlay et al. 133). For Hodgson-Wright, staging the play also highlighted important moments where the characters “see and look at each other” including a metatheatrical moment where Salome remarks on the arrival of her lover: “see, he comes at last / Had I not named him longer he had stayed” (1.4.63-64). She argues that “[t]his not only provides the cue for the actor playing Silleus to enter but also refers, self-reflexively, to a woman’s control of the dramatic situation (Salome, and behind her, Cary)” (Findlay et al. 133). In their 2013 production, The Lazarus Theatre Company dramatically cut the script to fit the limitations of their fringe festival performance context and rearranged speeches to further highlight Cary’s emphasis on female voices (Reimers and Schafer 664). Sara Reimers and Elizabeth Schafer note that despite the edits made to the script, performance emphasized aspects of Cary’s text that would not have been evident in a reading context. They note that “the Chorus inevitably becomes gendered, depending on the casting of the roles, whereas in Cary’s text no gender is assigned” (668). Their choice to cut or re-gender all of the male roles except for Herod dramatically emphasized Cary’s creation of a female space at the beginning of the play. In this production, “the dynamic was of the male, patriarchal soldier, returning from war, invading a female space” (671). The fact that Cary’s “stage” is all-female for the first 324 lines of the play (670) becomes much more noticeable in performance.

Though it is not possible to trace a performance history for *The Tragedy of Mariam* in the early modern period, we do know that the play circulated in manuscript from around 1603 to at least 1606 before it was published in 1613 (Wray, Introduction 55). Its circulation in manuscript means that Cary's play took on a more public aspect than it would have if it were confined to Cary's domestic sphere but not so public as it would become when it finally went to print. Cary herself makes a distinction between manuscript circulation and print in her note to the reader in the Fitzwilliam manuscript of *Edward II*:<sup>8</sup> "If yo<sup>u</sup> hapte to veiwe It, taxe not my errors. I my self confess them, Who meant not yo<sup>u</sup> should Iudge, till I Amend Itt w<sup>ch</sup> ere it Liue in publicke, I doe promise" (qtd. in Reeves 134).<sup>9</sup> As Margaret Reeves suggests, "Cary registers an awareness of the boundaries between alternative forms of publication current during the early modern period, acknowledging a potential reader's scrutiny should the work circulate in manuscript" (134). Significantly, the distinction she makes here is in terms of relative publicity. She recognizes the public quality of manuscript circulation that allows her readers to see any errors present in the manuscript, but for Cary at least, it does not yet "Liue in publicke" the way it would if it were published in print. This distinction, Heather Wolfe suggests, was often an important one for women writers who "tended to use the medium of manuscript, rather than print, to construct their public identities, [but], as recent studies have shown, manuscripts could be as influential, and often more subversive, than printed texts" (2).

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<sup>8</sup> The manuscript for *The Tragedy of Mariam* is no longer extant but *Edward II* remains in two manuscript forms—the Fitzwilliam manuscript and the shorter Finch-Hatton manuscript, both written in scribal hands. For more on the complex relationship between the manuscript and printed versions of Cary's *Edward II*, see Reeves, "From Manuscript to Printed Text: Telling and Retelling the *History of Edward II*."

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Reeves notes that Cary never did follow through on this promise. She explains, "The omission of this last phrase of the preface is the most substantial of the editorial revisions to the text of 'Rainge and deathe off Edwarde' made by the printer of the 1680 folio" (134).

Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence that *The Tragedy of Mariam* was read widely in manuscript and was quite influential in literary and dramatic circles. Cary is often linked to the so-called Sidney circle, a literary coterie of dramatic authors variously influenced by Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke. Many critics have argued that the Sidney circle was a product of Mary Sidney's wish to reform English theatre to conform to the "more dignified classical standard" outlined in Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (Lamb 195).<sup>10</sup> While the plays that tend to be associated with the Sidney circle are Senecan closet dramas that adhere to many of the classical conventions that Philip Sidney prized, Straznicky notes that "the Sidnean closet plays . . . express no interest in commercial drama, and the writers—except for Fulke Greville—reveal nothing like a programmatic anti-theatrical position" ("Closet Drama" 426). Further, M. E. Lamb argues that the Sidney circle is unlikely to have existed in the way that critics have suggested. Lamb disputes the idea that Mary Sidney, who herself translated Robert Garnier's neo-Senecan tragedy *Marc Antoine*, recruited other playwrights "to join her in her battle against the sensationalism and ribaldry of the contemporary stage" given the lack of evidence linking Sidney to supposed members of the group including Thomas Kyd and William Alexander (195). Instead, Lamb suggests, the Countess of Pembroke's influence could have been "transmitted indirectly" through those like Samuel Daniel who were more directly influenced by Sidney's work (199).

While there is little evidence to suggest that Cary knew Mary Sidney or the other playwrights of her supposed circle personally (Straznicky, "Private Drama" 255), there is evidence that Cary's work had its own sphere of influence. Richard Levin and R. V.

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed list of many of the scholars who espouse this viewpoint from the beginning of the twentieth century onward see M. E. Lamb, "The Myth of the Countess of Pembroke: The Dramatic Circle," 195 n2.

Holdsworth have suggested that Thomas Middleton borrowed from *The Tragedy of Mariam* in two of his plays. *A Fair Quarrel* (1617), Levin argues, takes its climactic “remarkable duel scene” from the duel between Constabarus and Silleus: both duels end with the victor wounding their opponents and winning their admiration (152-153). Similarly, Holdsworth posits that *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* (1611), which is now widely credited to Middleton, contains a scene which echoes Herod’s comments on Mariam’s “dusky habits” (4.3.4) in what Holdsworth calls “agreements of staging, verbal detail, and to some extent of situation (though Mariam is Herod’s wife)” (379). In *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, the Tyrant, specifically modelled on the Biblical Herod, “rebukes [the Lady] for her incongruous attire” (Holdsworth 379)—she too is wearing black to “suit [her] garment to [her] mind” (Cary 4.3.5).<sup>11</sup> While *A Fair Quarrel* was likely written between 1615 and 1617 (Levin 153), Holdsworth suggests that since *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* was written in 1611, two years before *The Tragedy of Mariam* was printed, Middleton likely read it in manuscript (380).

The dedication of Sir John Davies’ *The Muses Sacrifice, or Divine Meditations* (1612) links Cary to the Countess of Pembroke (at least in Davies’ mind) and establishes that Davies read *The Tragedy of Mariam* in manuscript before its publication in 1613. Though Davies praises the “Art” of all three of his dedicatees, he describes Cary, his former student, in distinctly dramatic terms:

*Thou mak’st Melpomen proud, and my Heart great  
of such a Pupill, who, in Buskin fine,*

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<sup>11</sup> As Holdsworth suggests, the verbal echo here is fairly clear (and is made stronger by similar verbal echoes in the Tyrant’s preceding lines). The Lady responds, “I have a mind / That must be shifted ere I cast off these, / Or I shall wear strange colours” (qtd. in Holdsworth 379). Holdsworth argues that the idea that both plays were based on the same source “is untenable, as the episode is Elizabeth Cary’s invention” (379), though Cary’s scene does recall Hamlet’s continued mourning attire.

*With Feete of State, dost make thy Muse to mete*

*the Scenes of Syracuse and Palestine. (sig. \*\*3v)*

As Hodgson-Wright suggests, Davies' dedication places Cary's plays (both *Mariam* and an earlier play set in Syracuse, which is now lost) "alongside those performed in universities, private theatres and public playhouses" (Findlay et. al 132). Her plays, Davies argues, would make the Muse of Tragedy proud. His image of the Athenian tragic hero in the traditional buskin boots, in the words of Hodgson-Wright, "draws attention to the performed nature of tragic drama: the metrical feet in the verse are given voice via performance of the classical actor wearing buskins" (132). Cary as a playwright directs her actor/tragic muse to act out her stately and tragic scenes. The image here is certainly of a fully-realized tragedy in performance.

Davies' description of Cary paints her as an exceptional woman of wit and learning:

*Art, Language; yea; abstruse and holy Tongues,*

*thy Wit and Grace acquir'd thy Fame to raise;*

*And still to fill thine owne, and others Songs;*

*thine, with thy Parts, and others, with thy praise.*

*Such neruy Limbes of Art, and Straines of Wit*

*Times past ne'er knew the weaker Sexe to haue;*

*And Times to come, will hardly credit it,*

*if thus thou giue thy Workes both Birth and Graue. (sig. \*\*3v)*

For Davies, Cary's understanding of "abstruse and holy" languages is something that her "Wit and Grace acquir'd" in order to "raise" her fame. Her "Art" and "Language" fill her

plays, while it is others who sing her praises while her work circulates only in manuscript. As Skiles Howard notes, Davies uses the image of a “cosmic dance” to show that her “*neruy Limbes of Art, and Straines of Wit*” are “so extraordinary . . . that even goddesses are apprehensive” (96). This extraordinary quality leads Davies to suggest that Cary has no equal in the past or present, and that “*Times to come, will hardly credit it, / if thus thou giue thy Workes both Birth and Graue.*” If she does not publish her plays, as Margaret W. Ferguson suggests, “Cary, in Davies’ formulation, is giving her fame a stillbirth” (“Allegories” 264).

Davies makes a good point: *The Tragedy of Mariam* survives today because it was published, while her earlier “*Scenes of Syracuse*” does not. While this is likely why some scholars see his suggestion that all three women “*presse the Presse with little you haue made*” (sig. A1) as a rebuke intended to encourage them to publish their work, Davies’ poem as a whole takes a different view of print publication. “*No;*” he continues,

*you well know the Presse so much is wrong’d,*  
*by abiect Rimers that great Hearts doe scorne*  
*To haue their Measures with such Nombres throng’d,*  
*as are so basely got, conceiu’d, and borne. (sig. A1v)*

Instead, Davies’ praises the decision not to publish because the medium of print is tainted by the quality of the work it produces. It is better to avoid association with the “abject Rimers” who publish their poetry in abundance. Margaret P. Hannay also notes, however, that Davies adds another possible motivation for avoiding print publication: “the conflation of publication and unchastity that was so commonly used against women

writers” (15).<sup>12</sup> Here Davies uses the language of unchastity and bastardy to figure the poetry of the “abject Rimers” as children “*basely* got, conceiu’d, *and* borne.” To “*presse the Press,*”—itself an image both of torture (Ferguson, “Allegories” 264) and of, in Wendy Wall’s words, “a bawdy, masculinized sexual position” (279)—is to leave oneself open to “Fame” of a different kind. Davies’ advice here, Ferguson suggests, is “highly equivocal” since “fame [is], for a woman, intricately bound up with the perception of her chastity on the part of others” (“Allegories” 264).

When *The Tragedy of Mariam* was eventually published, it appears that some consideration was taken to preserve and promote Cary’s reputation as her words went to print. The 1613 quarto’s title page does not include Cary’s full name, and instead identifies the author as “that learned, vertuous, and truly noble Ladie, E. C.” This semi-anonymous attribution both establishes Cary’s authorship while concealing her name from those who did not already know it (Straznicky, *Privacy* 64). As Marcy L. North suggests, “In many publications where both the author’s name and discretion could prove attractive to readers, initials could serve both functions simultaneously”, that is both to indicate authorship and to conceal it, “and work as a subtle sign of a book’s status and ambition” (70). Straznicky points out that with what she calls “the very unusual use of the demonstrative pronoun “*that,*” the play “trades on her *prior* reputation” and far from seeking to completely conceal her identity, relies on the fact that some people would know the identity of E. C. (*Privacy* 65). This is consistent with Cary’s presumed participation in literary coterie culture, “where,” as North suggests, “social familiarity bred a kind of exclusivity and discretion” (162). Though North here refers to the kind of

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<sup>12</sup> For a more extended analysis of the various motivations for manuscript circulation over print to be found in Davies’ dedication, see Hannay 10-21.



inside communication that takes place between familiar groups and is preserved in coterie-created manuscripts, she also notes that small details about the author were often provided strategically to create a “dual audience”—“those with information about the author and those without” as a way to “creat[e] the author in the right place and manner and at the right time” (108).

In remarkable economy of print, the title page also establishes Cary’s reputation for learning, virtue, and nobility, with the adverb “truly” working to emphasize that Cary’s nobility encompasses more than just her social rank, but her character as well. This is much like what Rachel Speght attempts to accomplish in her use of modesty rhetoric in the prefatory material of *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, explored in Chapter 1, here accomplished in fewer than ten words, supported by an exclusively-appended dedicatory sonnet. Establishing a female author as learned and virtuous supports both her right to speak (or write) and the reliability of her speaking position—emphasizing that this play is the result of study by a virtuous noble woman. As Straznicky rightly points out, “learned” is among the substantive words that is given prominence in the title page’s typeface, which, she argues, “suggests that, rather than trying to conceal her authorship, the play is in fact appealing to a specific segment of the play-reading public, the better-educated readers for whom an author’s learning would presumably be a guarantee of a better quality literary product” (“Private Drama” 256).

Cary dedicates her play “TO DIANAES EARTHLIE DEPVTESSE, and my worthy Sister, Mistris Elizabeth Carye” (sig. A1v) in a dedicatory sonnet that appears only in two extant copies in the Houghton and Huntington libraries (Wray, Introduction 56; Weller and Ferguson 44). From the beginning, the sonnet clearly identifies her dedicatee as her sister and later clarifies that this sisterly relationship is through her

husband's family ties.<sup>13</sup> This added information about the author's relationships would likely have helped to confirm the identity of E. C. for some readers, but as Straznicky suggests, "the sonnet is far from explicit about Cary's authorship, revealing little more to the general reader than the title page attribution" and instead suggests that the sonnet should be understood as "an overt marker of the play's roots in a literary coterie" (*Privacy* 65). Many scholars, beginning with Elaine Beilin,<sup>14</sup> have speculated that since the sonnet only appears in two remaining copies, it could be the work in verse that Cary's biographer daughter describes as having been "stolen out of that sister-in-law's (her friend's) chamber and printed, but by her own procurement was called in" (*The Lady Falkland* 190). Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson argue that the poem, and the list of speakers on the verso page, was cancelled after the play had already gone to print, noting that "[s]tubs are visibly present in the Eton Library copy and the Malone collection copy in the Bodleian Library" (44). Scholars tend to conclude that the copies with the dedicatory poem were likely reserved for members of Cary's inner circle of family and friends, and as Wray notes in her introduction (and as is visible in the copy digitized for *EEBO*), "In the Huntington copy, there is, on the blank verso of π1, a signature, 'Eliz:

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<sup>13</sup> Elaine Beilin notes that there are two possible candidates for this second Elizabeth Cary: her brother-in-law Philip Cary's wife, who A. C. Dunstan argues for in his attempt to date the play for the Malone Society edition; and her husband Henry Cary's sister Elizabeth who married Sir John Saville in 1586. In support of this second choice, Beilin argues "it is reasonable to suppose that Lady Cary, in dedicating her play, would have made a point in emphasizing the original identity of her name with that of her husband's sister" ("Elizabeth Cary" 48 n6). This difficulty in identifying even to which Elizabeth Cary the poem was addressed seems to support Straznicky's suggestion that the poem would give a general reader little more to go on than the title page. In the Arden edition, Wray presents both options but suggests that the first "is more persuasive, in part because, as Britland argues (x), the Cary family lived with the Bland Cary family until 1612" (72 n3).

<sup>14</sup> Beilin seems to have been the first to suggest that this poem printed without Cary's permission "might be the dedicatory sonnet" ("Elizabeth Cary" 48 n6). Margaret W. Ferguson notes that "If Beilin's hypothesis is right, it is interesting that Cary would have recalled the sonnet but not the play; perhaps she wanted it published but was unwilling to go so far in defying custom—and her husband's strong views on women's proper behavior as 'private' beings—as she would have had she publicized her authorship" ("Running" 46). Straznicky argues that "The dedication is charged with intimacy," which in the context of manuscript circulation, "the personal tone of the dedication would not be surprising. In print, however, it was evidently too intimate to be included in all but a few presentation copies, presumably to individuals who were known personally to Cary" (*Privacy* 66).

Carew', in a seventeenth-century hand. An alternative spelling of 'Cary', 'Carew' could refer to the author's sister-in-law Elizabeth Bland Cary or to Cary herself. The signature suggests either book ownership or an ascription of authorship" (Introduction 58). In either case, the signature or inscription is evidence of the book owner's membership within the select group of those who would have known the play's authorship.

In the dedicatory sonnet Cary emphasizes the importance of female friendship through her own construction of chastity, which, as Laurie Shannon suggests, "links . . . chastity with a homosocial paradigm of women's bonds" (*Sovereign* 86). As "Diana's earthly deputess" (1-2), Cary's sister is the goddess of chastity's representative on earth, and as such, Cary describes her as "Luna-like, unspotted, chaste, divine" (13). Cary's offering of her play then places her in the position of "a votary of Diana's" (Shannon, *Sovereign* 86), so by emphasizing her sister's chastity through her relationship with the goddess, she also establishes her own status as chaste by association. Through her description of their interconnected relationships, Cary produces a distinctly marital chastity as she positions her marriage to her husband alongside her female friendship: "your fair brother is to me the sun, / And you his sister as my moon appear" (6-7).

Though it was the Greeks who first understood the moon to reflect the light of the sun, in Cary's figuration, her husband's absence causes his sunny "beams" to shine elsewhere, far from home, and in his place his sister (the moon, "Phoebe") "shines my second light" (11). Rather than a reflected light, her sister-in-law seems to produce her own. Female friendship then becomes in the darkness a comforting light that is outshone only by her fidelity to and love for her husband. For Cary, female friendship fostered in mutual chastity becomes particularly important in a husband's absence, which in effect places Cary in direct contrast to both Salome and Mariam, neither of whom can rely on

what Shannon calls a “network of female relations” (*Sovereign* 86). For Shannon, this contrast is striking. She argues that “[i]f the dedication offers as reality what the tragedy describes as impossible, it too comments on the constraints of the drama’s world” (*Sovereign* 86). For those who would have read the sonnet alongside the play—perhaps themselves a select few also united to Cary by bonds of family and friendship—the sonnet could easily provide a framework in which to read and understand the play. According to the sonnet at least, marital chastity and female friendship best exist hand in hand.

**“Now stirs the tongue that is so quickly moved”**

*The Tragedy of Mariam* opens on a predominantly female space in the wake of the news of King Herod’s supposed death. Mariam, alone on stage, is conflicted by the news of her husband’s death and muses about how she “with public voice” has criticized Caesar for similar inconsistencies (1.1.1, 2-4). This brief comparison between herself and Caesar establishes both Mariam’s outspokenness, often explored by scholars, and her assumed role as the de facto political leader in Herod’s absence. Though she cannot help but weep for Herod’s death, she also paints a picture of his tyranny: he killed both her brother and her grandfather to secure his power and left orders for Mariam’s death should he himself be killed (1.1.30-50).<sup>15</sup> However, the point on which Mariam’s conflicted mind dwells is, in her words, Herod’s “love for me— / The deepest love that ever yet was seen—” (1.1.55-56). She feels loyalty toward her husband despite the fact that she would “rather much a milkmaid be / Than be the monarch of Judea’s queen” (1.1.57-58). Herod’s love for her was expressed in jealousy that, she explains,

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<sup>15</sup> The play’s Argument is much more explicit than Mariam is here about Herod’s political motivations (8-12).

Had power even constancy itself to change;  
 For he, by barring me from liberty  
 To shun my ranging, taught me first to range.  
 But yet too chaste a scholar was my heart  
 To learn to love another than my lord.  
 To leave his love, my lesson's former part,  
 I quickly learned; the other I abhorred. (1.1.23-30)

Mariam's chastity and obedience to her husband have been tested by his jealousy and tyrannical behaviour, which Mariam here expresses through the language of space and its relationship to infidelity. Conduct books such as Barnabe Rich's *My Lady's Looking Glass* (1616) and Thomas Becon's *The Boke of Matrimony* (1564) often cite Solomon's description of harlots as women who "gad abroad" (Becon fol. 675v):

*the pathes of a harlot (he saith) are moouabl, for now shee is in the house, now in the streetes, now shee lieth in waite in euery corner, shee is still gadding from place to place, from person to person, from companie to company: from custome to custome, shee is euer more wandring: her feete are wandring, her eies are wandring, her wits are wandring, Her waies are like the waies of a serpent: hard to be found out. (Rich sig. F1)<sup>16</sup>*

As Rich emphasizes here, the harlot's physical wandering is paralleled by the wandering of her "eies" and her "wits" as she looks for and thinks of a lover beyond her matrimonial bed. Mariam's description of herself as "ranging" in response to Herod's "barring [her]

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<sup>16</sup> Becon's description of the Solomonian harlot is similar but also includes unruly speech in the equation: "Salomon in the description of an harlot, setteth forth her to be such one as is full of loud wordse, redye to dally, & whose feete cannot abide in the house, but now she is with out nowe in the streets, seldome at home, &c." (fol. 675v).

from liberty” is similar but upsets the equation of ranging/wandering and infidelity: she may “leave [Herod’s] love” in a physical and mental sense, but she will not look for another lover to take his place.

In Herod’s absence a feminine space remains in which Mariam, with the help of her mother Alexandra, must “resolve / How now to deal in this reversèd state” (1.2.125-126). Women are now in control of “great . . . affairs” (1.2.127) including assuring the line of succession for the kingdom, which represents, as Alexandra’s image of a “reversèd state” suggests, not only a change from the usual order of things, but also a complete (albeit temporary) inversion of the usual patriarchal hierarchy. The relationships between women in this female space, however, still remain marked by the lingering influence of Herod’s tyranny. The relationship between Mariam and her mother, for example, bears the scars of Mariam’s marriage to the man who killed both Alexandra’s father and son. In her first speech to Mariam, Alexandra curses Herod and catalogues the litany of wrongs he has done to her family, reproaching Mariam for her apparent grief (1.2.1-52). Not only is Alexandra not sympathetic to Mariam’s internal conflict, but several of Alexandra’s criticisms of Mariam’s marriage also bear the hallmarks of a well-worn maternal disapproval of a hated match, suggesting a continued conflict between mother and daughter despite their current cooperation. For example, Alexandra looks to the past to question the security of her grandson’s claim to the throne, suggesting that Herod may have been cheating on Mariam with his ex-wife:

Who knows if he, unconstant wavering lord,

His love to Doris had renewed again

And that he might his bed to her afford?

Perchance he wished that Mariam might be slain? (1.2.49-52)

Though Mariam dismisses the accusation—“Doris! Alas, her time of love was past; / Those coals were raked in embers long ago / Of Mariam’s love” (1.2.53-55)—Doris and Herod’s “firstborn son” (1.2.57) does pose a potential threat to the line of succession. Alexandra, however, effectively frames this as a competition between women, which Mariam echoes when she assures her Doris is “now disgraced, / Nor did I glory in her overthrow” (1.2.55-56). Though she denies any pleasure in the dissolution of Herod’s first marriage and rhetorically distances herself from the authorship of it, Mariam’s use of the word “overthrow” here conjures images of the usurpation of another woman’s position of power.

In her continued criticism of Mariam’s grief, Alexandra’s words suggest the “Felicity” of their female-centred moment only to upend her own image of female agency and success with a further suggestion of competition among women for male affection and access to power. Encouraging Mariam to “entertain with joy this happy hour” (1.2.76) that Herod’s tyranny is at an end, Alexandra argues that happiness will not find her if she continues to weep for Herod:

Felicity, if, when she comes, she finds  
 A mourning habit and a cheerless look,  
 Will think she is not welcome to thy mind,  
 And so perchance her lodging will not brook.  
 Oh, keep her whilst thou hast her! If she go,  
 She will not easily return again. (1.2.77-82)

Though Felicity or Felicitas, the Roman goddess of happiness and success, is elusive, the image here is of a woman giving shelter to another. But, as Marina Prusac suggests, as a personification of happiness, Felicitas was “connected with the state of Rome rather than

to the domestic scene,” as is her Greek counterpart, Eudaimonia, and Felicitas was frequently “used as a symbol of the prosperity of the Empire, in particular—and perhaps almost exclusively—on coins” (80, 83). In contrast, the goddess Fortuna, Felicitas’ “iconographic twin,” is “the personification of luck or chance,” rather than sustained prosperity, and was more closely associated with “fertility and womanhood, reproduction, marriage and family building” (80, 81).<sup>17</sup> By invoking Felicity rather than Fortune, Alexandra produces an image of women helping each other to achieve not simply personal or domestic happiness but prosperity for the state and the entire kingdom. Though this image of Felicity could signal healing from Herod’s tyranny, Alexandra uses the image again a few lines later when she describes how she once sought to woo Antony for Mariam:

For when a prince’s favour we do crave,  
 We first their minions’ loves do seek to win;  
 So I, that sought Felicity to have,  
 Did with her minion Antony begin. (1.2.89-92)

Here Alexandra figures “The warlike lover,” Antony (1.2.94), as Felicity’s favourite. He already has Felicity’s favour as evidenced by his successes, and she imagines an alternate history in which Antony loved Mariam rather than Cleopatra:

He would have loved thee, and thee alone,  
 And left the brown Egyptian clean forsaken,  
 And Cleopatra then to seek had been

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<sup>17</sup> Marjorie Leach defines Felicitas as simply “[a] Roman goddess of happiness and success” (651). In comparison, she notes Fortuna’s development “[f]rom an agricultural, fertility goddess . . . into an abstract concept of chance, of fortune, the incalculable” (736).



So firm a lover of her waned face.

Then great Antonius' fall we had not seen

By her that fled to have him hold the chase.

Then Mariam, in a Roman's chariot set,

In place of Cleopatra might have shown;

A mart of beauties in her visage met,

And part in this, that they were all her own. (1.2.111-120)

Apart from the wishful thinking of what might have been had Mariam not married Herod, Alexandra places Mariam and Cleopatra in competition for the same man, comparing their beauty in Petrarchan fashion, with distinctly racial terms. As Kim F. Hall argues, while the usual Petrarchan dichotomy of dark/fair women is often an arbitrary distinction in which “no two women can be fair at the same time” (181), “[t]he languages of beauty and colonialism intersect when the ubiquitous ‘darkness’ in these pairings comes to include foreign women who are posed to compete with fair, European women for male attention” (181). Cleopatra is “the brown Egyptian,” othered by both her racial and national difference, compared to the “fair” Mariam, whose earlier expression of a desire to be a pastoral milkmaid is, as Dympna Callaghan suggests, “quite literally allied with the whiteness of milk” helps to establish Mariam’s association with whiteness (171).

Further, Alexandra notes, Mariam’s beauty, as opposed to Cleopatra’s, is “all her own,” suggesting that Cleopatra uses cosmetics to enhance her beauty where Mariam has no need for such artifice. As Kimberly Woosley Poitevin argues, “[a]s important as it is that Mariam possesses a ‘fair’ complexion is the condition that her beauty is not achieved artificially. The underlying implication here, of course, is that lack of cosmetic art renders women and their moral, religious, or racial statuses transparent, always immediately and

reliably decipherable to whomever may read them” (22). Mariam herself seems to endorse the readability of “natural” whiteness as a bodily signifier of chastity when she rejects her mother’s suggestion that she might have taken Cleopatra’s place with Antony: “Not to be empress of aspiring Rome / Would Mariam like to Cleopatra live. / With purest body will I press my tomb” (1.2.121-123). Cleopatra is marked both by her racial difference and her lack of chastity.

Racial and class difference also figure prominently in Mariam’s conflicts with Herod’s sister, Salome. Though each expresses a sense of superiority over the other, Salome expresses this through criticism of Mariam’s and her mother’s outspokenness and public speech. Responding to Alexandra’s suggestion that Mariam could easily have had another king for her husband even before she married Herod (1.3.5-6), Salome warns that Alexandra’s speech is beyond what would normally be tolerated: “You durst not thus have given your tongue the rein / If noble Herod still remained in life” (1.3.13-14). The female space of Herod’s absence allows for a much greater scope for female speech, but here it is used against other women in competition over beauty, class, and, as Gwynne Kennedy suggests, “self-worth” (62). Mariam responds to Salome’s suggestion that her “betters far . . . / Might have rejoiced to be [Herod’s] wife” (1.3.15-16), by calling Salome a “Base woman” (1.3.17) and furthering her claim to superiority by suggesting that “Mariam’s servants were as good as you / Before she came to be Judea’s queen” (1.3.19-20). Once again, Salome’s rejoinder targets the inappropriateness of Mariam’s speech:

Now stirs the tongue that is so quickly moved;  
 But more than once your choler have I borne.  
 Your furnish words are sooner said than proved,  
 And Salome’s reply is only scorn. (1.3.21-24)

Mariam is quick to anger and this is not the first time that Salome has been on the receiving end of Mariam's angry words. Salome recognizes that Mariam's words are "furnish," figuratively "hot-tempered," angry, or "irascible" (*OED* adj. 4), but like smoke, they are insubstantial and do not amount to proof of her claim. Her "reply," Salome maintains, "is only scorn." As Kennedy argues, however, "Scorn is a hierarchical emotion that never travels upward. It requires a strong, positive sense of self-worth because it presumes the superiority of the scorning subject to the object of her scorn" (62).<sup>18</sup> Mariam's words may lay claim to superiority over Salome, but Salome responds with her own unwavering sense of self-worth and superiority over the "furnish" Mariam.

To this, of course, Mariam vehemently objects, and she launches into an attack on Salome's birth and racial ethnicity:

Though I thy brother's face had never seen,  
 My birth thy baser birth so far excelled,  
 I had to both of you the princess been.  
 Thou parti-Jew and parti-Edomite,  
 Thou mongrel, issued from rejected race!  
 Thy ancestors against the heavens did fight,  
 And thou, like them, wilt heavenly birth disgrace. (1.3.26-32)

What starts out as a disparagement of Salome's inferior social status quickly turns to an attack on the perceived racial difference that in Mariam's eyes also contributes to Salome's "baser birth." As Callaghan suggests, in calling Salome "Thou parti-Jew and

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<sup>18</sup> Mariam's initial response—"Scorn those that are for thy companions held!" (1.3.25)—agrees with Kennedy's assessment: scorn requires at the very least, a sense of equality, if not outright superiority. For more on the relationship between scorn and anger in *The Tragedy of Mariam* see Kennedy 64 and 71-74.

parti-Edomite, / Thou mongrel, issued from rejected race!” (1.3.29-30), Mariam sets herself up as a “‘pure’ Jew” against Salome and Herod’s mixed racial identity (172). As part Edomite, Salome and Herod are related to the “enemies to Israel” that were “subdued by those of Mariam’s blood, a history that would have been familiar to Renaissance readers (173).<sup>19</sup> Here Mariam aligns herself with heaven by figuring Salome’s ancestors as demonic: part of the “rejected race” that fought with Satan “against the heavens” and were consequently exiled to Hell, which helps to connect her later expression of moral superiority over Salome to Salome’s “baser” racial lineage.<sup>20</sup>

Salome’s retort—“Still twit you me with nothing but my birth?” (1.3.33)—indicates that she has been on the receiving end of Mariam’s anger and sense of superiority before. Further, as Poitevin suggests, Salome’s “racial origins may be a constant preoccupation with the royal-blooded queen, whose denouncing of them works as a strategy of maintaining her own privileged position” (21). With her use of the single syllable plosive “twit,” however, Salome almost spits on Mariam’s insult. While “twit” itself means “to criticize, censure; to ridicule,” it usually implies “a good-humoured or teasing” element to the criticism (*OED* v. 1b) that is lacking here. Instead Salome’s use of the word is ironic, which, in the moment, allows Salome to appear to brush off the seriousness of Mariam’s insult. However, we find out later that Mariam’s public scorn for Salome’s rank and ethnicity forms the reason for Salome’s revenge:

I scorn that she should live my birth t’upbraid,

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<sup>19</sup> Significantly, Mariam also includes Herod in her racial othering of Salome. Callaghan suggests that throughout the play “Cary . . . accentuat[es] the production of racial difference between Herod and Mariam and [posits] it as the circumstance of Mariam’s wifely rebellion. Paradoxically, then, Herod becomes both more Jewish than Mariam and racially debased—an Edomite—while Mariam becomes both less Jewish than Herod and ‘pure’ Jew” (172). For more on the shifting significance of Mariam’s racial signifiers, see Callaghan 170-177.

<sup>20</sup> Callaghan argues that “Mariam’s diatribe . . . implies not merely that her antagonist’s darkness is an accurate reflection on her ‘blacke acts,’ and base blood. . . . It also implies that her transgressions have their origins in her inferior heritage” (173).

To call me base and hungry Edomite.  
 With patient show her choler I betrayed,  
 And watched the time to be revenged by sleight.  
 Now, tongue of mine, with scandal load her name!  
 Turn hers to fountains, Herod's eyes to flame! (3.2.61-66)

Here, scorn also features prominently, though the roles are reversed. Where Mariam compares herself to Salome in terms of racialized beauty, Salome deems herself to be superior with regards to her patience. She notes the difference between her feelings of anger over Mariam's upbraiding of her birth, and the "patient show" that she performs in the face of her insults. Mariam openly shows her "choler," but Salome "watch[es] the time to be revenged by sleight," patiently hatching the sleight-of-hand plot that will allow her to direct attention away from herself as the author of Mariam's fall. This plot, the slander with which Salome plans to "load [Mariam's] name," and the methods of Salome's revenge, are topics to which I will return.

We can see the beginnings of the difference between Mariam's and Salome's methods of speech in their accusations of "black acts" against the other (1.3.38). Not able to respond to Salome's claims to ancestral equality, Mariam instead taunts her again:

I favour thee when nothing else I say.  
 With thy black acts I'll not pollute my breath;  
 Else to thy charge I might full justly lay  
 A shameful life, besides a husband's death. (1.3.37-40)

Mariam here uses apophasis to essentially speak without seeming to speak, but like Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, her voice is on the edge of control. Establishing that she should be silent and claiming not to want to "pollute [her] breath" with Salome's "black

acts,” Mariam attempts to align herself with silence. But she continues to speak. Though her “Else” and “might” make the content of her sentence conditional, it is conditional only on her continued speech and instead her charges of sexual immorality and murder against Salome remain quite direct.

Salome’s response is important here because it shows the contrast between how Salome and Mariam operate. While Mariam is choleric, only paying lip service to the expectations that women should not express themselves this way, Salome’s response allows her to distance herself from Mariam’s accusations by reinterpreting the events to place herself in a favorable light. This is the beginning of what Reina Green identifies as Salome’s “skill as a listener who knows how to manipulate what she hears” (465):

’Tis true indeed. I did the plots reveal

That passed betwixt your favourites and you.

I meant not, I, a traitor to conceal.

Thus Salome your minion Joseph slew. (1.2.41-44)

Under the guise of loyalty to Herod, Salome reinterprets the events that Mariam labels as her “black acts,” shifting the suggestion of sexual immorality back onto Mariam. While she owns her part in her late husband’s death, she shifts the blame onto Mariam implying that Josephus was Mariam’s “favourite” and “minion”—words that imply a sexual relationship between the two—and further that they were involved in a traitorous plot against the King. Though Mariam technically stops short of a direct accusation against Salome, Salome’s skillful redirection of the accusation is more veiled. Josephus was the traitor and she simply outed him, but her words also imply that Mariam was unfaithful to Herod and a traitor too.

Though Salome's allegations are subtle, Mariam is well aware of their meaning and quickly characterizes herself as "slandered Mariam," and looks to Heaven to witness "this infamy" (1.3.45). As Ina Habermann explains, the slandered woman is a "specific fantasy of femininity":

Defences of women in the context of the "popular controversy" draw on the "slandered heroine" as a positive figure; in narratives of her fate, the sexual honour of women is acknowledged to be vulnerable, the woman is known to be falsely accused, she must be vindicated. However, a history of gender politics reveals the "slandered heroine" to be a precarious concept, because the moral superiority of this type of woman is linked to her chastity and passiveness. (138)

By casting herself in this role, Mariam fashions herself as the chaste but wronged woman who must rely on Heaven as a witness to her innocence. However, as Habermann suggests, the moral superiority of this type of figure is also tied to her passivity (138), and Mariam is far from passive. Though she claims, "I this speech with patience bear" (1.3.48), in the same breath, she cannot resist accusing Salome of "self-guilt," having an "unsteadfast heart," and of plotting to kill her husband so that she could marry Constabarus (1.3.47-50). We find out later that Mariam's assessment of Salome's character is correct, but Salome is also much more patient than Mariam who cannot resist doubling down on her accusation, this time even more directly than the last.

**"Stern enmity to friendship can no art"**

Cary contrasts the enmity between women with the Renaissance ideal of male-male friendship through the figure of Constabarus and his relationships with the Sons of Babas and Silleus, his rival for Salome's affection. As Deborah Uman explains, "early

modern discourse . . . depicts male friendship as an idealised relationship requiring perfect equality” (91), offering this as a model of what Laurie Shannon calls “the highest form of human conduct” (“*The Tragedy of Mariam*” 149). In his essay “Of Friendship,” translated into English by John Florio in 1603,<sup>21</sup> Michel de Montaigne describes this type of true friendship as “a genuine and voluntarie acquaintance” (sig. I4) in which “All things [are] by effect common betweene them; wills, thoughts, judgements, goods, wives; children, honour, and life; and their mutuall agreement, being no other then one soule in two bodies, according to the fit definition of *Aristotle*, they can neither lend or give ought to each other” (sigs. I5-I5v). Constabarus and the Sons of Babas use similar language to describe the closeness and mutual reciprocity of their relationship.<sup>22</sup> When Babas’ eldest son suggests that the brothers owe Constabarus more than thanks for “concealing [them] from the tyrant’s sword” for twelve years (2.2.5-6), Constabarus explains that this is not how “truest friendship” (2.2.10) is supposed to work:

Oh, how you wrong our friendship, valiant youth!  
 With friends there is not such a word as ‘debt’;  
 Where amity is tied with bond of truth,  
 All benefits are there in common set.  
 Then is the golden age with them renewed;  
 All names of properties are banished quite;  
 Division and distinction are eschewed;  
 Each hath to what belongs to others right. (2.2.13-20)

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<sup>21</sup> As Jeffrey Masten notes, Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s *Essayes* was “published repeatedly in the early seventeenth century” and “Of Friendship,” in particular, “both augmented and participated in English discourses of friendship” (32).

<sup>22</sup> Several scholars note that Cary was likely familiar with Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s essays. See Straznicky, “Profane Stoical Paradoxes” 125 n60 for more on this connection.



Constabarus rejects the suggestion that there could be any debt between friends since “All benefits are there in common set”—what belongs to him also belongs to his friend and neither party would seek to profit from the relationship. His language here actively draws on the discourse of male friendship espoused by Montaigne who argues that profit (and therefore debt) have no place in true friendship: “For generally, all those amities which are forged and nourished by voluptuousnes or profit, publike or private neede, are thereby so much the lesse faire and generous, and so much the lesse true amities, in that they intermeddle other causes, scope, and fruite with friendship, then it selfe alone” (sig. I3v). Friendship cannot have ulterior motives. Constabarus continues by invoking the Biblical friendship of David and Jonathan as an ideal to emulate (2.2.25-30). Here, in Constabarus’ view, as Shannon suggests, “the pattern of friendship becomes an ultimate form of personal loyalty, one explicitly prioritized over political and familial forms of authority” (*Sovereign* 73).

The contrast between these examples of ideal male friendship and the female competition and enmity exemplified at the beginning of the play is stark; however, this disparity becomes even more interesting when considered in relation to Montaigne’s ideas about women and friendship. Like the “ancient schooles” of thought he follows (sig. I4v), Montaigne argues that women are not up to the task of true friendship: “that the ordinary sufficiencie of women, cannot answer [friendship’s] conference and communication, the nurse of this sacred bond: nor seeme their mindes strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable” (sig. I4). In a play written by a female playwright and prefaced with a sonnet dedicated to “my next beloved, my second friend” (8), it is highly doubtful that Cary is suggesting that women are not capable of

friendship.<sup>23</sup> Instead, as Shannon suggests, Cary uses this contrast to make female friendship in the play conspicuous in its absence: “even a basic neutrality between women is precluded by a patriarchal social organization that directs women’s anger toward each other” (*Sovereign* 84). While this kind of homosocial friendship is held up as an ideal, Cary also reveals that it is an ideal that is unattainable under a system of patriarchal tyranny that pits women against each other.

Constabarus’ surprising friendship with his rival Silleus suggests an even more direct parallel to the animosity between Mariam and Salome, providing further evidence of Cary’s critique of gendered difference under tyrannical patriarchy. Much like Salome’s issue with Mariam, Silleus’ problem with Constabarus is his “tongue.” He announces, “I am to call / Thy tongue to strict account” (2.4.2-3) and calls on Constabarus to “Suck up the breath that did my mistress blame, / And swallow it again to do her right” (2.4.15-16), which recalls Salome’s similar assessment of the insubstantiality of Mariam’s “furnish words” (1.3.23). Here, however, Silleus has an avenue of recourse for addressing the perceived wrongs against him (and his “mistress”) where Salome must bear Mariam’s racist and classist assessment of her birth “with patient show” (3.2.63). Constabarus “scorn[s]” (2.4.12) to fight over his wife’s honour (which is yet another verbal echo of Salome’s conflict with Mariam) and instead renews his assessment of her “unconstancy” (2.4.35). The two do eventually fight, but only after Silleus calls Constabarus a “coward” (2.4.53). This allows Constabarus to frame their duel as a defence of his own reputation:

A coward’s hateful name

Cannot to valiant minds a blot impart,

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<sup>23</sup> For further analysis of Cary’s dedicatory sonnet “To Diana’s Earthly Deputess” in relation to female friendship see Shannon, *Sovereign Amity* 84-86.

And therefore I with joy receive the same.

Thou know'st I am no coward . . . Not for Salome

I fight, but to discharge a coward's style. (2.4.54-64)

Unlike Salome who must endure Mariam's disparagement with patience, or Mariam who is left unable to adequately defend her reputation after Salome's slanderous revenge plot, Constabarus has a clear path to the restoration of his good name. The men fight; Silleus is injured and the conflict is resolved. The incident is left to stand in direct contrast to the conflict between women, which cannot be resolved through such direct and distinctly gendered means.

Constabarus and Silleus form an unlikely friendship by resolving their claims to Salome through performative speech. Stopping the fight from going further, Constabarus "resign[s] [his] right" to Salome:

What needest thou for Salome to fight?

Thou hast her and mayst keep her; none strives for her.

I willingly to thee resign my right,

For in my very soul I do abhor her.

Thou see'st that I am fresh, unwounded yet,

Then not for fear I do this offer make.

Thou art, with loss of blood, to fight unfit,

For here is one and there another take. (2.4.75-82)

Constabarus' words "I willingly to thee resign my right" are a performative utterance much like the phrase "I now pronounce you man and wife" that form the basis of the marriage ceremony (and a key example in J. L. Austin's explanation of performatives

[5]). In speaking, Constabarus unknits the vow that he made to Salome (itself a performative utterance), and effectively dissolves his marriage.

This scene, however, comes after an important moment that, when paired with this scene, shows the similarities between Constabarus' and Salome's conceptions of marriage and the subsequent gendered difference in their access to the means of its dissolution. In her first soliloquy, Salome similarly comprehends marriage as an act of speech:

But now, ill-fated Salome, thy tongue  
 To Constabarus by itself is tied;  
 And now, except I do the Hebrew wrong,  
 I cannot be the fair Arabian bride. (1.4.17-20)

It is her tongue, her act of speech, that ties her to Constabarus in a bond that she can only undo if, in her words, "I do the Hebrew wrong." Here, "Hebrew" refers to Constabarus as compared to the Arabian Silleus, but it also suggests the linguistic element of their marital vows. Salome, however, struggles with her legal inability to undo this linguistic knot when Constabarus could easily do so by virtue of the fact that he is a man. In another claim to equality, Salome questions,

Why should such privilege to man be given?  
 Or, given to them, why barred from women then?  
 Are men than we in greater grace with heaven?  
 Or cannot women hate as well as men? (1.4.45-48)

This last line has prompted scholars like Laurie Shannon to suggest that Salome's "claim to an equal right to divorce exposes her as a part of the disease from which the kingdom suffers. From the point of view of constancy, she wants the right to be 'as bad' as the men" (*Sovereign* 77). However, Salome's desire to use language this way also sets up a

parallel between herself and Constabarus that links marriage with the other privileges—such as friendship—that men experience over women under tyrannical patriarchy.

In his essay “On Friendship,” Montaigne spends a great deal of time explaining the difference between marital or “lustful” love and true friendship in order to privilege male homosocial relationships above the rest. He argues, on one hand, that the quality of friendship is different than that of sexual desire: “a generall & vniversall heate” as opposed to “lustfull love” which may be “more sharpe” but is also “a rash and wavering fire . . . subject to fittes and stints, and that hath but slender hold-fast of vs” (sig. I4). On the other hand, he notes, marital relationships cannot be considered true friendship because they are not entirely voluntary:

Concerning marriage, besides that it is a covenant which hath nothing free but the entrance, the continuance beeing forced and constrained, depending else-where then from our will, and a match ordinarily concluded to other ends: A thousand strange knotts are therein commonly to be vnknit, able to breake the web, & trouble the whole course of a lively affection; whereas in friendship, there is no commerce or busines depending on the same, but it selfe. (sig. I4)

For Montaigne, one of the major differences between friendship and marriage is that in friendship both parties must be continually invested. If they are not, the friendship ceases to exist. In Cicero’s construction, “if you remove goodwill from friendship, the very name of friendship is gone” (qtd in Shannon, *Sovereign* 61). This is simply not the case in marriage. In this context then, Salome’s claim to an equal right to divorce her husband, who later espouses Montaigne’s ideas to similarly privilege male-male friendship over marriage, exposes the ways in which the system of patriarchal tyranny limits women’s access to these same amicable bonds.

**“Written on my tainted brow”**

The same tyrannical system that puts so many constraints on women also produces a figure like Salome who, because she no longer fits the role of the chaste woman, does not feel beholden to the gendered rules that are meant to control and enforce her chastity. Conduct books like Robert Cleaver’s *A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government* (1598) emphasize that a woman’s chastity is the only virtue that matters. Once it is gone, not only is it gone forever, but all other virtues cease to matter:

For in a maide, the honestie and chastitie is instead of all. . . . The which thing onely, if a woman remember, it will cause her to take great heed vnto, & to be a more warie & carefull keeper of her honestie, which alone being lost, though all other things be neuer so wel and safe, yet they perish together therewith, because shee that hath once lost her *Honestie*, should thinke there is nothing left. Take from a maid or woman her beautie, take from her, kindred, riches, comelinesse, eloquence, sharpnesse of wit, cunning in her craft: giue her *Chastitie*, and you haue giuen her all things. And on the other side, giue her all these thinges, and call her whoore or naughtie packe: with that one word you haue taken all from her, and left her bare and foule. (sigs. Y8-Y8v)

As many scholars note, the unchaste Salome, freed from the burden of protecting “the most precious iewell” that was her chastity (sig. Y8v), often takes on the role of the medieval vice figure (Callaghan 184; Beilin, *Redeeming Eve* 173), apparently freed from the need for any other virtue, since for women, there are none. However, despite occasionally falling into this misogynist line of thinking herself, Salome recognizes the importance of *performing* virtue even when that virtue is fabricated. Though she still *acts* in accordance with patriarchal expectations of feminine virtue, for Salome, the

performance of these behaviours is no longer directly tied to the inner state that they purport to represent. For Salome, there is freedom in this separation.

Other conduct books like Rich's later *My Ladies Looking Glasse*, similarly stressed the moral (and behavioural) deterioration that extended from a woman's lack of chastity: "[A harlot] is bold, shee is impudent, shee is shamelesse, shee can not blush: and shee that hath lost all these vertues, hath lost her *evidence of honesty*: for the ornaments of a good woman is *temperance* in her minde, *silence* in her tongue, and *bashfulness* in her countenance" (sig. F1v).<sup>24</sup> Salome's conception of herself in her first soliloquy reflects the influence of this conventional misogyny as she imagines the path her life would have taken if she had been concerned about her chastity:

Why stand I now

On honourable points? 'Tis long ago  
 Since shame was written on my tainted brow,  
 And certain 'tis that shame is honour's foe.  
 Had I upon my reputation stood,  
 Had I affected an unspotted life,  
 Josephus' veins had still been stuffed with blood,  
 And I to him had lived a sober wife.  
 Then had I never cast an eye of love  
 On Constabarus' now-detested face;  
 Then had I kept my thoughts without remove

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<sup>24</sup> Though *My Ladies Looking Glasse* was published three years after *Mariam* and quite a few years after *Mariam* circulated in manuscript form, the thinking behind this sentiment was nothing new, nor was his expression of it. Recall that in *The Book of the Courtier* Castiglione similarly endows blushing as evidence of chastity and "shamefacednesse" (191).

And blushed at motion of the least disgrace. (1.4.21-32)

Salome questions her concern for “honourable points” since it has been a long time since she has been concerned about her honour. Constabarus is not her first husband, nor is it the first time her heart has strayed from her marriage vows. Like *My Ladies Looking Glasse*, Salome’s description of herself assumes that shame can be read on her body—it is figuratively “written on my tainted brow.” In her imagining of the alternate course of her life, Salome shows that she understands the expectations placed on women to live “an unspotted life,” but also that the evidence of this is largely visual (i.e. expected to be written on the body) and performative. She could have “affected”—that is, performed—“an unspotted life” by performing chaste femininity including acting soberly, controlling her thoughts and gaze, and, following Castiglione’s recommendations in the *The Book of the Courtier* (191), “blush[ing] at motion of the least disgrace.”

As she continues her musing, vice-like, Salome seems to cast off the expectations of feminine virtue using the same patriarchal rhetoric that was intended to safeguard female virginity: chastity once lost, is lost forever. She is not chaste, so why, indeed, should she “stand . . . now / On honourable points?” Instead, she recognizes the potentially illusory nature of what Rich calls “*evidence of honesty*”—the visual and performative aspect of female virtue—figuring shame and honour as cosmetics to be applied and removed at will:

But shame is gone, and honour wiped away,

And impudency on my forehead sits.

She bids me work my will without delay,

And for my will I will employ my wits. (1.4.33-36)



As Poitevin suggests, “Since physical signifiers are supposed to reflect inner states, even ‘modesty’ and ‘shame’—the essences of female virtue—can be applied and removed as easily as paint” (29),<sup>25</sup> which implies that these states can be just as easily performed or counterfeited.

Here Salome imagines wiping away what Poitevin calls the “virtuous red” of the blush (21) and the whiteness of feminine honour to reveal her unpainted “impudency” written on her brow. The implication in this visual metaphor, however, is that Salome’s appearance of virtue is as artificial as paint, fabricated not through her use of cosmetics, but in her modes of speech, her patient silence, and her performance of idealized feminine behaviour. She appears virtuous in public until she removes that artifice in the privacy of her own chamber to reveal the impudency beneath that she claims as her own internal state. Though impudency tends to be defined by its lack of shame and modesty (*OED* n. 1a) and therefore carries with it negative connotations, for Salome the wiping away of her shame and modesty suggests a freedom from the patriarchal expectations that promote these restrictive emotions as important signifiers of feminine virtue. Instead, in Salome’s imagining, this freedom from patriarchal constraint, which she genders female, will be the guiding principle of her action. Rather than resigning her will and desire for power as the Chorus later suggests a wife should do (3 Chorus.4), Salome actively decides not to live as “a sober wife” and instead she will follow the freedom that “bids me work my will without delay, / And for my will I will employ my wits” (1.4.35-36).

In order to achieve her “will,” Salome uses the potential to perform feminine virtue and subservience to her advantage, suiting her voice and action to her audience.

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<sup>25</sup> For more on the rhetoric of cosmetics in *Mariam* especially as it relates to race, see Poitevin, “Counterfeiting Colour.”

With Silleus, Salome is a lover, with Constabarus, a scolding wife, and with Pheroras, a careful conspirator, holding her most important cards close to her chest. Unchaste as she is, her adulterous lover Silleus seems not to view their relationship as inconsistent with Salome's overall chastity and virtue. Not needing to hide her adultery from Silleus, she communicates openly with him, demonstrating the kind of genuine voluntary affection nourished by communication that Montaigne argues would be ideal, if possible, in marriage: "And truly, if without that, such a genuine and voluntarie acquaintance might be contracted, where not onely mindes had this entire jovissance, but also bodies, a share of the aliance, and where man might wholly be engaged: It is certaine, that friendship would thereby be more compleate and full" (sigs. I4-I4v).<sup>26</sup> Their communication in this scene forms an alliance of equals as they imagine together the voluntary end of the relationship that prevents their union. As Ilona Bell suggests, the poetic structure of their conversation creates what she calls a "dialogic sonnet," a lyric composed of twelve quatrains of alternating rhyme "in which [Silleus'] lines follow and summarize [Salome's]" (25) followed by a concluding couplet to create what she calls "a protective enclosure for [the] clandestine lovers" (17).

Bell uses Salome's final lines in this scene—a warning to Silleus to "Begone" lest her husband find them together—to argue that "Salome is so power hungry that she perpetuates and inverts the inequality of Petrarchan sonnet tradition in order to claim male power and authority for herself" (25). I would argue instead that Salome is almost uncharacteristically deferential to her lover even though she is an active participant in

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<sup>26</sup> For an exploration of the homoerotic aspects of Montaigne's "Of Friendship" and Richard Brathwaite's later exploration of male-male friendship in *The English Gentleman* (1630), see Masten's chapter "Between Gentlemen: Homoeroticism, Collaboration, and the Discourse of Friendship" in his *Textual Intercourse* (28-62).

their courtship. Bell is certainly correct in surmising that Salome is not the “traditionally demure sonnet lady” (23). Salome is quite clear that she considers herself on fairly equal footing with Silleus (despite his status as an Arabian prince); she assures him “’Tis not for glory I thy love accept / Judea yields me honours worthy store” (1.5.33-34). However, as she explains her plans to “wrest” a bill of divorce from Constabarus (1.5.9-14), she downplays her plans, describing them as “the best I can devise” (1.5.5), admitting that “A more imperfect means was never found” (1.5.6). After all, under the laws of Jerusalem, the only way she can get a divorce is to make her current husband hate her enough to initiate the divorce himself. Likely anticipating that she will have to perform the role of the shrewish and unruly wife, she pre-emptively apologizes to Silleus and seeks his permission for her behaviour: “Blame not thou / The ill I do, since what I do’s for thee; / Though others blame, Silleus should allow” (1.5.14-16). While she is not afraid to be disobedient, unchaste, and voluble to deliberately provoke the rage of her current husband, she is careful to ensure that Silleus will not think negatively of her behaviour.

Silleus’ response to Salome, and even his characterization of her throughout the play, is indicative both of his love for her (he too casts himself in the role of the Petrarchan lover) and how Salome presents herself when she is around him. He reassures her that her anticipated ills cannot change his love for her:

Thinks Salome Silleus hath a tongue

To censure her fair actions? Let my blood

Bedash my proper brow for such a wrong!

The being yours can make even vices good. (1.5.17-20)

He will not admonish her for her behaviour because in his eyes she can do no wrong. Her actions are “fair” and even her “vices” are “good.” Elsewhere he praises her “innated

wisdom” (1.5.2), calls her “beauty’s queen” (1.5.23), “fair Salome” (1.5.25), and “rare creature” (1.5.31), and later challenges Constabarus “for slandering her unspotted name” (2.4.13). In his eyes, despite her lack of fidelity to Constabarus, Salome is unspotted, fair, and beautiful—all visual signifiers of feminine virtue, and incidentally the complete opposite of how both Mariam and Constabarus perceive her.<sup>27</sup>

Salome claims the masculine “role of boldly unconventional poet/lover” (Bell 23, 25) in her unabashed categorization of herself as a desiring woman and in the active role she takes in divesting herself of her husband.<sup>28</sup> Diverting Silleus from his description of the honours she could command as his bride, Salome assures him that her desire is for him alone and not his position:

Had not affection in my bosom crept,  
My native country should my life deplore.  
Were not Silleus he with whom I go,  
I would not change my Palestine for Rome;  
Much less would I, a glorious state to show,  
Go far to purchase an Arabian tomb. (1.5.35-40)

She would not willingly leave Palestine were it not for her love for him. Silleus, in turn, meets her expression of desiring love with an acknowledgment of his own: “I know it is thy gratitude requites / The love that is in me, and shall not shrink / Till death do sever me

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<sup>27</sup> Kennedy argues this inconsistency shows “that the categories of fairness and darkness are not under women’s control. . . . As Hall remarks, the ‘arbitrariness of male favor and desire, push[es] women into inconsistent and unstable positions.’ This instability is assigned to women not only by confirming or denying a woman’s worth/fairness, but also by revealing that the values associated with fairness/virtue are themselves arbitrary and not fixed. There is no necessary connection between a fair nature and fair skin, between moral goodness and whiteness” (71).

<sup>28</sup> Bell similarly argues that “Salome represents herself as [a] desiring subject” though she cites Salome’s private soliloquy to argue that she “reduces her lover to the mirror of her desires, rendering him the ‘object to mine eye,’” and suggests that “Silleus is perfectly willing to be objectified and controlled by Salome; he is pleased to be ‘deified, / by gaining thee” (24).

from earth's delights" (1.5.42-44). Silleus' words here echo traditional marital vows and signal his faith in her fidelity and Salome's success in performing feminine virtue.

However, just in case the reader-audience is tempted to side with the mutual love of the clandestine lovers, Constabarus' arrival reminds us of the adulterous nature of their relationship.

### **"If I be silent"**

Significantly, Salome is not the only desiring woman we encounter in the play, nor are Salome and Silleus the only pair of clandestine lovers. Pheroras and his bride-to-be Graphina provide an important contrast to the adulterous affair between Silleus and Salome. Additionally, Graphina herself is often cited as a counterpoint to Mariam's public speech. As many scholars note, Graphina is a character of Cary's own invention (Ferguson, "Running" 43; Hiscock 123) and as Ferguson suggests, "the name evidently plays on the Greek word for writing, *graphesis*" ("Running" 47), implying "a silent form of speech" (Bell 23).<sup>29</sup> Graphina is indeed much more silent than either Mariam or Salome, but how she speaks, especially in relation to her soon-to-be husband serves as an interesting counterpoint to the other women. Like Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, Graphina speaks only at Pheroras' requests that she do so—"Why speaks thou not, fair creature? Move thy tongue, / For silence is a sign of discontent" (2.1.41-42)—responding with an extended explanation of her former silence:

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<sup>29</sup> This connection between Graphina and writing has prompted scholars to consider Graphina in relation to the play's genre and playwright. Ilona Bell suggests that Graphina's exclusion "from the literary tradition that would enable her to speak and write in a manner worthy of her mind and wit" links her to the young Cary who engages in "a serious course of study," suggesting that "Graphina is less a foil for Mariam than a surrogate for Cary" (23). Miranda Gamo Nesler notes a similar connection, arguing that Graphina represents "an alternative example of feminine communication—one whose blend of vocal and written expression mirrors the closet drama form and Cary's own work. . . . Graphina offers women an example of how to effectively generate authoritative expression while avoiding retribution for transgressions" (364).

Mistake me not, my lord. Too oft have I  
 Desired this time to come with winged feet  
 To be enwrapped with grief when 'tis too nigh.  
 You know my wishes ever yours did meet.  
 If I be silent, 'tis no more but fear  
 That I should say too little when I speak[.] (2.1.45-50)

Her silence, she explains, is not “a sign of her discontent.” Rather, she establishes herself as a silent but desiring subject with what Christina Luckyj calls “a fully private interiority” (156). Like Juliet who impatiently wishes for “fiery-footed steeds” to bring her Romeo (3.2.1), Graphina anticipates her wedding to Pheroras with desire. As she explains, her silence does not represent a lack of desire or sexual interest but instead too many thoughts for adequate expression by a modest speaker.

Graphina is able to balance speaking about her desire with the chaste and feminine modesty that is usually signified by silence through a rhetorically complicated negation of her desire to speak for herself. As Jonathan Goldberg argues, Graphina figures much of her speech as “simply . . . reproducing [Pheroras’] mind” (172). Though her very first line is a correction of Pheroras’ interpretation of her, she assures him “You know my wishes ever yours did meet” and in so doing, Goldberg explains, “Graphina produces herself as her reading of that otherwise amazed perception” (173). What she says of herself, then, is simply a “ventriloquization of Pheroras’s mind” (173) rather than her own independent speech. Graphina also connects Pheroras’ supposed interpretation of her with her reluctance to break her former silence:

But since you will my imperfections bear,  
 In spite of doubt I will my silence break.

Yet might amazement tie my moving tongue,  
 But that I know before Pheroras' mind. (2.1.51-54)

She is able to speak because she claims to know that Pheroras will correctly interpret her speech not as typically unruly or unchaste but as consistent with her modest chastity. Each couplet in the quatrain begins with “But” and “Yet” signaling her reluctance to speak, but her supposedly natural “doubt” and “amazement”—which conform to the expectations of both her gender and her status as Pheroras’ slave<sup>30</sup>—are, she suggests, counteracted by her faith in the interpretation of her feminine virtue in spite of the speech she attributes to Pheroras. By signaling her reluctance to speak and attributing to Pheroras a view of herself as chaste, modest, and obedient, Graphina effectively distances herself from her own speech even while producing herself as a desiring subject. Goldberg’s description of the rhetorical gymnastics that Graphina performs is similarly complex, capturing the reflexive nature of her construction of herself as a reflection of his desires: “If Graphina is a blank text, a site to be inscribed by him, it is only through her offer of herself as such, indeed her demand that he see her as such, and therefore not see that the Graphina she is producing as his is her production of herself as his—as what she claims he wants to see and will see” (174). By producing herself in this way, she “hides . . . behind the mask of not saying anything on her behalf beyond the recognition of what [Pheroras] has done for her” (174)—in essence, she is able to speak without seeming to speak.

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<sup>30</sup> Hodgson-Wright notes in her introduction to the Broadview edition of the play that Graphina’s status as a slave should alter how we view her relationship with Pheroras: “This does not mean she is simply social and economically inferior; it means that, by law, she does not have power over her own body. Therefore, by marrying Pheroras, she does not stand to *become* economically dependent upon Pheroras, because as his slave she is dependent already. Nor does she stand to lose any self-determination because she never had any. . . . Thus Pheroras and Graphina’s relationship in II.i shows that the only means by which marriage can be played out in a mutually successful fashion is in the format of male master and female slave” (25).

Though Graphina is able to distance herself from the potentially immodest speech required to express her desire, it is clear from this brief conversation and Pheroras' later defence of Graphina to Salome that Graphina is not always so silent nor as obedient as she first appears. To a certain extent, Graphina's potential loquaciousness and disobedience is present from almost the very beginning of her twenty-eight line monologue. Both Nesler and Bell note that the final lines of Pheroras' speech set up the beginning of a dialogic sonnet reminiscent of the sonnets composed by Romeo and Juliet in their initial courtship (Nesler 372; Bell 22) or the extended sonnet form that Salome and Silleus compose together a few scenes previous. As Bell notes, "Elizabethan poetry of courtship depends upon an answering response" (22), but Graphina's does not conform to expectation. Instead her response "more than doubl[es] the length that Pheroras requires, [and] she vocally and visually rewrites the kind of text in which the lovers exist" (Nesler 373). Further, as Graphina gently corrects Pheroras' misinterpretation of her silence as "discontent" (2.1.42), she does not completely close off the possibility that she is, in Goldberg's words, "exactly as she has been 'mistakenly' seen, resistant to Pheroras's joys or to her continuing subordination to him" (174).

It is also clear that while we only see one small (and fairly one-sided) conversation, there are more conversations between the lovers that we do not get to see. In fact, as Ferguson suggests, "Graphina evidently has won her lover's admiration for her powers of speech" ("Running" 47), since, as Luckyj notes, Pheroras later "celebrates Graphina for her 'wit' (3.1.15) and for 'the mirth on her tongue'(17)" (155). Graphina herself alludes to at least one other conversation in which she is neither silent nor obedient to Pheroras' wishes: "You have preserved me pure at my request, / Though you so weak a vassal might constrain / To yield to your high will" (2.1.61-63). Graphina's



words here establish her continued virginity despite speaking about her desire and her involvement in an unsanctioned clandestine relationship with the brother of the king, but they also deferentially allude to her rejection of Pheroras' previous sexual advances. Jocelyn Catty argues that "Graphina displays a command of language which she uses on-stage to praise her lover, but off-stage to articulate her resistance to his sexual advances . . . . The model she posits here is one which admits the possibility or even likelihood of rape, particularly of a lower-class woman by the man who is her 'Lord' socially as well as emotionally," noting that "her claim to have 'request[ed]' celibacy suggests that her speech too has been used to express resistance" (156, 157). As Catty notes, as Pheroras' "lowly handmaid" (2.1.70), Graphina's bodily autonomy depends entirely on "male good 'will'" (157), making her resistance to Pheroras' sexual advances an example of disobedience to her "lord" (2.1.44), which she expertly re-figures in her speech as an act of his benevolence. While succinctly illustrating the extent of vulnerability to which Graphina's gender and status as a slave subject her, her rejection of Pheroras can also be understood as an act of both self-preservation and an attempt at strategic social positioning. In Catty's words, Graphina's "active choice of chastity is a sign not only of autonomy but of worldly-wisdom: an awareness that few liaisons between noblemen and servants end in marriage. She both asserts and subordinates herself, claiming sexual autonomy but acknowledging male sexual power" (157).

Graphina's awareness of her social position and her ability to refigure her instances of disobedience and illegibility to flatter and influence her male interlocutor makes her more similar to Salome than she first appears. Though Graphina's social status and position are vastly different than the sister of the king, she stands to gain freedom, wealth, and status through her marriage to Pheroras. Her performance of a silent,

deferential femininity that accentuates her hard-won chastity is made all the more necessary by the precarity of her social status but is no less strategic on her part. Like Salome, Graphina does everything within her power to get what she wants, but the only thing that she can control is her awareness of her situation and her accordant modulation of her voice. In her later discussion with Pheroras, Salome suggests that Pheroras should be wary of the “wit” (3.1.23) that he so readily praises, suggesting also that listening is equally as dangerous as speech for his new wife. Pheroras’ praise of Graphina focuses on her beauty and intelligence:

Mine eye found loveliness, mine ear found wit,

To please the one and to enchant the other.

Grace on her eye, mirth on her tongue doth sit—

In looks a child, in wisdom’s house a mother. (3.1.15-18)

In Pheroras’ praise here, Graphina’s speech is explicitly connected to her intelligence. Her voice enchants his ears with her “wit” and “mirth on her tongue doth sit,” but this speech, he boasts, is also circumscribed by her wisdom: “But wisdom is the porter of her head, / And bars all wicked words from issuing thence” (3.1.25-26). At this point, we have already seen Graphina’s reputed “wisdom” at work as she carefully chooses her words to emphasize her silence, modesty, and chastity, but as Green notes, “Salome argues that Pheroras should be less concerned about the ‘wicked words’ Graphina might utter, and more worried about how his wife will defend herself from hearing them” (464). “But of a porter,” Salome warns, “better were you sped / If she against their entrance made defence” (3.1.27-28). Listening silently could be equally as unchaste as speaking. As Luckyj explains, “The dangerous speech here is not Graphina’s but that of the (implicitly male) other, who discursively (and sexually) penetrates her, filling her with

corruption of which her speech bears no trace. Salome thus replaces Pheroras's myth of a talking Eve with the myth of a silently listening Eve" (155). While the more explicit concern here is about Graphina's sexual corruption, the image of Graphina as a silent but intelligent female listener also implicitly aligns her with Salome, who, as Green argues, is a "skillful and practiced listener" "who knows how to manipulate what she hears" (465). Salome's depiction of Graphina as a potential listener here leaves open the possibility that Graphina could similarly manipulate the words she hears.

**"A stranger's private conference is shame"**

To return again to Salome's chameleon-like ability to adapt her speech to suit the situation, in the presence of her "now-detested" (1.4.30) husband Constabarus, she is the proverbial unruly and unchaste wife. Importantly, Salome's speech in this scene—deliberately crafted to "find a quarrel, him from me to drive" (1.5.48)—leads Constabarus to accuse Salome of being unchaste and unfeminine, explicitly connecting her speech to promiscuity. Observing the tail end of Salome's conversation with her lover Silleus, Constabarus attempts to reinstate the patriarchal expectations for women's silence and obedience that the Chorus later endorses:

Oh, Salome, how much you wrong your name,  
 Your race, your country and your husband most!  
 A stranger's private conference is shame;  
 I blush for you that have your blushing lost. (1.6.1-4)

Here Constabarus anticipates the words of the third Chorus—"That wife her hand against her fame doth rear / That more than to her lord alone will give / A private word to any second ear" (3 Chorus.13-15)—and like the Chorus, he is primarily concerned with

limiting the audience for his wife's speech. The promiscuity of her voice supposedly signifies her sexual promiscuity, since a "private conference" between a man and a woman could easily involve or indicate a sexual relationship. In this case, Constabarus is right; Salome has been unfaithful (or she intends to be). This moment also prefigures Salome's slander of Mariam in which she draws upon evidence of the private conversations between Mariam and Sohemus (also the subject of the Chorus' third interjection) to sow doubt in Herod's mind about his wife's faithfulness. While at first it may seem strange that this is the basis for Salome's slander of Mariam when she herself has been accused of the same, it can also be understood as yet another example of Salome's awareness of gendered expectations within this patriarchal system, the consequences for going against them, and how to best use her voice and behaviour to manipulate the situation to her advantage.

In her deliberate provocation of her husband, Salome does just that: she uses her knowledge of the consequences of shrewish speech to secure a divorce from Constabarus by any means necessary—either by procuring a bill of divorce herself or provoking one. Responding to Constabarus' pointed suggestion that she "seek to be both chaste and chastely deemed" since "Our wisest prince did say, and true he said: / 'A virtuous woman crowns her husband's head'" (1.6.20-22), Salome reworks this conventional maxim to place herself on top in the marital hierarchy:

Did I for this uprear thy low estate?

Did I for this requital beg thy life

That thou hadst forfeited to hapless fate?

To be to such a thankless wretch the wife!

This hand of mine hath lifted up thy head,

Which many a day ago had fallen full low  
 Because the sons of Babas are not dead;  
 To me thou dost both life and fortune owe. (1.6.23-30)

Her anaphoric repetition of “Did I for this” insists on a re-evaluation of her place within their marriage. She is no status symbol, but instead the architect of Constabarus’ social position. “This hand of mine hath lifted up thy head,” she reminds him, but her reminder is both a refusal of his attempted containment of her speech and a thinly-veiled threat. She has the power to destroy “both [his] life and fortune.” Importantly, her speech here is very different from her deferential speech toward her lover, Silleus, in the previous scene. Rather than downplaying her ideas or position as she does with Silleus, Salome insists on her primacy within the relationship, and openly defies her husband:

Thy love and admonitions I defy!  
 Thou shalt no hour longer call me wife;  
 Thy jealousy procures my hate so deep  
 That I from thee do mean to free my life  
 By a divorcing bill before I sleep. (1.6.42-46)

Salome phrases her defiance as a performative utterance—she literally defies his “love and admonitions” in the moment of her speech—before promptly claiming the right to divorce him, a right, we are reminded, that is reserved only for men. She distances herself from her true motivation for the divorce, however, claiming that it is Constabarus’ jealousy that “procures [her] hate so deep” and prompts her desire to be freed from him. Here, despite the unruliness of her speech, she frames herself as the undeserving victim of Constabarus’ jealousy in a move that echoes Mariam’s claims that “Herod’s jealousy /

Had power even constancy itself to change” (1.1.23-24) despite her chastity preventing her from acting upon it. All this, of course, provokes her husband’s ire.

Constabarus’ response—“Are Hebrew women now transformed to men?” (1.6.47)—draws attention to the shrewishness of Salome’s speech as she oversteps the bounds of idealized feminine behaviour. He claims, rather conventionally, that if he “Suffer[s] this” then “all the world [will] be topsy-turned quite!” (1.6.49-50) before cataloguing the ways in which her speech could overturn the natural order (1.6.51-54). In the end, he arrives at what he understands to be Salome’s true motivation—“This is Silleus’ love that makes you thus / Reverse all order; you must next be his” (1.6.83-84). It is not his jealousy that provoked Salome’s hateful and unruly speech; she is simply and fundamentally unchaste. Though Constabarus sees through Salome’s attempts to shift the blame for her desire for a divorce away from her infidelity, in this instance her unruly voice is not meant to conceal her lack of chastity, but instead to reveal it. Salome’s goal here is not to preserve her appearance of chastity—that proverbial ship has sailed. Instead, she deliberately performs shrewishness to provoke a fight with her husband and lead him to conclude that she has been unchaste, thus granting her the divorce that she desires. Salome’s lack of concern for her reputation allows her to perform chastity, or a lack thereof, when and how it suits her purposes. She may not be able to file a bill of divorce herself, but it is certainly within her power to provoke one. In the end, it works. Though, as I note above, it is not until several scenes later that Constabarus performatively divorces Salome (2.4.77-78), his words here effectively end their marriage, unwittingly fulfilling Salome’s goal: “Yet Constabarus biddeth thee farewell. / Farewell, light creature. Heaven forgive thy sin!” (1.6.98-99).

### “Revenged by sleight”

Constabarus is also the first of many characters, including the Chorus, to foreshadow Herod’s return and what it would mean for his personal safety,<sup>31</sup> but it is the high priest Ananell who joyfully delivers the news of Herod’s survival to Salome and Pheroras:

My lips, my son, with peaceful tidings blest,  
 Shall utter honey to your listening ear.  
 A word of death comes not from priestly breast;  
 I speak of life. In life there is no fear. (3.2.1-4)

Here Ananell foregrounds the acts of speaking and listening to these “peaceful tidings,” which effectively draws attention to the potential power of speech over life and death. As a messenger, Ananell’s words can only deliver news that has already happened, but “A word of death” in the mouth of a tyrant becomes a performative command that must be swiftly carried out. Ananell’s formulation here draws attention to the power of performative speech. His reversal of this formula—“I speak of life”—then seems to take on a similar performative quality, at least for Salome as she processes the news of her brother’s survival: “What? Can your news restore my brother’s breath?” (3.2.10).

The news of Herod’s impending return strikes the two siblings much differently and we see their opposite reactions play out simultaneously, echoing each other:

SALOME: How can my joy sufficiently appear?

PHERORAS: A heavier tale did never pierce mine ear.

SALOME: Now Salome of happiness may boast.

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<sup>31</sup> For explorations of rumor in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, see Keith M. Botelho, *Renaissance Earwitnesses: Rumor and Early Modern Masculinity* 127-131; Luckyj 150; and Green 469.

PHERORAS: But now Pheroras is in danger most.

SALOME: I shall enjoy the comfort of my life.

PHERORAS: And I shall lose it, losing of my wife.

SALOME: Joy, heart, for Constabarus shall be slain!

PHERORAS: Grieve, soul, Graphina shall from me be ta'en!

SALOME: Smile, cheeks, the fair Silleus shall be mine!

PHERORAS: Weep, eyes, for I must with a child combine! (3.2.19-28)

Cary's use of stichomythia here is not just an echo of the classical Greek drama she emulates in the structure of her play, but it also highlights the uniqueness of Salome's position amongst the play's characters: she is happy for Herod's return. Where Salome rejoices ("Now Salome of happiness may boast"), Pheroras laments ("But now Pheroras is in danger most"). With Herod's return, Pheroras is understandably concerned for his safety and that of his new wife Graphina, but Salome's joy at the news of her brother's survival is not for love of Herod but for the renewed possibility that she may get what she wants. Under Herod's rule, Salome's social and political position as sister to the king benefits her because she knows how to manipulate this proximity to royal power for her own ends. On the whole, Herod's brand of tyrannical patriarchy should not benefit Salome—it certainly does not benefit Mariam who attempts to live a virtuous life within it only to find she must either sacrifice her own conceptions of feminine virtue or to disobey her husband. Salome's lack of attachment to the socially-constructed principles of feminine honour and her ability to fabricate the semblance of it, however, gives her a kind of freedom to operate in a way in which other women will not or cannot. Additionally, with Herod alive, Salome has access to power. Carol Mejia-LaPerle explores Salome's spatial proximity to power, noting that "Salome's ability to pressure



events to serve her needs reveals an understanding of the cultural expectations to which she is subject” (83). She knows who has access to certain spaces within the court, how the system of power works, how her brother makes decisions, and how she can influence him without seeming to have a hand in it at all. In a political system that precludes women’s access, Salome understands the mechanics of government and how to perform her place within this political machinery. This knowledge allows her to manipulate the system while remaining undetected. Salome’s plot depends on a coordinated circulation of half-truths, under the guise of rumor and observation, to conceal her authorship of Mariam’s destruction.

Pheroras’ response to Salome’s offer to “win the king’s consent” for Graphina to remain under his protection (3.2.30), highlights the connection between Salome’s speech and her plot to enact revenge on Mariam. “What’s the condition?” Pheroras asks, “Let me quickly know, / That I as quickly your command may act / Were it to see what herbs in Orphir grow, / Or that the lofty Tyrus might be sacked” (3.2.33-36). His actions will be on Salome’s command. As a speech act, a command is a performative utterance: it is made through the act of speaking (Austin 13). Here Pheroras requests that Salome give him a command, and in turn her words will create an imperative that he carry out her orders as they are given. Though Pheroras has the choice to either follow her command or to refuse, the actions he undertakes to obey these orders can be understood to derive directly from her acts of speech—they are a perlocutionary consequence of her words. Salome is therefore responsible for the actions that Pheroras takes in her name.

Salome’s command of her brother is similarly based in speech. She assures him that she does not require that he do much, just pass along information about Constabarus:

’Tis not so hard a task. It is no more

But tell the king that Constabarus hid  
 The sons of Babas, done to death before;  
 And 'tis no more than Constabarus did.  
 And tell him more, that I—for Herod's sake,  
 Not able to endure our brother's foe—  
 Did with a bill our separation make,  
 Though loath from Constabarus else to go. (3.2.37-44)

By noting that the task is “not so hard,” Salome emphasizes the difference between speech and action. She does not require Pheroras to do anything out of the ordinary; she is not asking him to steal or murder or commit treason. Instead, all she requires from Pheroras is his speech in a context in which she herself cannot speak for her plan to succeed. He only needs to tell Herod Salome's version of the truth.

Making lies seem like truth is a key aspect of a successful slander according to the anonymous author of *A Plaine description of the Auncient Petigree of Dame Slaunder* (1573):

for Dame sclan[der] doeth no harme (or at least very little) vnlesse she rehearse such thinges, which at the first sight seeme to be true, or else (as you know) she could not ouercome trueth, which in deede is very Lady and deliuerer (at the last) of all thinges, and vnlesse shee could deceaue the hearer with a full & probable tale at the first hearing. (sig. C2)

While the need to “rehearse such thinges” suggests an element of performance to the art of slander (here gendered female), in this case, the performance, like the message, is second hand. The story Salome asks Pheroras to tell is not an outright lie, but instead combines verifiable elements of the truth with minor falsehoods and lies of omission to

conceal her true motivations. She assures Pheroras it is true that Constabarus saved the sons of Babas from execution and hid them away: he would not be condemning an innocent man to death by revealing this information. However, Salome omits the fact that this is a secret she has known and kept quiet for up to twelve years. Her revelation of her husband's treachery against Herod at this point is strategic. It is also true that she wants a divorce, but not for the reason she asks Pheroras to relay. Instead this second half of her script presents truth that is grammatically interspersed with lies. The first clause of this sentence contains her directive to Pheroras, which can be neither true nor false, and the second complete clause contains a statement of truth as she sees it: "I . . . / Did with a bill our separation make" (3.2.41-43).<sup>32</sup> The grammatical construction of this independent clause, however, is interrupted by a relative clause,<sup>33</sup> a deliberate explanation of her motivations that we know to be a lie, and then is followed by another falsehood. She wants to leave Constabarus to be with Silleus: it was never "for Herod's sake" (3.2.41). This coupling of truth and lies creates a statement which, on the surface, seems truthful. The facts of the statement are verifiable, but her lies about her reasons for the divorce are not. Additionally, by expressing her motivations in terms that are deferential to her brother, the tyrannical king, Salome ensures that Herod is much less likely to question them.

By getting her brother to enact her command, Salome conceals herself as the original author of the story, much like how the originator of a rumor is concealed through

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<sup>32</sup> If Salome actually does file a "bill of separation," it happens off stage. We are frequently reminded that it is not within a woman's right to initiate a divorce. Salome expresses her will to do so and to therefore "be the custom-breaker" (1.4.49), but she also initiates a divorce by provoking her husband into wanting one for himself (1.6). Constabarus performatively renounces his claim to Salome in Act 2, Scene 4.

<sup>33</sup> The Arden edition, edited by Ramona Wray, offsets this clause using dashes indicating a non-restrictive clause, an emendation of the early modern punctuation of the 1613 quarto. Hodgson-Wright's (Broadview) and Weller and Ferguson's emendation of this line as a restrictive clause is closer to the original punctuation.

acts of anonymous circulation. Though Salome remains the source of the revelation of Constabarus' treachery, Pheroras is the one to tell Herod, making the disclosure seem unmotivated and all the more truthful. As Salome herself acknowledges, information about her motivation which "from [her] mouth would lesser credit find" (3.2.50), from Pheroras has the quality of observation. Coming directly from Salome, this same story would not be credible because credit—both economic and social—depends primarily on reputation.<sup>34</sup> Salome is known to lie to get what she wants and could easily be seen as unchaste. Her adulterous sexual desire would be apparent as soon as she were to mention divorcing her husband, just as Constabarus recognizes her motivations for demanding a divorce (1.6.83-84). By relaying this information second hand, Salome effectively severs the connection between her speech and her sexuality. In fact, the story she feeds to Pheroras explicitly denies any other motivation for the bill of separation since Pheroras will attest to Salome's reluctance to leave Constabarus even in the face of his treason.

Once alone, Salome muses on her plans for revenge on Mariam. Much like her plan to rid herself of her husband, her revenge hinges on successfully manipulating a man by using his emotions against him:

First, jealousy; if that avail not, fear  
 Shall be my minister to work her end.  
 A common error moves not Herod's ear,  
 Which doth so firmly to his Mariam bend.  
 She shall be charged with so horrid crime

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<sup>34</sup> For a detailed discussion of the relationship between reputation and early modern networks of cultural and economic credit see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* 148-172.

As Herod's fear shall turn his love to hate:  
 I'll make some swear that she desires to climb,  
 And seeks to poison him for his estate. (3.2.53-60)

Salome knows that Herod will not be persuaded by any “common error,” so instead she plans to prey on his insecurities, both sexual and political. Mariam is beautiful (and therefore coveted by other men) and also the means through which Herod's claim to his throne derives. Salome knows that if Herod's sexual jealousy does not get the best of him, his political insecurities will. Importantly, this passage also reveals how Salome intends to enact her plot. “Jealousy” and “fear,” she explains, “Shall be my minister to work her end” (3.2.53-54). Cary's choice of words here is significant. According to the *OED*, “minister” has several meanings, some of which are now obsolete. In the early modern period, however, a minister could mean “a person acting under the authority of another; one who carries out the executive duties as the agent or representative of a superior;” “a servant, an attendant; a person who waits upon or ministers to the wants of another;” or “a person or officer subordinate to another; an underling” (*OED* n. 1a, 1b, 1d). A minister's role, then, is to act on behalf of a superior and follow their commands. By personifying Jealousy and Fear as the ministers who will act her will, Salome effectively places herself at a greater remove from the actions of her own revenge plot. This jealousy and fear belong to Herod not to Salome, so while they are her “minister[s],” the effects of these emotions will be ascribed to Herod alone.

In order to turn Herod against Mariam, Salome must target “Herod's ear” (3.2.55), which is here, and elsewhere in the play, figured as a point of vulnerability.<sup>35</sup> Herod's ear

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<sup>35</sup> See Reina Green, “‘Ears Prejudicate’ in *Mariam* and *The Duchess of Malfi*” 460 and throughout.

is firmly bent toward Mariam (3.2.55-56), meaning that he listens to her and prefers her point of view over others'. Salome's goal, then, is to turn the figurative direction of Herod's ear—essentially to change to whom he listens. If Herod's ear is no longer bent toward Mariam, giving her preference, he will not hear her defence over the sound of the accusations against her. How Salome intends to do this is again through second-hand speech. She explains that Mariam “shall be charged with so horrid crime / As Herod's fear shall turn his love to hate” (3.2.57-58). The passive voice in this sentence is significant. “She shall be charged,” but not by Salome. Instead, Salome “will make some swear” that Mariam is plotting against him (3.2.59). The performative speech acts that will seal Mariam's fate will come from someone else, allowing Salome to effectively “be revenged by sleight” (3.2.64) as she directs attention away from herself to achieve her goal.

For Salome's part, her plot requires performance, patience, and strategic silence. Salome must perform chastity to maintain the pretence of her reluctance to leave Constabarus for any reason other than the utmost treachery. Herod cannot know about her lover Silleus for her plot to succeed. Instead she has her manservant send word to Silleus:

Commend my heart to be Silleus' charge.  
 Tell him my brother's sudden coming now  
 Will give my foot no room to walk at large,  
 But I will see him yet ere night, I vow. (3.2.83-86).

Discretion here requires a performance of chastity that she expresses through limitations of movement. As Mejia-LaPerle explains, “To evade suspicion, she remains indoors and away from her lover. Salome understands that shifts in social relations—in this case the return of Herod—warrants the management of spatial arrangements. Her acute awareness

of when ‘to walk at large’ illustrates the prevalent spatial organization encoding and governing women’s movement” (83). Salome’s strategic limitation of her own movement seeks to fabricate the appearance of chastity by forestalling the conclusion that she has been “gadding” abroad (Rich sig. F1). For Mejia-LaPerle, “Salome demonstrates that the representation of a woman’s movement, and her use of space to fabricate subjection, is malleable precisely because it is artificial” (83).

As for Salome, she just needs to wait and stay silent: “And I of Mariam will keep me mute / Till first some other doth her name detect” (3.2.69-70). M. Lindsay Kaplan (21) quotes the early modern legal theorist Ferdinando Pulton who describes in his *De pace regis et regni* (1609) the “libelling, secret slandering, or defaming of another” in terms of stillness, silence, and the performance of innocence: “this priuie backebiter doth not by words impeach his aduersarie in so manifest and turbulent maner, as the cholericke menacer in his furie doth, but seeming to sit quietly in his studie, he doth more deeply pinch him, & infixeth a more durable wound into his fame, & credit, than the other boistrous fellow doth into his bodie, who in a moment threateneth to do more, than peraduenture he after is willing, or dareth to performe in an age” (sig. B1v). For Pulton, the silent slanderer is much more effective than “the cholericke menacer” because, rather than “layeth open his name, & his grief, and standeth in the face of his enemy” the “secret canker the libeller, concealeth his name, hideth himselfe in a corner, & priuily stingeth him in fame, reputation, & credit, who then neither knoweth from whom, or vpon what cause he receiueh his blows, nor yet hath means therein to defend himselfe” (sig. B1v). The victim of slander can neither defend themselves nor bring the slanderer to justice if they do not know the identity of their attacker. Once Salome has quietly set her plan in motion, she will wait until someone else mentions Mariam so she can avoid the appearance of

authoring the slanderous reports. Her performance of innocence in this context depends on her silence.

**“Now, tongue of mine, with scandal load her name”**

As Kaplan notes in her exploration of slander as a response to censorship, “In its most general sense, slander is a false accusation which results in the humiliation of its victims” (9). “While slander is an injury which may result in serious physical consequences,” she goes on to explain, the terms that are used to describe it “reflect its basis in speech. Both defamation and infamy suggest a diminishment in fame, usually accomplished by means of speech; the etymological root of fame itself is found in speech, deriving from the Greek *phanai*, to speak” (12-13). Slander, then, is a form of linguistic injury that targets the victim’s reputation and seeks to redefine the victim’s self presentation. But, as Kaplan notes, “speech must be published or circulated to make an impact” (13), and as such, slander has a public dimension that necessitates a listener. In *Dame Slaunder*, the author defines slander as “an accusation made for hatred, vnknown to him that is accused, wherein the accuser is beleueed, and hee that is accused is not called to giue answer, or to denye any thing, and this definition standeth on three persons, euen like as matters of Comedies doe that is, by the Accuser, and by him that is accused, and by the hearer of the accusement” (sig. B7v). As this anonymous author suggests, though slander is often clandestine—it is “vnknown to him that is accused”—it also has a social, even theatrical quality, that requires at least “three persons,” the slanderer, the victim, and the listener.<sup>36</sup> Habermann suggests that this “theatricality of slander” lends itself well to its exploration in drama, since, as she notes,

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<sup>36</sup> Ina Habermann calls this the “slander triangle” and argues that “People may be involved in such a triangle without their knowledge or become aware of negative effects belatedly, harmed only once they have ‘seen the spider’, as



the audience watching a slander plot is in a privileged position because it can observe the mechanisms of slander at a moment when, from the point of view of the characters in the play, the slander has not yet become a public event. Only the slanderer knows what he or she is doing, sometimes, vice-like, addressing the audience, the listener believes the accusation, and the victim remains blissfully unaware until he or she is confronted with the consequences of the detraction whose source may be revealed at some point or may even remain permanently hidden. (4)

It is from this “privileged position” that we can explore how Salome sets up the conditions of her slanderous trap, turns Herod’s mind against Mariam, and conceals her part in the plot.

That “Dame Sclaunder” is gendered female is indicative of what Habermann calls “the profound gendering of slander” in the early modern period (2), particularly sexual slander. In her exploration of slander litigation in early modern London, Laura Gowing notes that “[s]exual slander had always been sued predominantly by women. . . . But after 1600, the volume of both defamation cases and women litigants increased to such an extent in London that sexual slander accounted for the largest part of the consistory court’s business” (“Language” 27). But, Gowing notes, though sexual slander was [o]stensibly concerned with the detailed mechanics of heterosexuality, slander was also about another kind of relationship, the social ties between women. At this level, the established language of insult operated as a sign for other grievances or

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Leontes puts it in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*. But people also place themselves within the slander triangle quite consciously—usually as victims—or change positions and play different roles at different times. The circumstances of such positioning quite crucially determine the effect on the sense of selfhood of those involved in verbal defamation” (2).

disputes, and when the women spoke sexual insult they adopted a discourse whose idiom and meaning were already set up to focus on women's sexual faults, and used it towards their own ends. The exchanges of slander represent not normative regulation of heterosexuality, but disruptive interpersonal abuse in a larger social context. (34)

In *The Tragedy of Mariam* the battle of words between Mariam and Salome is conducted along the lines of sexual insult and slander but is more about access to power, social rank, and their lack of respect for each other. Much of their back and forth in the first Act has to do with their sexual status as chaste or unchaste because it is the basis of honour for women. In pairing the enmity between women with the conflict and subsequent unlikely friendship between Constabarus and Silleus, Cary emphasizes the disparity between available definitions of honour and, as Habermann suggests, "the means of conflict open to women and to men." She explains,

Women do not as a rule fight with the sword; therefore they use poison, in this case administered to the soul through the ear. Even though duelling was discouraged in contemporary England, men had active means of clearing their honour at their disposal, whereas women's assertiveness, let alone violence, could easily have been construed as proof of their guilt. Thus, for Cary, femininity and slander are intertwined; she acknowledges slander both as a form of female empowerment and a potent threat to women. (148)

**“With patient show”**

Much of Salome's plot unfolds without her presence onstage. As Mejia-LaPerle suggests, "access does not necessarily require presence, for the apparatus of the court

allots various modes of infiltration” (82). Salome can coordinate the deaths of her enemies without being anywhere near them. As she explains, Salome “enacts a form of access mobilized by the spatialization of power already in place, maneuvering through the restrictions placed upon women when she solicits others to ‘stand in’ for her” (83). In place of her bodily presence, we see the perlocutionary effects of her speech, which allow her to stay silent and perform innocence through her physical absence. Pheroras delivers her message to Herod as Salome instructed, and as Salome predicts, Herod’s response is to call for Constabarus’ execution. In Salome’s absence, Herod imagines his sister’s voice: “Now Salome will whine to beg his breath, / But I’ll be deaf to prayers and blind to tears” (4.2.35-36). Here Herod steels himself for the expected onslaught of feminine lament, vowing to be “deaf” and “blind” in order to prevent his senses from clouding his judgement. Herod’s understanding that his ears and eyes represent a point of vulnerability suggests that words and outward self expression (tears) are persuasive. In this imagined speech, Herod assumes his sister’s continued marital fidelity to her husband, but because Salome is not there, her voice cannot reveal her lack of chastity.

Pheroras continues with his script, phrasing Salome’s reasons for divorcing Constabarus as loyalty to her brother above all else:

He is, my lord, from Salome divorced,  
 Though her affection did to leave him grieve;  
 Yet was she by her love to you enforced  
 To leave the man that would your foes relieve. (4.2.37-40)

The passive voice in Pheroras’ revelation of his sister’s divorce conceals Salome’s transgressive initiation as he frames it as loyalty and subjection to Herod, as he has been directed. Through Pheroras Salome is able to “fabricat[e] the appearance of subjection

before Herod” without “challeng[ing] Herod’s prescriptions of female conduct” (Mejia-LaPerle 83). Predictably, Herod responds favourably: “I will requite / Thee, gentle Mariam—Salome, I mean” (4.2.41-42). Here he strangely conflates his wife and his sister, which, as many scholars suggest, indicates his infatuation with his wife: her name is always on the tip of his tongue. In addition, I would like to suggest that this slip also indicates that, for Herod, in this moment, both Salome and Mariam belong in the same category of “gentle,” chaste, and loyal women, who deserve to be rewarded for their continued loyalty and subjection. Salome’s performance of chaste femininity constructed through her intermediary and in her absence is effective.

### **“I cannot frame disguise”**

When Mariam encounters Herod upon his return the “dusky habits” (4.3.4) in which she styles herself are a visual claim to personal integrity: “I suit my garment to my mind,” she explains, “And there no cheerful colours can I find” (4.3.5-6). For Mariam, it is important that her outward bodily signifiers match her inner thoughts. Herod is similarly concerned with Mariam’s interiority and insists that she speak so that he her “sorrow may prevent” (4.3.10). He implores her to “Be my commandress, be my sovereign guide” (4.3.12), promising that her speech under these conditions will have performative illocutionary power, but it is the power to “command” him to further tyranny: “Thou shalt be empress of Arabia crowned, / For thou shalt rule and I will win the land” (4.3.17-18). Herod’s speech here recalls Mariam’s own in her conversation with Sohemus as she contemplates whether or not to perform the kind of feminine subservience that Herod could interpret as marital chastity. She knows the kinds of speech

and gestures that it would take (3.3.45), but since it would require her to “beguile” (3.3.47), for Mariam, it is not an option:

To be commandress of the triple earth  
 And sit in safety from a fall secure,  
 To have all nations celebrate my birth,  
 I would not that my spirit were impure. (3.3.57-60)

Mariam will not lie, making her spirit impure, even if it would allow her to command all of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

In her confrontation with Herod, Mariam is defiant and angry but, as Kennedy suggests, she expresses her anger and hatred for Herod in a “controlled manner [that] is the antithesis of contentious, shrewish disobedience” (65). Instead she claims that she separates herself emotionally and physically from Herod because he has “irreparably wronged” her (66). She does not mention her many more personal grievances including the tyrannical jealousy that, in her words, “taught me first to range” (1.1.19). Her expression of her anger here is almost uncharacteristically indirect. To the other women in the play, Salome and Doris especially, Mariam expresses her anger, hatred, and scorn directly and volubly, but unlike Salome, she cannot seem to do so to her husband’s face (Kennedy 67). But this indirectness, rather than being a product of a performance of the kind of chaste femininity that could be interpreted as marital fidelity, is instead a reaction to Herod’s tyrannical power. As Kennedy explains, “Mariam is rightly being cautious here, for a frank explanation of her anger and hostility to a tyrant like Herod would be risky. The play suggests that direct expressions of anger and hatred by a wife, even one with defensible reasons, simply cannot be voiced safely in Mariam’s world, and it asks Cary’s early modern readers to speculate about that possibility in their own present” (66),

Kennedy suggests that Mariam’s indirectness “approximate[s] the model of ‘silent’ speech that Gouge, Whately, and others find desirable—with one exception. Mariam’s speech is controlled, deliberate, and moderate, but angry and critical rather than acquiescent. Mariam’s manner illustrates the contradiction in the demand for women’s transparency because her words conform to the desired manner but not the matter of a good wife’s speech” (65-66). The “matter” here is just as important as the manner in which she expresses it. Though her voice and words may be calm and controlled, expressing only a portion of her anger, she deliberately rejects a performance of marital chastity that would require submission to her husband’s will and the suppression of her anger toward him.

As Judith Butler notes of all injurious speech, the effects of slander—that the lie is believed, resulting in a loss of reputation—are, what they call, “non-necessary”: “If the performativity of injurious speech is considered perlocutionary (speech leads to effects, but is not itself the effect), then such speech works its injurious effect only to the extent that it produces a set of non-necessary effects. Only if other effects may follow from the utterance does appropriating, reversing, and recontextualizing such utterances become possible” (*Excitable Speech* 49). Just as Salome recontextualizes Mariam’s outward signifiers of personal integrity, Mariam knows that she could prevent Salome’s slanderous words from achieving their intended effect:

I know I could enchain him with a smile  
 And lead him captive with a gentle word.  
 I scorn my look should ever man beguile,  
 Or other speech than meaning to afford.  
 Else Salome in vain might spend her wind;

In vain might Herod's mother whet her tongue;  
 In vain had they complotted and combined,  
 For I could overthrow them all ere long. (3.3.45-54)

Until the slanderous words settle into Herod's mind, Mariam's performance of marital chastity could prevent him from believing the suggestion that she wants him dead or from jumping to the conclusion that she has been unfaithful. As Shannon suggests, in this context "dissembling and beguiling conduct are seen as useful props in properly maintaining a chaste reputation" (*Sovereign* 78). If she were to dissemble, to hide or suppress her feelings, Salome's words—as insubstantial as the wind—would blow over Mariam in vain.

When Mariam refuses to tell her husband what he wants to hear, Herod becomes frustrated that his speech—usually imbued with the illocutionary power of a tyrant whose word is law—will not repair his relationship. "Wilt thou believe no oaths to clear thy lord?" he asks, "How oft have I with execration sworn! / Thou art by me beloved, by me adored, / Yet are my protestations heard with scorn." "I will not speak unless to be believed!" (4.3.31-34, 53). To command belief is impossible because, as a perlocutionary effect of speech, belief is beyond the control of the speaker. To command belief is an act of tyranny. What Herod demands here is obedience over personal integrity even if her outward signifiers do not match her mind within: "Yet smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile, / And I will all unkind conceits exile" (4.3.57-58). As Karen L. Raber suggests, "Herod wishes to educate her in dissembling, essentially in acting the part of a good wife. Her response is to assert a stable and unified self, which resists any detachment of mind (or emotion or behavior) from outward appearance" (334-335). When Mariam refuses saying, "I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught / My face a look dissenting from my

thought” (4.3.59-60), Herod requests a “milder thought,” or at least the appearance of one: “Yet let your look declare a milder thought: / My heart again you shall to Mariam bind” (4.3.67-68). Herod wants the appearance of marital fidelity. The difficulty here is that, as Mejia-LaPerle argues,

Mariam’s steadfastness is particularly dangerous in a world where appearances are vital, where the performance of chastity for Herod is also the performance of exclusive accessibility. Herod requires from Mariam a convincing expression of total submission since her performance should fulfill two functions: to invite him and to deter others. Yet the performance of accessibility is problematically dependent on her speech, itself so anxiously policed as sexual availability. (85)

Mariam may be chaste, but without her continued performance of marital chastity, defined, as Mejia-LaPerle suggests, by Herod’s exclusive access to her, she ceases to appear so.

That the Butler enters at this moment speaks to Salome’s powers of observation. Salome is notably absent on stage, but her intermediary arrives on the heels of Mariam’s refusal to submit to her husband (and king). Using what Mejia-LaPerle calls a “stand in” allows Salome to “penetrate and corrupt a private interaction in which she is unwelcome” (83). While we do not know if she has overheard or could simply predict how Herod’s reunion with the defiant Mariam would go, Salome, via her intermediary, is there, ready to enact her slander at just the right moment. Though we see Mariam attempt to cultivate a feminine virtue involving personal integrity where her inner thoughts match her outward behaviour, Habermann suggests that slander interrupts this process. Instead, she suggests, “[i]nteriority and exteriority, as well as their negotiation effected through self-fashioning, emerge as dimensions of an intersubjective exchange which determines the



material being of the subject in the world.” “Through slander,” she continues, the boundaries between interiority and exteriority “are altered from ‘without’” (136). In her slandering of Mariam, Salome resignifies Mariam’s outward markers of personal integrity. The Butler’s delivery of the potentially poisonous drink changes the way that Herod interprets Mariam’s “dusky habits,” her serious countenance, and her accusations.

The slander here is indirect, delivered as speculation from the mouth of a servant—“My lord, I guess: / Sohemus told the tale that did displease” (4.4.11-12)—but the Butler’s apparent speculation originates from Salome.<sup>37</sup> Here the Butler’s words put Mariam in the role of the listener as Sohemus’ tales penetrate her listening ear. This image is sexually suggestive and reminiscent of a similar image from the Chorus who suggests that a wife should not speak to anyone but her husband: “When any’s ears but one therewith they fill, / Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow” (3 Chorus.33-34).

Though in this instance the roles are reversed, with Mariam the listener in the passive, feminine position, the image is no less sexual for its passivity. As Mejia-LaPerle suggests, “Herod’s passions are stirred by the thought that Mariam makes herself available to other men, but not to him” (86). Suddenly, for Herod, Mariam’s beauty is resignified. She becomes a “painted devil, / Thou white enchantress” (4.4.17-18), the active instigator of sexual desire in another man. Rather than representing the personal integrity to which Mariam attests, for Herod, her “beauteous body hides a loathsome soul” (4.4.20).

For Herod, Mariam’s imagined betrayal is tied up in speech. As an “enchantress,” Mariam’s very body, even if silent, persuades Sohemus to “falsify / The oath he swore

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<sup>37</sup> In his later soliloquy before he commits suicide, the Butler reveals Salome as the source of the slander and the poisoned drink. Salome compelled his knowing participation in her slanderous plot as repayment of a debt: “O Salome, thou hast thyself repaid / For all the benefits thou hast done! / Thou art the cause I have the queen betrayed; / Thou hast my heart to darkest falsehood won. / I am condemned! Heaven gave me not my tongue / To slander innocents, to lie, deceive; / To be the hateful instrument to wrong, / The earth of greatest glory to bereave” (4.5.5-12).

e'en of his own accord," to "blab" that Herod intended to have Mariam put to death if he were to die (4.4.15-16, 23). Similarly, Herod frames her suspected infidelity as a "breach of vow" that is only made worse by her supposed contemplation of murder (4.4.26).

While he is wrong that Mariam has been unchaste, technically in her personal vow to "forsw[ear] his bed" and "not to his love be reconciled" (3.3.16, 15), she breaks the vow she made to Herod when they wed. Her refusal of Herod, while justified, does not demonstrate marital chastity that involves sexual loyalty and availability to her husband.

As is often the case with accusations of unchastity, Mariam's speech can no longer help her. When Herod demands to know "Why didst thou love Sohemus?" (4.4.35), she answers "They can tell / That say I loved him. Mariam says not so" (4.4.35-36). Her answer here emphasizes the voice of the unknown slanderer and disavows the incriminating speech, an act that should align her with silence. In denying authorship of the words that have been used against her, however, Mariam never categorically denies the love that Herod suspects even as she denies the ability to explain a love for Sohemus. For Herod, even this denial only "makes of [her] falsehood but a greater trial" (4.4.40). There is nothing she could say that would adequately allow her to defend herself. As Herod laments Mariam's betrayal, he pairs Mariam's lost chastity with performative speech: "Yet wert thou chaste / Thou mightest exalt, pull down, command, forbid, / And be above the wheel of Fortune placed" (4.4.46-48). Herod's use of the past tense here is significant; though chaste, Mariam's appearance of chastity is already negated, and with it, the illocutionary power of her words. With chastity, he claims, she could "exalt, pull down, command, forbid"; each a powerful speech act associated with access to power and authority. Without the appearance of chastity—fabricated or genuine—Mariam's access to power as well as her access to effective speech is foreclosed.

From her ineffective denial onward, “Mariam remains silent as Herod reads her silence” (Luckyj 153). As Luckyj explains, “Her silent body, like her ‘unbridled speech’, is read as a text reliable only in signifying her unreadability. Her silence here in fact opens her to two closed, dichotomous interpretations, erasing her subjective choice: for Herod she is guilty; for the reader (as for Constabarus) she is innocent” (153). Herod’s reading of the now-silent Mariam echoes the conventional misogyny of the period: her beauty and fairness, rather than signifying her purity and innocence, are now part of the problem. Her beauty covers over the corruption within: “hell itself lies hid / Beneath thy heavenly show” (4.4.45-46). This apparent disparity between outer beauty and inner corruption renders Mariam illegible to Herod, who imagines “I might have seen thy falsehood in thy face. / Where couldst thou get thy stars that served for eyes / Except by theft? And theft is foul disgrace” (4.4.61-63). Herod’s words here anticipate Joseph Swetnam’s misogynist amalgamation of anti-woman rhetoric in *The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and unconstant women*, which forecloses the possibility of personal integrity for women: “a woman which is faire in showe is foule in condition, she is like vnto a glow-worme which is bright in the hedge and black in the hand; in the greenest grasse lyeth hid the greatest Serpents: painted pottes commonly holde deadly poyson: and in the clearest water the vgliest Tode, and the fairest woman hath some filthines in hir” (sigs. C2v-C3). Despite Mariam’s claims to personal integrity where the beauty of her body matches the purity of her mind, the misogynist trope assumes that no such integrity is possible, given women’s natural untrustworthiness.

Herod wavers in his resolve to execute Mariam—sending for guards to “take her to her death” and in the same breath calling for them to “Come back, come back!” (4.4.77)—until Salome steps in, taking on the role of royal counsellor to help Herod read

(and resignify) Mariam's silent body. The success of her slander of Mariam depends upon her ability to redefine Mariam's beauty, strategically deploy her brother's commands, and perform the feminine subjection needed for her slander to remain undetected. As Green notes, "In this scene Salome is the ideal active listener, attending to Herod's problem, offering a solution, and hearing his objections to her suggestions" (465). Like any good counsellor, her solutions are reasonable; each method of execution she suggests suits Mariam's station, crime, and gender. Her first suggestion, beheading, long considered to be the most humane and therefore most suitable method of execution for nobility, Herod rejects because "Her skin will every curtal-ax edge refell" (4.7.7)—the beauty of her skin is impenetrable. Salome's second suggestion, drowning, reflects both Mariam's gender, the moral nature of her supposed crime (Merback 140),<sup>38</sup> and its association with speech. Water was a key component in the ducking- or cucking-stool, a non-lethal method used to punish scolds and other "gender-related offences" including "sexual incontinence" (Underdown 123).<sup>39</sup> This, too, Herod rejects, arguing that "every river [would] turn her course / Rather than do her beauty prejudice" (4.7.18-19). Salome's third suggestion, "Then let the fire devour her" (4.7.21), a more brutal method of execution used to punish

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<sup>38</sup> In his exploration of the role of Church and State in the understanding of public executions in Medieval and Renaissance culture, Mitchell B. Merback explains that medieval punishments took on a "symbolic logic" meant to "square the need for retribution with the principle of equivalence, and in this way use the penalty to illuminate the immanence of justice" (140, 139). He notes that "[t]hroughout most of Europe and across the better part of a millennium, hanging was the punishment of thieves; . . . arsonists, like heretics, witches and sodomites, were burned; women charged with offences against religion or morality, such as adultery or infanticide, were drowned; and decapitation was used for a wide range of offences, including manslaughter, robbery, incest, infanticide or major fraud" (140).

<sup>39</sup> In her article, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds," Lynda E. Boose cites a 1675 legal summary which describes the "Cucking or Ducking-stole" specifically in relation to the punishment of scolds, as a device "in the fashion of a Chair; and herein [the Scold] is to sit, and to be let down in the water over head and ears three or four times, so that no part of her be above the water, diving or ducking down, though against her will, as Ducks do under the water" (qtd. in Boose 186). D. E. Underdown notes that ducking began to be understood as a punishment specifically for women by the sixteenth century (123) and became increasingly associated with the punishment for scolds, noting that in a 1576 proposal for the renovation of an old cucking-stool in Southampton, the jury "mentioned its use only 'for the punishment of harlots', but in subsequent presentments scolds became the primary targets" (124).

heretics and witches (in Scotland and on the continent, if not in England),<sup>40</sup> seems to follow from Herod's assessment of Mariam's almost supernatural beauty. "Flame," he concludes, would be similarly ineffective since "Flame is from her derived into my heart. / Thou nursest flame; flame will not murder thee, / My fairest Mariam, fullest of desert" (4.7.22-24). Again, Mariam's fair beauty prevents Herod from sentencing her to death.

Salome's change of course "Then let her live, for me" (4.7.25), both denies her own personal investment in seeing Mariam executed, but also expertly continues the rhetorical formula of their preceding conversation, which requires Herod's denial of each suggestion: "Nay, she shall die" (4.7.25). With the conversational roles now reversed, Herod asks Salome "But can you live without her?" (4.7.26), and it is Salome who asks, "How should I try?" (4.7.29). Herod's response—"Why, let my love be slain; / But if we cannot live without her sight, / You'll find the means to make her breathe again, / Or else you will bereave my comfort quite" (4.7.29-32)—is entirely rhetorical, participating in what Green calls "the conversational pattern his sister has set for him" (465). For Herod, Mariam's death is purely hypothetical, even reversible should he not be able to "live without her sight." But for Salome, these are the words she has been waiting to hear: they have the linguistic construction of an implicit performative command. Taking advantage of the illocutionary power such words would normally have from the mouth of a king,

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<sup>40</sup> In his introduction to the volume *Witchcraft in Scotland*, Brian Levack argues that the difference between the methods of execution for witches in England and Scotland is related to the idea that witches made pacts with the devil rather than simply practicing "harmful magic" in Scottish witchcraft beliefs. He notes that "The prevalence of such ideas in Scotland after 1590, when James VI helped to introduce them, and their relative weakness in England provide an important explanation of the greater number of Scottish convictions and executions. It is significant that Scottish witches were burned at the stake, a penalty reserved mainly for heretics, while English witches were hanged like other felons" (ix-x). There seems to have been an increased fascination with the figure of the witch in English drama surrounding James' ascension to the throne of England in 1603; the most notable of these plays is, of course, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Salome willfully ignores Herod's rhetorical intent and instead exits to deliver his "command."

Intent is a significant aspect of how J. L. Austin describes the felicity or infelicity of performative utterances, noting that without the requisite intent or "thoughts or feelings" "we speak of our infelicitous act as 'professed' or 'hollow' rather than 'purported' or 'empty', and as not implemented, or not consummated, rather than as void or without effect" (16). Herod's words here are, in essence, a command, but a hollow one. But as Austin explains, "'without effect' does not here mean 'without consequences, results, effects'" (17). In alerting Salome, Herod's words spark what Austin calls a "perlocutionary sequel"—a consequence of his speech that Herod does not intend, but which nevertheless is a consequence of his speech (118). In Green's words, "Through the conduit of Salome's ear, Herod's words take on a meaning and lead to a consequence that he did not intend" (465). Salome's subsequent delivery of Herod's "command" cleanses the performative utterance of any appearance of the hollowness of Herod's lack of intent and thereby restores its illocutionary power, substituting her own intent for Herod's. Mejia-LaPerle argues that this only works because of Salome's spatial proximity to power: "It is through sanctioned private access that Salome's public commands are received as legitimate, that she is accepted as Herod's representative and can speak for him" (86). Through this proximity to Herod, Salome appears to have the authority required to give her words illocutionary power.

With the command for Mariam's death delivered, Salome counteracts Herod's objections by resignifying Mariam's beauty in what Poitevin calls a "collective deblazoning of the Petrarchan mistress" (25). In Salome's interpretation, the famed fairness of Mariam's skin becomes indicative of her inability to blush "[t]hough foul

dishonours do her forehead blot” (4.7.50). The strands of her hair, to which Herod attributes the shine of the mythical golden “fleece” (4.7.57-60), become “nets / To catch the hearts that do not shun a bait” and instead “hide deceit” (4.7.61-2, 64).<sup>41</sup> Where Mariam seeks to match her outward appearance to her inner thoughts, striving for the integrity of a more masculine concept of virtue and honour, Salome dismantles this appearance of coherence using the same conventional misogynist tropes that initially led Herod to doubt the significance of Mariam’s outward appearance. Rather than signifying the purity and chastity of her mind within, in this light Mariam’s beauty becomes suspect, a deceitful cover for her lack of virtue.

The argument that prevails the most with Herod, however, is Salome’s resignification of Mariam’s speech. Countering his characterization of her speech as “a world-amazing wit” (4.7.72), Salome argues

She speaks a beauteous language, but within  
Her heart is false as powder; and her tongue  
Doth but allure the auditors to sin  
And is the instrument to do you wrong. (4.7.73-76)

Just as Alexandra earlier praised the naturalness of Mariam’s beauty by deriding Cleopatra’s use of cosmetics, Salome here reverses the characterization using the image of cosmetic powder to suggest that Mariam’s beauty should not be trusted as an indicator of chastity.<sup>42</sup> Mariam’s speech, she argues, is similarly dangerous and deceitful. Like the

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<sup>41</sup> The image of women as sirens who ensnare men in the nets of their beauty is conventional. Swetnam includes a similar image in *The Araignment* to highlight women’s deceitfulness: “A man may generally speake of women that for the most part thou shalt finde them dissembling in their deeds and in all their actions subtill and dangerous for men to deale withall, for their faces are lusers, their beauties are baytes, their lookes are netts, and their wordes charmes, and all to bring men to ruine” (sig. B2v).

<sup>42</sup> After the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, this image of a “heart as false as powder” (4.7.74) would also carry a suggestion of treason, which would only further emphasize Mariam’s potential duplicity. As previously outlined, we know that the play circulated in manuscript from around 1603 to 1606, but it is impossible to speculate whether this

“*Sirens*” of which Swetnam and others like him warn (sig. C2v), the sound of Mariam’s voice is dangerously persuasive, its male auditors lured to their ruin upon the proverbial rocks of sin. As the author of *Dame Slaunder* suggests, for slander to be successful, the slanderer must “marke what is most weakest, brittellest, and easyest to be ouercome, in the hearers minde, thereto they lay their enginnes, and conueye their artillery, and shortly they winne the fort, & speede their busines, for no man fighteth against them, nether perceiue their assaults, and so when they be entred the walles, they burne, spoyle, and destroye all things” (sigs. C4-C4v). Already suspicious of Mariam’s speech, Herod is persuaded, and concludes, “Her murderer must be both deaf and blind” so as not to be lured by her words and her beauty (4.7.84).

Salome’s characterization of Mariam’s speech as dangerously persuasive is, of course, ironic, since she herself speaks to persuade Herod against Mariam. Salome, however, is successful because of her ability to obfuscate her own speech beneath her performance of subservience. Salome presents her reinterpretations of Mariam’s beauty here as the necessary duty of a royal adviser to warn Herod of the danger that Mariam’s beauty poses, excusing her own speech even as she disparages the persuasiveness of Mariam’s. “’Tis time to speak,” she assures him, “for Herod sure forgets / That Mariam’s very tresses hide deceit” (4.7.63-64). Here Salome excuses her speech as imperative in much the same way that female writers like Rachel Speght justified their writing because of the importance of the subject. Salome’s words, “Her tongue . . . is the instrument to do you wrong” (4.7.74-76), become a warning delivered from the mouth of a loyal adviser wishing only to prevent harm to the king.

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powder image is a specific reference added later or that the image would simply take on a greater significance by the time the play went to print in 1613.



In her performance of this traditionally masculine role, Salome manages to subtly persuade Herod that the dangerously persuasive nature of female speech does not apply to her even as she persuades him not to trust Mariam's words. Herod's trust of Salome falters, however, when he becomes aware of Salome's gender. Countering Herod's assertion that Mariam has "eyes like stars" and a "forehead like the sky," so "She is like heaven and must be heavenly true" (4.7.95-96), Salome argues that "Her eyes are ebon-hued, and you'll confess / A sable star hath been but seldom seen" (4.7.98-99), invoking an image of blackness as a bodily signifier of what Poitevin calls "moral blackness" (26). By reversing an image that had previously been used by Mariam against Salome herself, Salome inadvertently invites comparison to her own likely "ebon-hued" eyes. This prompts Herod to compare the two women, which does not end well for the darker-complexioned Salome:

Yourself are held a goodly creature here,  
 Yet so unlike my Mariam in your shape  
 That, when to her you have approached near,  
 Myself hath often ta'en for an ape.  
 And yet you prate of beauty! Go your ways.  
 You are to her a sunburnt blackamoor.  
 Your paintings cannot equal Mariam's praise,  
 Her nature is so rich, you are so poor.  
 Let her be stayed from death, for if she die,  
 We do we know not what to stop her breath.  
 A world cannot another Mariam buy. (4.7.101-111)

Salome is an attractive woman, but in comparison to the slightly fairer Mariam, she is “ta’en for an ape” and is “to her a sunburnt blackamoor.” By drawing attention to Mariam’s “ebon-hue[s]”, Salome’s own racial signifiers stand out. Though, as Callaghan suggests, Salome “reminds us (despite the dotting Herod’s immediate de-racialization) that Mariam is not ‘white,’ so much as a de-racialized Jewess” (174), any connection that Salome draws between racial signifiers and moral blackness, no matter how conventional, implicates herself and her own darker features in this characterization. As a woman who does not possess the markers of Petrarchan beauty—white skin, red cheeks, fair hair—speaking about beauty in this context suggests ulterior motives, which Herod attributes to jealousy.

Though Salome oversteps here in her resignification of Mariam’s beauty, she recovers her persuasion of Herod by continuing to perform subjection to him while reminding him of Mariam’s supposed crimes. Though Herod countermands Mariam’s death, demanding she deliver his changed orders (“Why stay you lingering?” [4.7.112]), Salome does not leave. Instead, she questions Herod’s resolve but in a way that defers to Herod’s superior judgment.

Then you’ll no more remember what hath passed?

Sohemus’ love and hers shall be forgot?

’Tis well, in truth. That fault may be her last,

And she may mend, though yet she love you not. (4.7.113-116)

Though grammatically Salome questions Herod’s orders, she frames her questions here as rhetorical, phrased not to contradict but to confirm the orders she has been given.

Through her questions, she deliberately performs the process of seeming to override her own misgivings with Herod’s faith in Mariam. “’Tis well, in truth,” she concludes,

praising Herod's decision to spare his wife. But, in continuing to muse about the soundness of Herod's judgment, her use of the words "may" and "yet" subtly remind him of Mariam's stubborn refusal to love him and her accordant potential to continue transgressing. Herod begins to interpret Mariam according to Salome's suggestions: "For in the weight / She is deceitful, light as vanity. / Oh, she was made for nothing but a bait / To train some hapless man to misery" (4.7.133-136). Echoing Salome's earlier suggestion (4.7.61-62), Herod concludes Mariam's beauty is indeed a trap meant to lure unsuspecting men.

Salome's performance of subjection allows her to augment her accusations against Mariam while simultaneously appearing to praise Herod's decision to spare Mariam's life. "I'll stay her death," she assures him, "'Tis well determined, / For sure she nevermore will break her vow; / Sohemus and Josephus both are dead" (4.7.145-148). Having subtly accused Mariam of keeping Josephus as her "minion" (1.3.44) at the beginning of the play—an accusation Mariam likely escaped before on the strength of her reputation ("all Judea yield her innocent" [1.6.117])—Salome reintroduces this accusation as a closed possibility to suggest not only that this first accusation had some merit, but Mariam has a pattern of infidelity. Though Herod concludes "She shall not live, nor will I see her face" (4.7.149), he turns again on Salome calling her a "foul-mouthed Ate," his "black tormenter" (4.7.155, 157). Herod's characterization of Salome here is apt. In Book IV of *The Faerie Queene* (1596), Edmund Spenser describes Ate as the "mother of debate, / And all dissention" (4.1.19.1-2), who dwells "Hard by the gates of hell" (4.1.20.1), sewing the "seedes" of discord in both public and private life (4.1.25.4). Ate's garden is "full of wicked weedes" (4.1.25.2), but, according to Spenser, the discord she sows is primarily based in speech:

Now grown great, at first of little seedes,  
 The seedes of euill wordes, and factious deedes;  
 Which when to ripenesse due they grown arre,  
 Bring foorth an infinite increase, that breedes  
 Tumultuous trouble and contentious iarre,

The which most often end in bloudshed and in warre. (4.1.25.4-9)

Like Ate, Salome sews the seeds of discord in Herod's marriage through her "euill wordes and fractious deedes," but though Herod acknowledges the power of her words to make him "unsecure" (4.7.158), he does not doubt the truth of her words. Continuing her performance of subjection to Herod, Salome's final words efface her speech even as she maintains her innocence of any wrongdoing.

#### **"I knew me chaste"**

In her final soliloquy, Mariam recognizes the role her own performance of femininity plays in how Herod perceives her innocence and chastity. She assumed that her beauty and chastity would save her, that "One virtue for a woman might suffice" (4.8.38). Instead, she acknowledges the importance of humility as a key aspect of wisdom for women:

That mind for glory of our sex might stand  
 Wherein humility and chastity  
 Doth march with equal paces, hand in hand,  
 But one, if single seen, who setteth by?  
 And I had singly one. (4.8.39-43)

Mariam's speech here suggests that chastity requires the simultaneous performance of humility or modesty in order to be read and understood on its own. As Shannon explains, "She now realizes the 'glory of our sex' can only stand where actual chastity is supplemented (or undercut) by a willingness to dissemble and comply. *The Tragedy of Mariam* thus records under protest the fatal effects of a woman's attempt to enact a chaste or constant integrity specifically created for males" (*Sovereign* 79). In the words Cary herself had inscribed on her daughter's wedding ring, she must both "be and seem" chaste (*The Lady Falkland* 195); her outer bodily presentation must convey her inner chastity in a way that is legible under patriarchy.<sup>43</sup> Mariam's downfall is in that she "had singly one" of these virtues in her knowledge of her personal chastity, but Salome's success comes from her ability to strategically perform the appearance of the other, which seems to negate the need for both.

By taking solace in the fact that she "was ever innocent, though sour" (4.8.44), Mariam prizes the inner self over the worldly presentation of her physical body and begins to look forward to her ascent into heaven, anticipating the moment when her "soul is free from adversaries' power" (4.8.46). It is at this moment, however, when Herod's first wife, Doris, enters unacknowledged before the end of Mariam's soliloquy, which as Mejia-LaPerle argues "foreground[s] the fragility of Mariam's consolation" (88). Doris is a reminder of the enmity that characterizes the relationships between women throughout the play, a war waged through the power of injurious speech. Like Salome, Doris seeks to refigure Mariam's bodily signifiers again using the trope that her beauty hides a "soul

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<sup>43</sup> Cary's daughter writes in her biography *The Lady Falkland, Her Life* that Cary's impetus for including the inscription on her daughter's ring is because "She did always much disapprove <a> the practice <with> of satisfying oneself with their conscience being free from fault, not forbearing all that might have the least show <of unfit> or suspicion, of uncomeliness, or unfitness" (195).

[that] is black and spotted, full of sin” (4.8.52). In Doris’ view, Mariam’s marriage to Herod is illegitimate and tantamount to adultery.

In repudiating Mariam, Doris’ voice is loud and angry, but her performance of chastity is never in question since her volubility is related to her defence of her own prior and legitimate marriage. Tearing down Mariam’s claims to chastity and innocence actually bolsters her own. As Gowing notes in her exploration of early modern slander litigation, “When women talked about sex, the question of their own honesty was rarely far from the surface. Even for those women who were not talking about their own sexual experiences, discussion of another woman’s morals also had implications for their own. Women used the words of slander to proclaim their own virtue by defining its opposite” (*Domestic Dangers* 76). Here Doris’ redefinition of Mariam’s marriage, and with it her claims to chastity, serves to define herself as chaste, as wronged by Mariam, and as the rightful claimant of the position of power that comes from being Herod’s wife. Herod’s ability to divorce one wife and take another—a right, we are consistently reminded, not afforded to women—is the reason that these two women are set against each other. As Kennedy suggests, Doris is angry at Herod, but directs this anger at Mariam rather than her former husband largely because it would be unsafe to do so. Additionally, to express her anger directly to her (former) husband as Salome does “is incompatible with virtue” (67-68).

Rather than insult or slander, Doris harnesses the performative power of the curse to claim authorship of Mariam’s downfall:

These thrice three years have I, with hands held up  
 And bowed knees fast nailed to the ground,  
 Besought for thee the dregs of that same cup—

That cup of wrath that is for sinners found—  
 And now thou art to drink it. Doris' curse  
 Upon thyself did all this while attend,  
 But now it shall pursue thy children worse. (4.8.73-79)

As an act of speech, a curse is performative in that it creates the cursed condition in the cursed subject at the moment of the utterance. While Doris' curses could be said to have immediately cursed Mariam, the effect of such curses is rarely instantaneous, instead promising a later fulfillment of the curse at an unknown future point. This is much like how Judith Butler describes the injurious effects of a threat: "the threat begins the performance of that which it threatens to perform; but in not quite fully performing it, seeks to establish, through language, the certitude of that future in which it will be performed" (*Excitable Speech* 9). While here Butler describes the threat as being connected to and the precursor of a later separate action, in a curse, these two actions are even more connected: the performative curse promises its own later fulfillment, a perlocutionary consequence of the original illocutionary act. These perlocutionary aspects of the curse, the unknown future event that the curse sets into motion, make it particularly dangerous in its potential: neither the cursed nor the cursing subject knows precisely when, how, or even *if* the curse will take effect.

The scene here takes place at the culmination of nine years of cumulative curses, when, in Doris' view, the curse has finally taken effect. Salome's slanderous plots, Herod's jealousy, and Mariam's blindness to how her outspokenness and unwillingness to dissemble could signify her lack of chastity all become the perlocutionary consequences of Doris' curses. As Kennedy suggests however, "Doris's vengeful speech is clearly

satisfying, but it is insufficient to redress her injuries” (67), so Doris continues to curse Mariam, this time uttering an intergenerational curse that extends to Mariam’s children:

Hear, thou that didst Mount Gerizim command  
 To be a place whereon with cause to curse!  
 Stretch thy revenging arm! Thrust forth thy hand  
 And plague the mother much, the children worse!  
 Throw flaming fire upon the base-born heads  
 That were begotten in unlawful beds!  
 But let them live till they have sense to know  
 What ’tis to be in miserable state.  
 Then be their nearest friends their overthrow;  
 Attended be they by suspicious hate!  
 And, Mariam, I do hope this boy of mine  
 Shall one day come to be the death of thine. (4.8.89-100)

Doris’ curse here continues her rewriting of Mariam’s story. Mariam’s children, the heirs to Herod’s kingdom and continuation of Mariam’s noble lineage, are here “base-born heads / That were begotten in unlawful beds!” as she calls on the unseen “revenging” power of God to give her curse its performative power.

As Austin explains, all performative utterances are connected to cultural conventions which allow the performance of action through speech. In order “to be said to have happily brought off . . . [the] action” there must not only be an “accepted conventional procedure,” but that procedure must also be followed correctly and completely by an appropriate person, in the appropriate circumstances (14). Doris’ curse is therefore performative in that it not only performs the action, rather than merely



describing it, but also in that it conforms to early modern conventional beliefs about the power of language to invoke higher powers to bring about action. Mariam's response to Doris' reported curses, "Curse not mine infants! . . . Thy curse is cause that guiltless Mariam dies" (4.8.82-84), and to her second curse, "Oh, heaven forbid!" (4.8.101), establish the power of divine forces to grant curses their worldly power. Further, as Kennedy notes, "Doris's wrath gains sanction from future events because her son will, as Doris promises, cause the deaths of some of Mariam's children" (67). Her curses are effective.

Cursing, however, is often associated with a position of weakness, and as Keith Thomas suggests, are used only "by the weak against the strong, never the other way around" (509). The curse was considered a way to bring justice even where there was no legal recourse to be had, and as such, cursing becomes a way for "dispossessed women [to gain] a measure of worldly power through otherworldly means" (Wifall 148). Doris curses Mariam because her own performances of the humility and chastity that are characteristic of marital fidelity were not enough to save her from Herod's hatred:

What did he hate me for? For simple truth?

For bringing beauteous babes? For love to him?

For riches, noble birth, or tender youth?

Or for no stain did Doris' honour dim?

Oh, tell me, Mariam, tell me, if you know,

Which fault of these made Herod Doris' foe? (4.8.67-72)

Doris did everything right, brought wealth and nobility to the marriage, bore Herod's children, and Herod still cast her aside. Even the humility Mariam recognizes as missing

from her own performance of chastity may not have saved her from Herod's tyranny either, which suggests that there can be no worldly redemption for women in this society.

Like Doris, who calls upon God to give her curses power, Mariam looks beyond her world for resolution to the wrongs against her. In her final soliloquy, just as Doris enters, Mariam contrasts Herod's earthly power over her with the position she anticipates for herself in heaven:

You princes great in power, high in birth,  
 Be great and high! I envy not your hap.  
 Your birth must be from dust, your power on earth;  
 In heaven shall Mariam sit in Sarah's lap. (4.8.47-50)

Beverly Marshall Van Note argues that Mariam's image of herself nestled in Sarah's lap reverses and feminizes the image of the faithful returning to Abraham's bosom after death, which was common in early modern religious debates about the existence of purgatory. In her exploration of the religious significance of Abraham's bosom for both Catholics and Protestants, Van Note argues that Abraham's bosom is a particularly male image, especially in Calvin's description of it in *A Harmonie vpon the Three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke* (1584):

It is a Metaphor taken of a Father, into whose bosome . . . the chyldren doe come together, when they come home at the euening from thyr dayly labours.  
 Therefore, sith the children of GOD doe trauayle as Pylgrimes scattered in this worlde, as in this present race they followe the fayth of Abraham theyr father, so departing they go into that blessed reste, wherein he looketh for them. Neyther is it necessarye to imagine anye certeine place: but that gathering of the Saints together is onely noted, that the faythfull might know indeed that they warre not

in vain vnder the conduct of the faith of Abraham: for they enjoy the same place in heauen. (qtd in Van Note 81)

Though the image of father and child is itself, by definition, patriarchal, Van Note argues that the children that Calvin imagines Abraham to welcome are also specifically male children since “females would not have worked outside the home,” adding further that “these men collectively follow the faith of their male progenitor and are gathered into his bosom with the saints, also collectively male” (81). Cary’s substitution of Sarah, Abraham’s wife, for Abraham himself becomes what Van Note calls “a telling reaction to the dominant Protestant narrative that presents salvation in exclusively patriarchal terms” (81).<sup>44</sup> For Van Note, in reversing this image to one of a mother and child, Cary not only creates “an ingeniously equivocal reference to the devotional image of Madonna and child” (107), but she also posits a mode of feminine agency through religious devotion (98). Van Note sees Mariam’s “inward spiritual turn” as “emphasiz[ing] the husband’s inability to control his wife’s interiority, particularly her private religious devotions” (102). By focusing on her inner spiritual life and the world to come, Mariam is able to foresee a world where her soul truly is “free from adversaries’ power” (4.8.46).

It is also important to consider that the relationship Mariam imagines “in Sarah’s lap” is a relationship between women. It is an image of female homosociality, comfort, and protection that is not available to women within the world of the play. As we have seen, Doris, who enters just as Mariam imagines this female heaven, immediately seeks to

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<sup>44</sup> Catholicism, Van Note is quick to point out, is equally patriarchal despite the positive position of the Virgin Mary. She notes that Thomas More’s exploration of Abraham’s bosom in *A Dialogue of comfort against tribulacion* (1553) focuses on Lazarus and a rich man and “not once does he mention Sara by name” (82). Similarly, she notes earlier that Robert Southwell “reproach[es] Mary Magdalene for her lack of faith” in the popular *Mary Magdalene’s Funeral Tears* (1591) using a reference to Abraham’s bosom that locates it as a place in purgatory: “if . . . thou thinkest Paradise too high a place to be likely to haue him: the very lowest roome that anye reason can assigne him, cannot bee meaner than the bosome of Abraham” (qtd. In Van Note 78-79). For more on Southwell’s patriarchal treatment of Mary Magdalene see Chapter 1.

deny Mariam's claim to a place within it, cursing Mariam for her part in Herod's rejection of her. Even Mariam's own mother, who initially shares with Mariam the one remotely positive relationship between women in the play, rejects her daughter for her reputed lack of chastity. Where Salome is, as Alexandra G. Bennett has suggested, "the image of a woman's ultimate success in survival within [the play's] power structure" (306), Mariam's spiritual turn suggests that this is a worldly agency that comes at the expense of her morality. Mariam's solace in finding her place "in Sarah's lap" looks forward to a nurturing feminine community in heaven where her chastity is immediately recognized and she is held as "the representative of God's female elect" (Van Note 105).

**"Tell thou my lord thou saw'st me lose my breath"**

Like the deaths in many plays, Mariam's death happens offstage, but while offstage deaths in stage-plays are primarily the result of practical concerns like removing actors' bodies from the stage, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, as a work of dramatic poetry, would not have such concerns. Instead, in the play's final act, Mariam is conspicuous in her absence, made all the more so as she can still be present in the reader's imagination. Her final words are reported by a male messenger who describes her death as "the end of beauty, chastity and wit" (5.1.4). Her silence is emphasized here in part because of her absence, but also through Nuntio's description of her silent performance of stoic innocence in the face of death.

Frances E. Dolan argues that "public executions both granted voices to the condemned, especially women, and prevented them from controlling the subsequent representation of their speech and action on the scaffold" (160-161), further noting that "Paradoxically, the deprivation of bodily life is the means by which these women are

constituted and published as authoritative agents” (177). It is therefore important to think about how Mariam’s bodily absence and her silence in death allow her voice and bodily signifiers to be reinterpreted by the men who are left behind. Though she looks forward to her reunion with her female ancestors in heaven, Mariam’s earlier recognition that “humility and chastity” must “march with equal paces, hand in hand” (4.8.40, 41) suggests that she is also keenly aware of how her speech and bodily presentation affect the perception of her innocence. As she goes to her death, Mariam constructs herself as the innocent victim of Herod’s tyranny through her silence and the promise of reported speech in a similar way to how Salome orchestrated her original slander. She is the author of this depiction of herself, but her use of a proxy to convey her words and actions denies its constructed nature. As Nuntio explains before Herod enters, Mariam chose him to be “the relater of [her] end” (5.1.3), and he sees it as his responsibility to ensure that Herod “know his wife did guiltless fall” (5.1.12). He describes to Herod, “She picked me out from all the crew; / She beckoned to me, called me by my name, / For she my name, my birth and fortune knew” (5.1.60-62). By choosing Nuntio to tell her story, Mariam first ensures that her manner of death will be related back to her tyrant husband by an intermediary, and second, that her story will be told in a way that emphasizes her innocence.

Knowing that Nuntio is Mariam’s choice of messenger, it becomes possible to see the way in which she constructs her own innocence through her stoicism and relative silence. Though she remains true to her desire not to dissemble, here Mariam strategically performs the markers of feminine chastity that would have prevented Salome’s slander from taking hold. Describing his first view of her, Nuntio notes “The stately Mariam not debased by fear. / Her look did seem to keep the world in awe, / Yet mildly did her face

this fortune bear” (5.1.26-28). Like Salome, Nuntio interprets Mariam’s silence and facial features for Herod, but instead of finding vice, he ascribes to her a mildness that both conveys her continued chastity and sets her up as a martyr willing to embrace death. Cary’s construction of Mariam as a martyr that pre-figures the death of Christ has been explored by many critics.<sup>45</sup> Erin E. Kelly, in particular, locates Mariam’s death within early modern Christian understanding to argue that “the story of Mariam would always be the story of a martyr. Her death would not merely appear Christlike but register as a necessary sacrifice that made the coming of Christ possible” (39). What makes Cary’s telling different, in Kelly’s view, is that Cary does not shy away from the fact that “Mariam is such a troubling and troublesome figure” (39) and instead “makes clear that to be a martyr one had to be at least somewhat rebellious” (45). Like the images of historical martyrs that transform from rebellious figures into “meek victims” (45) or saint-like figures remembered for their piety, Mariam’s image is transformed in the retelling after her death. To a certain extent, as Dolan suggests, this is beyond Mariam’s control, but she takes careful steps to control her own story. Not only does she choose her messenger—a way to ensure the favourability of the narrative—but she also deliberately performs the innocence she hopes he will report.

Ironically it is on her way to her death that Mariam’s outward signifiers conform to Herod’s earlier demands. She smiles dutifully, albeit scornfully and, Nuntio informs us, she appears “In stately habit and with cheerful face” (5.1.57), performing in her final moments the obedience that she refused to fabricate in life, behaviour she knows will

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<sup>45</sup> See Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve* 171 and Sandra K. Fischer, “Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny, Domestic and Religious.” Fischer argues that Mariam’s death “prepares the way for the death of all tyranny” (236), noting also that “[t]he redemption of humanity by Christ’s sacrifice becomes equivalent to the redemption of womanhood by Mariam’s sacrifice” (236).

speak to her innocence. But as Luckyj argues, this smile “hardly simplifies her silence, in which are inscribed simultaneously indifference, humility and pride” (157). Though here she seems to acquiesce to the patriarchal requirement of feminine silence, the silent and smiling Mariam remains, in Luckyj’s words, “beyond the appropriations and reductions of male discourse” (157). Herod later continues to attempt to control Mariam’s voice and appearance even in her absence. Having fully recognized her chastity, Herod imagines he could call Mariam back and requests that Nuntio “Bid her now / Put on fair habit, stately ornament, / And let no frown o’ershade her smoothest brow” (5.1.142-144). His words recall Nuntio’s description of Mariam’s “stately habit and cheerful face” not even a hundred lines earlier, but the Mariam he imagines is his ideal: chaste, silent, and obedient, her outward appearance purged of the “dusky habits” (4.3.4) and defiant countenance she wore in life. Nuntio reminds him, however, that, instead of “stately weeds,” Mariam is now “attired in the robe of heaven” adding “Remember you yourself did send her hence” (5.1.145, 146, 147).

Mariam’s reported silence prompts Herod to search for the remainders of her lost voice. At first chastising Nuntio for “usurp[ing] [his] right” to praise Mariam (5.1.29-30), Herod implores him to continue speaking of her: “Yet speak. She cannot be too often famed; / All tongues suffice not her sweet name to raise” (5.1.31-32), and prompts him to relate Mariam’s speech both in response to Alexandra’s rejection and upon selecting Nuntio to relate her story: “But what sweet tune did this fair dying swan / Afford thine ear? Tell all; omit no letter” (5.1.65-66). Scholars often note that Cary’s reference to a swan song recalls Emilia’s final speech in *Othello*: “I will play the swan / And die in music” (5.2.245-246). As Katherine Butler explains in her exploration of the elegiac function of music in Elizabethan England, “swans were said to sing just once: an

exquisitely beautiful song, just before their deaths” (270). In this figuration of Mariam’s words, Herod both frames her final speech as her most eloquent and retroactively connects her previous outspokenness with the silence that is supposedly characteristic of chastity. Here Herod excuses her previous public speech as he reimagines and remembers her as a martyr and exemplar of feminine virtue. Her final words—here re-spoken by a male messenger in her absence—become more representative of silence than of her typically unruly speech. Punctuated by interruptions from Herod, Nuntio relates Mariam’s final words:

“Tell thou my lord,” said she—

.....

“Tell thou my lord thou saw’st me lose my breath.”

.....

“If guiltily, eternal be my death.”

.....

“By three days hence, if wishes could revive,

I know himself would make me oft alive.” (5.1.67-78)

Her words here form a potential self-curse that would consign her to eternal damnation if she is guilty of the crimes for which she is executed. This brief repudiation of the charges against her combines with her performance of a silent willingness to embrace death to secure the continuation of her reputation for chastity. Nuntio’s description of her final moments only further emphasizes her chaste innocence: “on she went, / And, after she some silent prayer had said, / She died as if to die she were content” (5.1.83-85). Even Herod interrupts Nuntio’s story to say, “I hold her chaste e’en in my inmost soul” (5.1.76).



When reading the play, it is easy to forget that Mariam is absent this entire time. As Katherine Butler explains, in the early modern imagination “near-death music,” such as the swan song, “forms a liminal space between life and death, and between earth and heaven” (270). Speaking her final earthly words offstage, Mariam anticipates her contentment in heaven, but when Herod asks for Nuntio to retell Mariam’s words, she is already gone, “Her body is divided from her head” (5.1.90). Other scholars have remarked on Mariam’s absence from the final act. Ferguson notes that “[i]t seems significant that Cary only imagines Herod coming to value Mariam’s voice at the moment when the disputed property of her body is absent both from the stage and from the narrative ‘present’” (“Running” 57). Dolan similarly notes that Mariam’s absence is the prerequisite for Herod’s changed perspective: “Just as martyrs assert their virtue through death, Mariam can be lauded as Herod’s ‘better half’ only after transcending the pressures of bodily presence and the contradictions of being vocal, defiant, female, and virtuous” (165). In Mariam’s bodily absence on the stage, her second-hand voice can exist purged of its associations with the female body much like how Dolan explains that Christian and classical traditions “constructed disembodiment as especially difficult yet imperative for women who wished to achieve spirituality and purity” (165). As Nuntio relays Mariam’s voice, Herod re-imagines Mariam’s outward bodily appearance as matching the purity of her words and the innocence with which she went to her death. Where he once thought her “Bright workmanship of nature sullied o’er / With pitched darkness” (4.4.53-54) in light of her apparent infidelity, Herod now recognizes her innocence, which he once again expresses in terms of her whiteness: “She was fair. / Oh, what a hand she had. It was so white / It did the whiteness of the snow impair” (5.1.149-151). She is the epitome of fairness, whiter even than snow. Callaghan notes this transformation, arguing that “[a]s

Mariam progresses toward death and exoneration, she becomes whiter—more dazzlingly white than ‘fair’—and less sexualized (that is, within the dominant ideology of ‘race’ she is de-racialized)” (175). This de-racializing and de-sexualizing is possible because of Mariam’s bodily absence and her strategic performance of feminine innocence in the final moments of her life. In death she can be held up as the paragon of virtue because her uncontrolled voice and unruly sexual potential have already been curtailed, contained. She can be remembered for the superlative fairness of her skin because she no longer exists in flesh and blood to contradict such characterization through her rebelliousness or in the bodily markers of her Jewishness.

Significantly, Salome is also absent in the final act, having slipped away after Mariam’s execution was all but assured. With Mariam gone, Herod recognizes Salome’s part in her death and blames Salome for his actions:

Accursed Salome! Hadst thou been still,  
 My Mariam had been breathing by my side.  
 Oh, never had I, had I had my will,  
 Sent forth command that Mariam should have died.  
 But, Salome, thou didst with envy vex  
 To see thyself outmatched in thy sex.  
 Upon your sex’s forehead Mariam sat  
 To grace you all like an imperial crown,  
 But you, fond fool, have rudely pushed thereat,  
 And proudly pulled your proper glory down.  
 One smile of hers—nay, not so much—a look  
 Was worth a hundred thousand such as you. (5.1.157-168)

Though he never names it as slander, Herod blames Salome's words for his actions, noting that had she been "still"—quiet, tranquil, unmoving—Mariam would not have died, thereby disavowing his own part in Mariam's execution. While Herod's repetition of the past tense "had" at line 159 serves a metrical purpose, it also suggests the futility of Herod's attempt to repossess the command that was sent forth according to Salome's will and not necessarily his own. We know that Herod's assessment of Salome's manipulation of the illocutionary power of his words here is apt, but we can also see that Herod misinterprets both Salome's motives and Mariam's willingness to remain "breathing by [his] side." As the audience, we know that the conflict between the two women and Mariam's rejection of Herod is much more complex than Herod chooses to remember in this moment. Instead, he imagines his ideal Mariam, alive and smiling obediently at his side, and attributes to Salome motives of jealousy that obscure Mariam's scornful treatment of her sister-in-law.

Though Salome's absence allows Herod to interpret her silence to further purge his idealized Mariam of fault, it also allows Salome to evade punishment, a fact that often troubles scholarly interpretation of the play. With regard to Salome, the play remains open-ended. Mariam dies a martyr, remembered for her chastity; Herod is repentant, his tyranny ended; and Salome walks away unpunished and free of her former husband. Salome's ability to use her voice to perform various aspects of femininity to her advantage, manipulating the very constraints meant to contain her, allows her to get what she wants and to escape unscathed. Though Mariam is initially resistant to performing the signifiers of chastity that are legible under patriarchy, in the end, she, too, solidifies her legacy and continued reputation for chastity by similarly modulating her voice in her off-stage performance of martyrdom, which she ensures will be conveyed to Herod in

appropriate detail. Examining Salome's and Mariam's use of speech and silence together in this way shows that the strategic performance of conventional signifiers of chastity, including humility and relative silence, has a significant impact on the two women's ability to maintain control of their own (and others') reputations. This becomes especially important under the tyrannical patriarchy that Herod's rule represents. In the absence of a female community willing to stand in witness to the sexual morality of its members, the status quo is every woman for herself. To a certain extent Bennett is right when she suggests that Salome is "the image of a woman's ultimate success in survival" under these conditions (306), but Cary is also clear that Salome's survival is at the detriment of her morality. In juxtaposing Salome's survival under these conditions with Mariam's eternal salvation imagined in the bosom of her foremother, Cary points to a feminine community as an antidote to patriarchal tyranny, if not in this life, then in the next.

## Chapter 4

### “Th’opinion of a Virtuous Name”: Chastity as Communal Performance in Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters*

Tut, my girl,  
'Tis nothing but a politic conveyance,  
A sincere carriage, a religious eyebrow  
That throws their charms over the worldlings' senses;

.....  
Be wisely tempered and learn this, my wench:  
Who gets th'opinion of a virtuous name  
May sin at pleasure, and ne'er think of shame.

—Thomas Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604-6, pub. 1608)

Relationships between women and the accordant harmony or discord of their voices have figured prominently in our exploration of the performative construction and defence of chaste reputation in early modern women's writing and on the early modern stage. Where Rachel Speght envisions herself as a lone David defending the reputation of all women against a “vaunting *Goliah*” in *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (4), Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* relies on Paulina to be “Her advocate to th' loud'st” (2.2.38). In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, however, a supportive community of women can only be theorized beyond the world of the play as Salome deploys her voice to destroy Mariam's reputation for chastity in Herod's eyes. These homosocial relationships become essential for the support and preservation of individual performances of chastity that rely so heavily on women's relative silence. Instead, it is the voices of other women—Speght herself, Paulina, and even Salome—that make all the difference. From varying positions of relative safety, they speak where, when, and how other women cannot when their chastity is in doubt, and as such, these voluble women become what Laura Gowing calls the “brokers of oral reputation” (*Domestic Dangers* 123). Reputation itself is, after all, a social phenomenon, consisting of the collective opinion of a community. Other women's voices then are an

integral part of what determines reputation, chaste or otherwise: they stand as witnesses for or against other women's claims to chastity. Interpreting feminine silence—that requisite but radically unstable signifier of chastity—their voices add coherence to individual performances of chastity, lending support to the idea that these behaviours are indicative of the inner state of mind that they purport to describe.

Thus far we have explored texts which feature significant threats to the chaste reputation of a female figure who is ultimately chaste (or specifically figured as such). Rachel Speght takes on Joseph Swetnam's slanderous assault on all women, leaving herself exposed to attacks against her own chastity by her anonymous annotator; Hermione is falsely accused of infidelity by her jealous husband Leontes; and Salome gets revenge on the chaste but outspoken Mariam through slander. While each illustrates how the strategic performance of chastity becomes an important part of successful defences of reputation, I want to turn finally to a slightly different scenario in a vastly different play. On its surface, Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* does not seem to follow our established formula: not one of the play's three female characters is chaste—one is literally a prostitute and another, her bawd—and indeed the play's comedic climax hinges on a scene of adulterous offstage sex. At first glance, we seem to be as far away from chastity as we can possibly get. However, like Salome in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the female characters in *A Mad World* may not actually *be* chaste, but they certainly *appear* to be so, and, even more importantly, within the world of the play, they have “th'opinion of a virtuous name” (1.1.181). Examining how Frank Gullman, her mother, and Mistress Harebrain construct and maintain their performances of chastity even where the requisite state of mind does not exist is therefore an important capstone to our discussion of the performative construction of chaste identity.

Like the other plays we have examined so far, female homosocial networks are central to the subplot of *A Mad World, My Masters* and vital to each female character's successful production and maintenance of chaste reputation. Though here the play's female characters' performative constructions of chastity are entirely divorced from the marital fidelity or lack of sexual experience their behaviour is supposed to signify, the women of the play recognize that the appearance of chastity remains socially and economically necessary. Rather than policing each other's chastity, exposing the fissures between appearance and reality, between the signifier of chaste silence and the interiority it is supposed to signify, the women of *A Mad World* work together to preserve their collective appearance of chastity, with each chaste reputation depending on and reinforcing the others. Like Salome in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, for Frank Gullman, her mother, and Mistress Harebrain, the preservation of the appearance of chastity, even where it does not exist, is a prerequisite to acquiring the agency they need to pursue their individual desires. In this way, their performative counterfeiting of chastity becomes a collective endeavour, sustained by the female voice. Together they teach and learn from each other—when and how to speak, when and how to stay silent—and when the naturalized cohesion of their appearance of chastity matters most, their voices blend, interpreting and standing in for one another to maintain this communal performance. Middleton, however, does not seem to fault them for this.<sup>1</sup> Instead, as others such as Celia

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<sup>1</sup> There has, however, been some scholarly debate on this issue. Scholars like Fumiko Takase have remarked on Middleton's supposed "antifeminist sentiment" in *A Mad World, My Masters*, arguing that his depiction of women in the play associates women "with lust and the devil" (19). In this view, Frank Gullman becomes "the embodiment of human corruption. She stands for the aggregation of lust, greed, and vanity, epitomizing the pit of hell into which all the other characters are enticed to fall" (21). Other scholars such as Celia R. Daileader have since "defend[ed] Middleton against these recurrent charges of misogyny" ("Courtesan" 224), arguing instead that Middleton shows sympathy for the unchaste women in his plays: "Yet to Middleton, women are, above all, human—and being human means being sexual. Male promiscuity is, if anything, more frequently represented and more harshly ridiculed in Middleton than female promiscuity, yet critics turn a blind eye to the former, in an unconscious and therefore doubly insidious reiteration of the double standard" ("Courtesan" 224).

R. Daileader, Jennifer Panek and Seung-a Ji have argued, Middleton's depiction of these unchaste women and their counterfeit production of chastity is less "an indictment" of the women themselves than a "critical exposure of a society that fetishizes and commodifies female chastity in both the brothel and the marriage bed" (Panek 427) and "the anxious men who are obsessed with chastity and try to regulate women in vain" (Ji 34).

### **"Learn this, my wench"**

When we first meet Frank Gullman, the female trickster figure of the subplot of *A Mad World, My Masters*, Penitent Brothel introduces her as "The close courtesan, whose mother is her bawd" (1.1.121). Immediately the audience knows that she is unchaste. In fact, for readers of the play's 1608 quarto and modern editions of the play, it is impossible to forget her profession, since even though she is immediately named as "my pretty Lady Gullman" (1.1.123) and referred to as such throughout the play, the quarto's stage directions and speech prefixes identify her only by her profession—"Curtizan" and "Curtiz." or "Curt." respectively (sigs. A3v, A4).<sup>2</sup> Penitent Brothel's initial description of Frank Gullman is significant, however. Though he knows her profession, and we as the audience and/or readers of the play are consistently reminded of it, the knowledge of her status as a courtesan is a fact that is held a "close" secret. As Kate Aughterson argues, this phrase

also suggests a closed body, contained and autonomous. The image of a closed body in a woman was conventionally used to refer to a virgin ('I ne'er beheld a perfect maid till now,' says Follywit (IV.6.77)), to be opened only by the

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<sup>2</sup> I will therefore follow the lead of the characters themselves in referring to this character as "Lady Gullman," Frank Gullman, or simply Frank, as appropriate, rather than by her profession alone. Her mother is given only the title Mother, so for the sake of clarity, I will refer to her as Mother Gullman throughout.



legitimate attentions of her husband. Despite her performance of a ‘leaky’ body in Act III scene 2, the paradox of a ‘close courtesan’ posits the notion that agency may reside in her body. (354)

Instead of a brazen Jezebel figure who wears her profession openly, Frank enters the opening scene as “Lady Gullman,” a woman who, we soon discover, covertly trades on and profits from a completely fabricated reputation for chastity. Her body then, as Aughterson suggests, is figured as “both closed and open” (355).

Lady Gullman’s counterfeit performance of chastity, which supports and maintains the spotlessness of her reputation, is a skill learned from her mother as part of a well-practiced and highly complex revenue-generating scheme. Together the women repeatedly sell Lady Gullman’s supposed virginity to men willing to pay handsomely for it in order to raise money for a dowry to help ensure an eventual legitimate marriage. At the same time, posing as a young virgin and her harried mother, Lady Gullman and her mother entertain various rich suitors, such as the gallants Innes and Possibility, who spend money on her indiscriminately. All the while Lady Gullman is also secretly being kept as a courtesan by the rich (but impotent) Sir Bounteous Progress. However, as Panek points out, “the fifteen sales of Frank’s maidenhead occur outside of, and prior to the world of the play: within the play, Frank’s occupation as a professional virgin consists almost entirely of having her mother *guard* her virginity rather than sell it. Sir Bounteous Progress is . . . an ideal client precisely because he is impotent and unable to penetrate her” (428). Thus their scheme, which depends on their consistent performance of female virtue—both virginal and matronly—collapses the usual distinctions “between chastity and whoredom” since “the quintessential moves of a bawd with a fresh whore can successfully double as the respectable bestowal of a daughter [in marriage]” as Panek

suggests (428, 431). Virginity here is doubly desirable—both in a potential wife and, ironically, in a whore (432).

The fact that Lady Gullman and her mother can sell her maidenhead fifteen times and, as her mother assures her, “Though fifteen, all thy maidenheads are not gone” (1.1.169), draws attention to the performative, rather than the purely physical, nature of virginity. As Marie H. Loughlin explains, the hymen or maidenhead, thought to signify the female body’s physical virginity, was itself subject to “anxious scrutiny and intense debate” in early modern medical and anatomical texts. Instead, she suggests, the hymen, like the state of virginity its presence was supposed to guarantee, was “a site of pure ambiguity, a membrane whose material existence is both constantly called into question and vociferously insisted upon, because, as Peter Stallybrass has argued, the practices of primogeniture and patrilineality depend upon the construction and control of female sexuality” (29). Though early modern anatomists could not find definitive proof of the physical existence of a hymenal membrane, cultural beliefs insisted upon it, thereby forcing anatomists to explain away their unexpected findings (or lack thereof). Andreas Vesalius concluded that the existence of the hymen could be found in what Loughlin calls “the signs of its absence” (30). Ambroise Paré, in his experience dissecting virginal corpses at the Hospital of Paris, had this to say about the presence of the hymen:

In som virgins or maidens in the orifice of the neck of the womb there is found a certain tunicle or membrane called of ancient writers *Hymen*, which prohibiteth the copulation of a man, and causseth a woman to be barren; this tunicle is supposed by manie, and they not of the common sort onely, but also learned Physicians, to bee, as it were, the enclosure of the virginitie or maiden-head. But I

could never finde it in anie, seeking of all ages from three to twelv, of all that I had under my hands at the Hospital of *Paris*. (qtd. in Loughlin 31)

However, despite his assertion that no such membrane exists, he too, in Loughlin's words "cannot escape the pressures attendant on this membrane's cultural and social significance" and instead locates the culturally requisite physical proof of female virginity in "a physiologically normative narrowing or 'glew[ing] together' of the vagina, which frequently tears and bleeds 'at the first time of copulation.' The sign of virginity does not disappear from the female body but is simply given a new structure and position" (31-32). There was a cultural need for the physical proof of virginity, but even as these anatomical descriptions suggest, the physical presence of virginity is only knowable retroactively (47). Tests of virginity, which were popular in the period, therefore sought to find other definitive signs of virginity. Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* famously features a test "to know whether a woman be a maid or not" (4.1.41) that similarly reveals secondary signs of virginity. The contents of "Glass M" given to a maid is promised to produce "three several effects: 'twill make her incontinently gape, then fall into a sudden sneezing, last into a violent laughing, else dull, heavy, and lumpish" (4.1.48, 49-50), all symptoms that Beatrice-Joanna is able to perform even though she has already had sex with the aptly named DeFlores.

Though we are never explicitly told how Lady Gullman fabricates the expected physical signs of virginity for her clients,<sup>3</sup> we do see her successfully perform the

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<sup>3</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that the method that Lady Gullman uses to fabricate the appearance of virginity is anal sex. As Daileader suggests in her article "Back Door Sex: Renaissance Gynosodomy, Aretino, and the Exotic," English Renaissance culture associated anal sex with Italians. "This," she argues "is due to the notoriety of Pietro Aretino's *Sonnetti Lussuriosi* (1525), inspired by and printed with a set of obscene engravings, and flagrantly pro anal sex" (304). Mother Gullman's suggestion that "all thy maidenheads are not gone" since "The Italian is not served yet" (1.1.170) is suggestive. Chantal Schütz also points to Follywit's lieutenant's description of Sir Bounteous' courtesan in Act 3 as an example of a "more pointed allusion" (92 n11): "Then is your grandsire rounded i'th' ear, the key given

signifiers of virginal chastity. These include deliberate performances of modesty and bashfulness, most evident in her later encounter with Follywit and her mother, in what appears to be a well-practiced routine designed to initiate a new suitor into their schemes. In this case, Follywit reveals that since the state of virginity is ultimately unknowable except perhaps retroactively, it is the signifiers of virginity that are themselves desirable. Besides Lady Gullman's beauty, he confesses, the quality that he is most attracted to is her modest restraint—that is, after her mother has interpreted her behaviour as such, which is an important distinction that I will attend to in much more detail later on.

From the time we first meet Lady Gullman and her mother, it becomes evident that Frank's successful performance of virginity is a skill that she learned from her mother. When Mother Gullman first enters, bringing "A token from [Lady Gullman's] keeper" (1.1.143), Frank responds by musing that, like a park, women are not easily kept by a single man:

O, from Sir Bounteous Progress. He's my keeper indeed, but there's many a piece of venison stolen that my keeper wots not on. There's no park kept so warily but loses flesh one time or other; and no woman kept so privately but may watch advantage to make the best of her pleasure. And in common reason one keeper cannot be enough for so proud a park as a woman. (1.1.144-150)

Here, as Aughterson suggests, Lady Gullman describes her sexual freedom in spatial language and "simultaneously acknowledges the conventional discourse of femininity as owned parkland and declares her ability to define her own pleasure from within that discourse" (348). However, while this spatial metaphor has important implications for

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after the Italian fashion, backward, she closely conveyed into his closet, there remaining till either opportunity smile upon his credit, or he send down some hot caudle to take in his own performance" (3.3.65-69).

how Lady Gullman approaches her tutelage of Mistress Harebrain, whose husband jealously guards her movement, it also expresses a lack of chastity. As Aughterson notes, “The courtesan’s access to different spaces differentiates her from all other characters except Follywit: she works the street, the bedroom, the squire’s country house, the merchant’s house, and Mr Harebrain’s doorway. This freedom immediately marks her as potentially unchaste” (348), and her description of this spatial freedom in terms of stolen flesh and her own pleasure only makes this connection more explicit. Mother Gullman quickly corrects her daughter with a warning to halt her unchaste speech: “Hold thee there, girl” (1.1.151). Though Frank assures her that she has nothing to fear from her temporary pause in her performance of chastity, Mother Gullman warns her of the potential for others to see through their ruse:

The shallow ploughman can distinguish now  
 ’Twixt simple truth and dissembling brow.  
 Your base mechanic fellow can spy out  
 A weakness in a lord and learns to flout.  
 How does’t behoove us then that live by sleight  
 To have our wits wound up to their stretched height? (1.1.156-161)

Even the “shallow ploughman” and “Your base mechanic fellow” have developed the ability to “spy out” deception and weaknesses in their social superiors in their changing socio-economic landscape. As a result, she warns, if they are to “live by sleight” they need to always have their wits about them—Frank’s performance of chastity must therefore never falter.

In the epigraph for this chapter, Mother Gullman remarks on the desirability of the appearance of chastity, which, she assures her daughter, can easily be achieved through

performance, supported by reputation. Her point is not that Frank must not be sinful or revel in her sexual freedom, but that she must continue her performance of chastity in order to achieve the coherence of the identity that a “virtuous name”—a reputation for chastity—will provide. Far from prohibiting sinful pleasures, a chaste reputation, achieved through the consistent performance of the signifiers of virginity, will provide cover for her sins. This, however, appears to be a well-worn conversation, as Frank chafes at her mother’s reminder of how she must perform her part: “Mother, I am too deep a scholar grown / To learn my first rules now” (1.1.183-184). She has heard this all before. Though their mother-daughter relationship centres around prostitution, it retains the dynamic of a long-standing mentorship between an invested mother and her grown daughter who is ready to branch out on her own.

Their schemes spring back into action when the two rich suitors, Innes and Possibility, enter onto the scene. Here, Mother Gullman’s instructions to her daughter—“Peace, hark, remove thyself” (1.1.185) are similarly designed to preserve her daughter’s appearance of chastity through silence and spatial distance. With Lady Gullman silently offstage and out of sight, her mother is able to interpret her absence for “the two elder brothers” (1.1.185-186): she is “Even at her book, sir,” a pious pursuit that Mother Gullman assures him is “no new motion, sir, she’s took it from an infant” (1.1.191, 193-194). Here we see Mother Gullman performing her part in their ruse, a part which is also dependent on her own “virtuous name.” Her ability to preserve the precious commodity that is her daughter’s (apparent) chastity relies on her own status as a “respectable, marriage-minded mother” (Panek 432). Indeed, despite her status as her daughter’s bawd, and her own previous involvement in prostitution (1.2.35-36), Mother Gullman is known in the community as “the virtuous matron, that good old gentlewoman” (1.2.30-31). The

control she exercises over access to her daughter therefore appears as motherly concern over her daughter's chastity rather than a bawd's interest in controlling the access of potential clients.

The apparent concern she shows for Frank's appearance of chastity represents part of her own performance of virtuous motherhood. With Frank silently offstage, she expresses a concern over unchaste speech—not her daughter's, but that of the men who are intent on courting her: “Upon that condition you will promise me, gentlemen, to avoid all profane talk, wanton compliments, indecent phrases, and lascivious courtings (which I know my daughter would sooner die than endure), I am contented your suits shall be granted” (1.1.196-200). Here, in Frank's absence and accordant silence, her mother anticipates her daughter's chaste deflection of compliments that, in Castiglione's words, would act as “a shielde againste the wanton pride and beastlinesse of sawsie merchants” (192). This prevents Frank from having to perform the delicate balancing act of having to appear chaste while speaking for herself under these circumstances. In such a situation, as Castiglione suggests, she would have to place careful limits on wanton speech but would have to do so without appearing that she “feigned to be so coye as to hide that in herself which she doubted others might come to the knowledge of” in order “to make her selfe good and honest” (191). Such overcorrection could potentially reveal her performance of chastity as a fiction. Instead, by attempting to prevent the “lascivious courtings” of the two men, Mother Gullman both expresses her own virtuous concern for the chastity of her daughter while also speaking for her to preemptively interpret her daughter's unspoken opinion on the matter—she “would sooner die than endure” such unchaste speech. Mother Gullman's performance of virtuous motherhood therefore stands in for her

daughter's need to performatively maintain her appearance of chastity under such precarious circumstances.

**“That modest virgin, / Her only company”**

Lady Gullman's plot to facilitate Mistress Harebrain's affair with her would-be lover Penitent Brothel, and indeed Mistress Harebrain's continued appearance of marital chastity, hinges entirely on Lady Gullman's reputation as a “modest virgin” (3.1.63), which illustrates the interconnectedness of women's reputations in the play. Similarly it is Frank's mother's reputation as a virtuous woman, even more than her own, that initially grants Lady Gullman's access to Mistress Harebrain. In fact, Harebrain seems to take Lady Gullman's appearance as a “sweet virgin” (1.2.39) for granted because of her mother's reputation. Upon greeting Lady Gullman, he inquires after “that good old gentlewoman thy mother” (1.2.30-31), praising her mother's modesty: “I persuade myself, if modesty be in the world she is part on't: a woman of an excellent carriage all her lifetime, in court, city, and country” (1.2.31-34). As her name suggests, here Frank Gullman is open and honest about her mother's fabricated appearance of chastity while also being careful to maintain the ruse, and as such her speech throughout this scene is consistently loaded with doubled meaning. Her response, “She's always carried it well in those places, sir” (1.2.35-36) is simultaneously an acknowledgement of Harebrain's compliment of her mother's modest demeanour, while her aside reveals that what her mother had “carried” “in court, city, and country” are bastard children because of her work as a prostitute.

The doubled meaning of Lady Gullman's words throughout this scene remains inaccessible to Harebrain because he takes her chastity for granted; therefore, her doubled



speech both reveals the counterfeit nature of her performed chastity for the audience while maintaining its appearance for Harebrain. Her answers are frank and truthful and thus convey the naturalness of honest speaking, but because of her reputation as chaste, Harebrain does not or cannot see the unchaste meaning beneath her words. He asks her to give his wife “good counsel” insisting that “a little of thy instruction will not come amiss to her” (1.2.41, 43-44). Frank replies first that “Alas, she needs none, sir” before promising “I’ll bestow my labour, sir” (1.2.42, 45). Harebrain, of course, understands her words as modest, a self-effacing denial of having anything of value to contribute to the instruction of his wife. However, what he does not see is that Frank is being honest, though not completely forthright, about her potential influence on his wife. Her “labour” here is part of her profession; she will act as a pander for his wife’s adulterous affair. Such doubleness, and his interpretation of her words as modesty, would not be possible without the “virtuous name” (and the knowledge of how to effectively wield it) that Frank has inherited from her mother.

As Harebrain listens to the conversation between Frank and his wife, here, too, Lady Gullman’s status as chaste colours how Harebrain understands what he overhears. Though Frank intends to teach Mistress Harebrain how to behave chastely, as her husband requests, it is so that Mistress Harebrain can perform chastity as a cover for the fulfillment of her adulterous desires; thereby Frank passes on the knowledge she learned from her mother. Mistress Harebrain’s first words in this scene are a direct and forthright admission that she “would as gladly enjoy” the sight of her would-be lover, Penitent Brothel (1.2.77-78); however, before she can further incriminate herself or be disastrously overheard by her listening husband, Frank cuts her off, silencing her unchaste speech, much like her own mother did to her in the previous scene. Here, though, it is Frank who

takes on the role of chaste tutor. Indeed, farther off, the listening Harebrain approves of Lady Gullman's no-nonsense approach: "She's round with her, i'faith" (1.2.80). Frank's subsequent advice to Mistress Harebrain is a crash course in the effective performance of chastity, which echoes the advice of conventional conduct books, including the odd phrase sure to easily satisfy their eavesdropper, but which also emphasizes its status as a performance:

When husbands in their rank'st suspicions dwell,  
Then 'tis our best art to dissemble well.  
Put but these base notes in use, that I'll direct you,  
He'll curse himself that e'er he did suspect you. (1.2.81-84)

As many scholars have pointed out, Frank's advice here is "unmistakably theatrical" (Maguire and Smith 188); "She provides the theatrical setting, script ('notes'), and direction for the consummation of [Mistress Harebrain's] desires" (Aughterson 349). In this case, chastity is not something one has or possesses, but something to be performed, an "art" that can be dissembled, and Frank is Mistress Harebrain's director.

Much of Frank's advice to Mistress Harebrain addresses the issue of movement—she suggests that Mistress Harebrain deny visiting, separate herself from visitors, and neglect her role in the entertainment of her husband's guests. Though acting as a hostess was an important role for a virtuous wife, as we have seen in our discussion of *The Winter's Tale*, such close contact with male visitors presents opportunities for performances of chastity to falter or to be misinterpreted by a jealous husband looking for the fissures in his wife's appearance of chastity. Instead, Frank advises that Mistress Harebrain keep to her chamber, away from the company of men, so it will be clear that she has had no opportunity to be unchaste.

Chastity, however, is not just a state of the body, but also a state of mind, as the jealous Harebrain is well aware: “Tell her her thoughts, her very dreams are answerable” (1.2.56-57). To counter this, preventing her jealous husband from assuming all she lacks is the opportunity to be unfaithful, Frank suggests that Mistress Harebrain anticipate his watchful eye and place material signifiers of her chastity where he is sure to find them:

If he chance steal upon you, let him find  
 Some book lie open 'gainst an unchaste mind  
 And coted Scriptures, though for your own pleasure  
 You read some stirring pamphlet, and convey it  
 Under your skirt, the fittest place to lay it. (1.2.93-97)

Frank's suggestion here is clearly meant to help Mistress Harebrain not only appease her husband's wishes that she “read . . . the horrible punishments for itching wantonness, the pains allotted for adultery” (1.2.54-56), but her suggestion for the strategic placement of reading material, apparently casually abandoned, will also aid Mistress Harebrain in preemptively interpreting her own silent absence from her husband's side. These books that preach chastity provide her a chaste literary alibi. The “stirring pamphlet” (1.2.96) that she reads for her own pleasure is easily tucked out of sight on her lap through the openings of her skirt.<sup>4</sup> Frank's advice here suggests both the erotic nature of the pamphlets themselves, and also the ease with which women's desire could be concealed. The pamphlet safely hidden, her husband will remain unaware of the unchaste desire she silently hides beneath fabric and performance.

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<sup>4</sup> Chantal Schütz suggests that “The small size of these works did indeed make them easy to conceal in codpieces, as is made clear when Master Matthew in Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* reveals that he carries Samuel Daniel's *Delia*—among other things—in his hose (5.5.19-20)” (89). However, of *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis*, the two “wanton pamphlets” (1.2.47) Harebrain identifies by name, only *Venus and Adonis* was printed in the smaller octavo format prior to 1608.

“This,” Frank explains, “is the course, my wench, to enjoy thy wishes” (1.2.98). Her performance of chastity will be, like her skirt, a cover for her desires and the means by which she will be able to fulfill them. All she need do is “Manage these principles but with art and life: / Welcome all nations, thou’rt an honest wife” (1.2.101-102). Here Frank echoes the lesson her mother taught her: “Who gets th’opinion of a virtuous name / May sin at pleasure, and ne’er think of shame” (1.1.181-182). By fabricating chastity through continual performance, she can have the fulfillment of her adulterous desires because in her husband’s eyes, and in public opinion, she *is* “an honest wife.” This is the nature of what it means for something to be performative—the “acts, gestures, [and] enactments” that are supposed to signify chastity produce “the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 185). She *is* chaste precisely because she *behaves* chastely.

Though Mistress Harebrain’s first words in this scene are incompatible with the performance of chastity in which Frank directs her, by the end of the scene, her speech patterns have changed. When Harebrain, overcome with emotion, advises his wife to “Embrace her counsel, yield to her advices,” assuring her “didst thou know / The sweet fruit once, thou’dst never let it go” (1.2.158, 163-164), Mistress Harebrain’s reply is truthful by omission. Though here Harebrain refers to “The sweet fruit” of repentance, Mistress Harebrain seizes on the alternate, unintended, meaning of his words as sexual pleasure, and instead assures him “’Tis that I strive to get” (1.2.165). Her response is truthful, but like Frank, she knows Harebrain will overlook her unchaste meaning because her words indicate her willingness to listen to her friend, the “sweet virgin” (1.2.39).

Later, in Act 3, Scene 1, we see Mistress Harebrain following Frank’s advice to the letter. Harebrain returns home with Innes and Possibility, the two bachelors vying for

Lady Gullman's hand, and requests that his wife "welcome these two gentlemen my friends" (3.1.7-8). As Frank anticipated, however, this is a jealous test of Mistress Harebrain's chastity, one that she cannot pass, if she participates. In an aside, Harebrain describes how he will watch her:

I will observe her carriage and watch  
 The slippery revolutions of her eye.  
 I'll lie in wait for every glance she gives  
 And poise her words i'th' balance of suspect.  
 If she but swag she's gone, either on this hand  
 Overfamiliar, or on this too neglectful,  
 It does behoove her carry herself even. (3.1.10-16)

Harebrain here enumerates the signifiers of a lack of chastity that he expects to read on his wife's body: how she carries herself and even the movement of her eyes, already characterized as "slippery"—sly, covert, and difficult to catch except under the watchful eye of a jealous husband. In his jealousy, her words are already suspect and, he admits, this is the scale on which he will weigh their meaning. This test, of course, is impossible to pass. Her words would have to be perfectly balanced even judged from his skewed perspective. Mistress Harebrain, however, follows Frank's advice to the letter, and chooses to neglect the company of the other men. This is the only way to possibly "carry herself even," since, like Castiglione's court lady, too much or too little speech in their presence would signify a lack of chastity under her husband's suspicious gaze.

Instead she responds by sending the servant Rafe with two messages: one for the general company, excusing herself on the basis of sickness, and the other for her husband

alone, to be delivered away from the other men. “Now they are absent, sir,” Rafe explains,

’tis no such thing.

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My mistress has her health, sir,

But ’tis her suit she may confine herself

From sight of all men but your own dear self, sir,

For since the sickness of that modest virgin,

Her only company, she delights in none. (3.1.58-64)

Like Salome’s slander and Mariam’s final words in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Mistress Harebrain’s words here are reported by a male messenger. Though Mistress Harebrain is not dead, simply sequestered in another room in the house, her use of a male go-between similarly allows her words to be heard in her absence. Just as Salome’s use of Pheroras as her proxy helped to sever the connection between her speech and sexuality, here these words are Mistress Harebrain’s, but her absence prevents her words and accordant gestures from being subjected to the foregone conclusion of her husband’s jealous scrutiny. The content of her message emphasizes the connection between her absence and her commitment to her marital fidelity—the only gaze that she wants is that of “your own dear self, sir.” Additionally, Rafe’s delivery of the second message (supposedly containing the true nature of her refusal to appear) away from the other men, performs by proxy the spatial and vocal separation needed to convince her husband of the truth (and chastity) of her words.

Mistress Harebrain’s strategy is successful: Harebrain chides himself for being “Watchful o’er her that is her watch herself” (3.1.72), and we find that she has been

employing Frank's strategies for signifying her chastity through strategically-placed literature. Ultimately Harebrain suggests that she visit her sick friend—the key to their unfolding plan—under the would-be watchful eye of a servant in his control. Mistress Harebrain, however, refuses, citing her desire to guard her reputation for marital fidelity since “The world's condition is itself so vile sir / 'Tis apt to judge the worst of those deserve it not” (3.1.108-109), ascribing to “the world” Harebrain's own suspicion of her chastity. Though Harebrain is desperate to root out his wife's infidelity, if it exists, he cares deeply about her public reputation for chastity, since it is intimately connected to his own reputation as a husband. By seeming to point out this fact, Mistress Harebrain performs concern over her reputation that convinces her husband that she guards it even more closely than he himself does. What he does not realize in her misdirection, however, is that a servant would likely be admitted to her friend's sickroom and be allowed to witness (and therefore report back on) her private conference with her friend, whereas if he accompanies her himself, under the guise of “scatter[ing] such thoughts” against her reputation with “a husband's presence,” (3.1.118, 117) she can get him to agree to “bring [her] but to th' door” and “no farther” (3.1.122-123), as if this accompaniment would be an inconvenience to him.

Frank's plot to bring Mistress Harebrain and her would-be lover Penitent Brothel together while preserving Mistress Harebrain's appearance of marital chastity hinges entirely on Lady Gullman's reputation and her ability to perform chastity—in this case, for them both. Frank will create the opportunity for the lovers to meet by feigning sickness: Mistress Harebrain will visit her friend who is under the care of her supposed doctor, the disguised Penitent Brothel. As Frank herself suggests, her “counterfeit . . . fit

of violent sickness” (2.5.23-24) plays on the early modern expectation that women are the weaker sex and thus prone to illness:

Puh, all the world knows women are soon down. We can be sick when we have a mind to't, catch an ague with the wind of our fans, surfeit upon the rump of a lark and bestow ten pound in physic upon't. We're likest ourselves when we're down. 'Tis the easiest art and cunning for our sect to counterfeit sick, that are always full of fits when we are well, for since we were made for a weak imperfect creature, we can fit that best that we are made for. (2.5.31-39)

Frank fully intends to make use of, and profit from, the expectations about women that are already at her cultural disposal: women are weak and prone to fits of sickness (both real and imagined), so a plot involving her sudden illness will not raise suspicion.

However, as Daileader suggests, “The joke here is not only the courtesan’s matter-of-factness about female duplicity, but the innuendo on ‘down’ which links illness and sex, exposing the former as a cover for the latter. Also ‘physic’ was a euphemism for sexual intercourse, that sweet cure for the sickness of lust” (*Eroticism* 116).

This link between illness and sex (or lack thereof) also figures prominently in the various interpretations of her illness by the men in Frank’s life. Sir Bounteous Progress, her generous but impotent benefactor, is the only one who has cause to know that she is unchaste aside from her co-conspirators. He assumes that he has gotten her pregnant, after first confirming that her illness is “not the plague” (3.2.31).<sup>5</sup> In an aside, Penitent Brothel

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<sup>5</sup> Sir Bounteous’ concern about the plague would not have been out of the ordinary. In his examination of public health documents related to the plague in seventeenth-century London, Stephen Greenberg notes that “In the three centuries from 1348 to 1665 . . . it is rare to find a year without plague deaths reported somewhere in England, both in London and scattered throughout the shires and boroughs. And especially in the seventeenth century, contemporaries were acutely aware of those deaths” (509). An outbreak of plague in 1603 closed theatres, postponed the newly-crowned King James I’s planned “Triumphant Passage” through the city following his coronation, and a proclamation ordered “every man to return to his home” (Wilson 111, 93). Bills of mortality containing statistics of the week’s deaths from plague and other causes were published on a weekly basis beginning in July 1603, continuing uninterrupted for twenty-



suggests that “the pox” rather than pregnancy “had been more likely” (3.2.34, 35). Both men interpret her sickness based on their understanding of her sexual behaviour.

Harebrain, on the other hand, seems to understand Lady Gullman’s apparent illness as connected to her virginity. In conversation with Innes and Possibility, Lady Gullman’s rich suitors, Harebrain laments the tragic nature of her maiden sickness:

O sickness has no mercy, sir.

It neither pities lady’s lip nor eye.

It crops the rose out of the virgin’s cheek,

And so deflowers her that was ne’er deflowered.

Fools then are maids to lock from men that treasure

Which death will pluck and never yield them pleasure. (3.1.22-27)

Here Harebrain draws a connection between Lady Gullman’s virginity and her sickness.

Indeed the female virginal body was thought to be susceptible to various diseases, including “womb-fury,” hysteria, and chlorosis (frequently called the greensickness), which themselves often served as secondary signs of virginity (Loughlin 39-40). “Womb-fury,” like hysteria, was related to the movement of the womb in response to frustrated sexual desire and could result in pale skin, difficulty breathing, faintness, and, in the words of one French physician, “a sort of Madness arising from a vehement and unbridled desire of Carnal Imbracement, which desire dethrones the Rational Faculty so far, that the Patient utters wanton and lascivious Speeches, in all places, and companies, and having cast off all Modesty, madly seeks after Carnal Copulation, and invites men to

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three weeks, and again at the end of December that year for another fifteen (Greenberg 512-513). By September of that year, the number of weekly deaths from the plague crept up to 3,035 (Wilson 93). Plague would not have been far from the minds of the members of Middleton’s audience when the play was first performed in about 1605.

have to do with her in that way” (Riverius qtd. in Loughlin 39). Chlorosis, or greensickness, was similarly related to a lack of sexual intercourse, and was thought to only affect virgins. Loughlin describes it as “‘a type of severe anaemia characterized by extreme pallour,’ as well as by listlessness, insomnia, and bizarre cravings” (40).

Harebrain’s suggestion that such sickness “crops the rose out of the virgin’s cheek” can therefore be understood, not just as a conventional reversal of the Petrarchan signifiers of beauty by death’s pale hand, but also as a symptom of a specifically virginal illness and therefore a secondary signifier of virginity.

Harebrain’s image here of sickness deflowering a virgin is distinctly sexual and suggests that he too is thinking a bit too much about Lady Gullman’s virginal desirability. His conclusion that “maids” are therefore “Fools” “to lock from men that treasure / Which death will pluck and never yield them pleasure” (3.1.26-27) figures women’s sexuality as a treasure. Women, he paradoxically argues, are foolish to try to keep this treasure from men (or else they will never experience the pleasure of sexual intercourse), but once in the possession of men, this treasure—his wife’s sexuality, for example—is something to be carefully guarded.

For Harebrain, Lady Gullman’s reputation as a virgin appears to be confirmed by her sickness and contributes to his suggestion that his wife visit her, which, in turn, allows Mistress Harebrain to temporarily escape the watchful eye of her jealous husband. Like in her doubled speech, the spotlessness of Frank’s reputation colours Harebrain’s interpretation of her illness and prevents him from questioning it further. He trusts her: each aspect of her performance, including her sickness, adds up to a naturalized appearance of virginity. Further, immediately after lamenting the virginal nature of Lady Gullman’s sickness, Harebrain brags about his wife’s connection to “that sweet virgin”

(3.1.28), drawing an explicit connection between the two women and, by extension, the spotlessness of their reputations for chastity—“She was my wife’s only delight and company” (3.1.29-30). Here, in the presence of other men, Harebrain ensures that his wife’s reputation is explicitly connected to Lady Gullman’s status as a virtuous woman.

### “Voyces within”

Later, having cleared her supposed sickroom of Sir Bounteous, with his delusions of expectant fatherhood, and the hovering suitors Innes and Possibility with a brilliantly comedic moment of feigned defecation,<sup>6</sup> Frank finally offers Mistress Harebrain the “spacious” opportunity for the fulfilment of her adulterous desires (3.2.181-182). Mistress Harebrain’s worry, however, is the jealous husband that she left waiting “below” (3.2.186). She knows that he will be listening—“Jealousy is prick-eared, and will hear the wagging of a hair” (3.2.186-187)—he will be listening for any sign that she has been unfaithful. Frank, on the other hand, is undeterred and assures Mistress Harebrain that she need not worry—“Trust yourself with your pleasure and me with your security” (3.2.188-189)—Frank will continue the necessary performance of the marital chastity that Harebrain expects from his wife, even as Mistress Harebrain cheats on him.

As the lovers exit the stage, the quarto’s stage direction has Harebrain enter “listening” (sig. E2) while Frank counterfeits a conversation between herself and the now-absent Mistress Harebrain. This one-sided conversation is hilariously punctuated by various onomatopoeic interjections: “Good Mistress Harebrain, this was kindly done—huh!—give me your hand—huh!” (3.2.197-198); “Huff, huff, huff, why how now woman? Hey, hy, hy, for shame, leave!” (3.2.216-217). These are coughs, sobs, or

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<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of Frank’s feigned defecation as a performance of a “grotesque” and “leaky” body and its relationship to female agency, see Aughterson 354-355.

splutters designed to mask the sounds of the exuberant and voluble sex happening offstage. These interjections, however, seem to have posed a textual problem for some previous editors of the text, an issue that Daileader criticizes in her book *Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage*:

Once again, though (and by now we should be used to this), most editors don't "get it." The initial "Huff, huff, huff" has been the main source of confusion; most editions follow Standish Henning in inserting the stage direction "*Sobs*" in the first of these passages, suggesting that the courtesan ventriloquizes, by way of these inarticulate sounds, the mistress' so-called "weeping." (33)<sup>7</sup>

Here Daileader suggests that rather than producing sound *for* Mistress Harebrain, Frank's coughing noises are intended "to drown out and/or gloss over the offstage 'oohs' and 'ahs'" (33). In modern performances at least, Frank's is not the only voice to be heard in this scene that is remarkable for its "loudly erotic potential" (33). I wish to explore the impact that the erotic volume of this scene and the distinction that Daileader makes here would have on our understanding of how Middleton's female voices function in this scene.

Other critics like Herbert Heller take a different view. Though his focus is admittedly on "the moralism implicit in this scene" and he reveals an evident distaste for the "emphasis on the obscenity" of a scene that he notes "sets the limits of sexual explicitness in Jacobean dramatic texts . . . [and] is frequently cited as an example of

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<sup>7</sup> Daileader herself remedies this situation in her annotation of *A Mad World, My Masters* for *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, calling attention to the offstage sex noises without adding editorial stage directions. For example, she annotates the courtesan's "Huff, huff, huff" of line 216 as "coughing sounds intended to cover over the sounds of off-stage sex" (434 n216).

Middleton's own immorality or amorality" (59, 58), he argues for an understanding of this scene that conforms to the quarto's limited stage directions:

Though the Courtesan's huhs, huffs, and suhs represent the lovers' noises, the lovers themselves are silent in the text from line [191] until line [248]; noises offstage or "within" are not indicated. Therefore the focus of the attention is on the Courtesan herself, and she expresses the lovers' sexual activity in terms of sickness, pain, and weeping. Perhaps some of the noises even suggest nausea, recalling the possibility of morning sickness. This obscenity with its own vengeance inherent—this obscenity is indeed a sickness. (59)

Heller here suggests that the lovers' voices are represented only through Frank's ventriloquization of them. I would argue, however, that offstage voices are indeed built into the text in other ways. Other than the lovers' exit, Harebrain's entrance, and the return of the lovers to the stage after the consummation of their desires, the quarto does not include any stage directions for this scene. However, as Daileader suggests, "Middleton's text clearly allows—in a way modern editors have been shy to point out—that the lovers *be heard*, if not seen, onstage" and points to Frank's attempts at concealment as an example (*Eroticism* 32), whether or not this possibility is enacted.

If we explore Middleton's use of offstage voices further, the play also makes use of them on two other occasions in the previous act, which could prime a reader of the quarto (or a modern edition) and the play's audience to consider offstage action as part of the scene. Both instances occur as part of Follywit's theft plot. The first, an "O" delivered

offstage immediately prior to Follywit's entrance in Act 2, scene 4 is easily missed.<sup>8</sup> The second instance, at the beginning of Act 2, scene 6, however, is much more sustained:

*Voices within*

SIR BOUNTEOUS [*within*] Ho, Gunwater!

FOLLYWIT [*within*] Singlestone!

ANOTHER (*within*) Jenken, wa, ha, ho!

ANOTHER (*within*) Ewen!

ANOTHER (*within*) Simcod!

FOLLYWIT [*within*] Footman! Whew!

*Enter Sir Bounteous [in his nightgown] with a cord half unbound,*

*Footman with him [unbinding him] (2.6.0-6sd)*

Here the *Collected Works* edition preserves the quarto's initial stage direction "*Voices within*" (sig. C4) along with "*within*" as a repeated speech prefix as Follywit, the gallant trickster of the main plot, emerges after he has successfully robbed his grandfather,<sup>9</sup> Sir Bounteous Progress, of his future inheritance that his grandfather had been squandering. Significantly, these scenes of offstage voices follow scenes where Frank hatches her sickroom plot (the first follows the moment of her plot's inception in 2.3, and the second follows her explanation of the plan to Penitent Brothel in 2.5). This scenic parallel has the effect of aligning the two tricksters and their respective plots, which, as Maguire and

<sup>8</sup> In the quarto there are no such scene breaks, but "*Within*" is given as a speech prefix prior to the stage direction "*Enter in a masking suit with a vizard in his hand, Folly-wit*" (sig. C2). In the *Collected Works* edition, this is prefix is emended to "A VOICE WITHIN" (2.4.1).

<sup>9</sup> There is some debate about the familial relationship between Follywit and Sir Bounteous Progress. The 1640 second quarto is the first to include a list of "*The Actors in the Comedy*" and lists "*Richard Folly-wit*" as "Nephew to *Sir Bounteous Progress*" (sig. A4v). In his 1965 edition of the play, Standish Henning adapts his dramatis personae from this list in Q2, identifying Follywit as Sir Bounteous' nephew (2). However, in both Q1 and Q2 Follywit identifies Sir Bounteous as "my frolike Grandsire *Sir Bounteous Progress*" in the first scene (Q1 sig. A2v; Q2 sig. B1v). I therefore follow Daileader's lead in her *Collected Works* edition in identifying Follywit as Sir Bounteous' grandson (417).

Smith suggest, is often furthered by the use of the bed as a stage property in modern productions, which helps to form “a visual bond between the play’s two central trickster figures” (185).<sup>10</sup> Follywit’s theft of his inheritance and the plot’s use of offstage action parallels Penitent Brothel’s theft of Harebrain’s wife (whom Harebrain earlier describes as the “gem / [he] would not loose, kept by the Italian / Under lock and key” [1.2.21-23]) and primes the audience to think of offstage action and “voices within” as comprising part of the scene, just out of view.

By the time the sickroom scene begins, the audience therefore understands the offstage space as an extension of the stage. However, as Daileader explains, this is a theatrical illusion that audiences take for granted: “technically nothing ‘happens’ offstage: theatrically speaking, the actors await their cues; textually speaking, narrative is interrupted—both resulting in the illusion that a vital part of the play eludes the gaze” (*Eroticism* 23). Yet, she observes, “the ‘mind’s eye’ fills” in this gap with the action that we are told, or are led to believe, happens offstage (23). Noises offstage give the illusion that there are other rooms in a house, just beyond our viewpoint; characters report offstage action that supposedly took place elsewhere, beyond the space of the stage. These gaps of representation, filled in by imagination, give the sense that the play world is more expansive than the narrow space of the stage. Characters have lives beyond what the audience can view—the evidence is that we can occasionally hear the proof.

In the case of offstage sex, Daileader suggests that the audience is placed in the role of “potential voyeurs” and “the seeming *proximity* of each offstage encounter . . .

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<sup>10</sup> This scenic parallel is even further emphasized in Follywit’s entrance following the sickroom scene: “Was’t not well managed, you necessary mischiefs? Did the plot want either life or art” (3.3.1-2). Here he comments on his own plot, but it doubles as a comment on the riotous scene immediately previous.

both constitutes and reflects the pitch of our own voyeuristic engagement” (*Eroticism* 24, 25). For Daileader, the possibility of noises heard from the offstage lovers in *A Mad World, My Masters*, suggests that in comparison to other early modern instances of offstage sex, this scene takes place “not as *far* offstage, bringing the lovers within earshot and therefore almost within view” (34). Though from our modern perspective we cannot know whether early modern audiences would have really heard actors vocalize these noises from offstage or whether they would have instead strained to hear the “voices within” that the play primes them to expect and Frank’s performance strives to drown out, the effect is similar. The illusion here is that the right seat in the theatre, the craning of a neck, or the straining of an ear could be all that is needed to catch the lovers in the act. In this sense, the audience is as “prick-eared” as Mistress Harebrain’s husband, enjoying a similarly voyeuristic (though significantly more knowledgeable) point of view (34).

Modern productions, however, have taken up this possibility that the lovers are heard offstage and have made the vocality of the offstage sex a central part of the play’s comedy for a modern audience. Though *A Mad World, My Masters* does not have much of a modern stage history, there are some notable recent productions, including by Shakespeare’s Globe in 1998 (directed by Sue Lefton), by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2013 (directed by Sean Foley), and by the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York in 2011 (directed by Michael Cordner). The most notable difference between these three productions (which can be only partially attributed to budgetary differences) is their use of stage space in blocking the scene. Both large-scale professional productions opted to keep the lovers onstage, within the relative privacy of the four-poster bed that dominates the scene. The stage directions in the modernized script for the RSC production set the scene between Penitent Brothel and the



Mistress Harebrain character (Mrs. Littlepick) as follows:<sup>11</sup> “*BROTHEL and MRS LITTLEPICK pull the curtains of the four poster closed. MR LITTLEPICK is listening through the floor of the room above. BROTHEL and MRS LITTLEPICK’s lovemaking can soon be heard. TRULY KIDMAN invents to cover their noise . . .*” (49). The choice to keep the lovers in the bed emphasizes the immediacy of the lovemaking happening just out of sight—all that separates the lovers from view is a few folds of material. Here the audience is placed in the position of the voyeur, hoping perhaps to catch a glimpse of the lovers inside. Additionally, with the lovers onstage, the sounds emanating from the bed become extremely difficult to ignore, which only further emphasizes the difficulty of Frank’s task in concealing their sounds of pleasure from Mistress Harebrain’s listening husband.

Where these productions differ is in their blocking of the Harebrain character to account for his gullibility despite listening for signs of his wife’s infidelity. While the RSC production places Mr. Littlepick in a balcony space, “*listening through the floor of the room above,*” in the Globe production, Harebrain hides behind one of the Globe’s pillars, which similarly creates distance between the lovers and the listening Harebrain. Bruce R. Smith describes this as “sonic scene-setting.” Each production uses relative spatial distance to establish apparent boundaries in the “fictional soundscap[e]”—the “here-and-now indications of how far the actors’ voices are imagined to carry and who

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<sup>11</sup> In their Editor’s Note, Sean Foley and Phil Porter explain their decision to modernize Middleton’s text: “We wanted to make sure that nothing got in the way of communicating Middleton’s seething delight in exposing how we pretend to be what we’re not to get what we want . . . And we wanted to try to make sure everyone could laugh like they must have done in 1608: uproariously, and at ourselves” (11). In addition to cutting the length, they cut references that would not be recognizable for modern audiences, updated jokes and allusions to more “contemporary idioms,” and “changed character names where Middleton’s joke could be rendered more clearly with modern language” (11)—most notably for this analysis, Frank Gullman becomes Miss Truly Kidman, Harebrain and his wife become Mr. and Mrs. Littlepick, Sir Bounteous Progress becomes Sir Bounteous Peersucker, and the suitors Innes and Possibility become Master Muchly-Minted and Master Whopping-Prospect, respectively (13). For further discussion of these changes, see Eoin Price’s review essay, “Modernizing Metatheatre in the RSC’s *A Mad World My Masters*.”

will or will not hear those voices” (184). As Maguire and Smith suggest, behind the Globe’s pillar, Harebrain “occupies a physical space where it is at least plausible that he both hears and does not hear what goes on within” (185). Michael Corder’s 2011 production at the University of York, on the other hand, achieves a similar sonic balance by preserving the quarto’s exit. With no bed onstage—this staging opted instead for a soft armchair—Corder’s lovers exit to another room through a door in the set’s backdrop, while Harebrain enters through another door to listen (apart) as Frank feigns her conversation with Mistress Harebrain from a comfortable position in the armchair. By retaining the original exit, the York production preserves the sonic balance that places the couple within the full earshot of the audience but not of Harebrain; however, Frank’s challenge in re-signifying their vocalizations does not seem as insurmountable. With the lovers offstage and completely out of sight, the immediacy of the lovemaking is lessened: there are no moving bodies, bed curtains, or shadows to signify sex, only voices (a distinction to which I will return).

These three performances also share an important similarity in how they handle the sex scene: all three allocate the text’s monosyllabic noises to the couple rather than assigning them to Lady Gullman alone. This has the effect of emphasizing what Maguire and Smith call Lady Gullman’s “improvisory verbal disguise” (185). In their description of the Globe’s production, they note in particular that her “I know you do” from line 209 “became a comforting reply to Mistress Harebrain’s ecstatic, unscripted ‘I love it!’, and the texts ‘huff, huff, huff’ and ‘hey, hy, hy,’ (216-217) . . . indicate the lover’s exertions” (185). However, as Corder explains, it is difficult to achieve the effect of improvisation except through careful rehearsal and allocation of lines. Instead, in rehearsal for the York production, he discovered that “Ad lib improvisation will not work, because co-ordination

between the offstage participants and those playing the Courtesan and Harebrain needs to be precise, or the scene will degenerate into meaningless noise” (18). The script for the RSC production shows a similar reallocation of lines. Lady Gullman’s vocal interjections are reassigned to the Mistress Harebrain character (Mrs. Littledick), while Truly Kidman (Lady Gullman) maintains the illusion of a normal, chaste conversation by interacting with the lover’s passionate noises. Witness how Lady Gullman’s first cover-up speech plays out in this version:

TRULY KIDMAN: Pray, sit down, there’s a chair, good Mistress Littledick, this was kindly done.

MRS LITTLEDICK: Huh!

TRULY KIDMAN: Give me your hand.

MRS LITTLEDICK: Huh!

TRULY KIDMAN: Alas, how cold you are. Even so is your husband, that worthy wise gentleman; a man who only waits . . .

MRS LITTLEDICK: Huh! Huh!

TRULY KIDMAN: . . . to satisfy his wife. Love him—

MRS LITTLEDICK: Yes!

TRULY KIDMAN: Honour him—

MRS LITTLEDICK: Yes!

TRULY KIDMAN: Stick by him—

MRS LITTLEDICK: Yes!

TRULY KIDMAN: He lets you want nothing that’s fit for a woman—

MRS LITTLEDICK: Yes!

TRULY KIDMAN: And to be sure on’t, he will see himself that you—

MRS LITTLEDICK: Yes?

TRULY KIDMAN: . . . want it not.

MR LITTLEDICK: And so I do, i' faith, 'tis right my humour. (49-50)

By assigning the interjections to the cheating wife, Truly Kidman's speech here maintains the fiction of chaste conversation while it is simultaneously punctuated by evidence of Mrs. Littledick's infidelity. The York production's allocation of lines achieves a similar effect with the lovers fully out of sight offstage. As in the RSC production above, the huhs of Lady Gullman's first speech are reassigned to Mistress Harebrain with her inarticulate moans punctuating Lady Gullman's sentence like commas. Significantly, Lady Gullman's voice also loudly covers over the lovers' moans that cannot be explained away. In effect, their voices blend, allowing Lady Gullman to claim Mistress Harebrain's exclamations as her own noises of sickness or overwhelming but chaste emotion.

Mistress Harebrain's offstage voice in this scene, whether actually vocalized from offstage, behind bed curtains, or imaginatively produced by the audience, is as unchaste as a female voice can possibly be. This is the patriarchal nightmare of which conduct books warned—the convergence of uncontrolled female speech and sexuality—which is the stuff of misogynist fantasy. However, it all takes place offstage—beyond the view of the audience. Instead it is only her voice that we hear (or strain to hear) from offstage, a voice, moreover, that exists only as an imaginative or performative possibility between the lines of the text we have preserved on the page.<sup>12</sup> Here, Mistress Harebrain's desire is expressed in monosyllabic words and sounds—"phonemes rather than graphemes"—

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<sup>12</sup> The theatrical space and the bodies and voices of the actors on (or off) the stage add another level of complexity here, which I do not want to ignore, but is somewhat tangential to my argument about the characters' vocalizations. Daileader explores this more fully in her consideration of the "gaps" created by scenes of offstage sex (see *Eroticism*, especially 1-22). As she suggests, "the 'offstage' does not exist" (21), and the sexual act does not actually take place backstage. Instead, for Daileader, "it takes place . . . *outside the text*; neither on stage nor off—in our ears, in our guts" (131).

signifying the inarticulate expressions of the body (Daileader, *Eroticism* 119). However, that body is not onstage (or at least not in view of the audience or her jealous husband), so at the moment precisely when her voice most represents her body—her chastity, or lack thereof—in her absence from the stage, her voice is decoupled from it, disembodied.

The disembodied character of Mistress Harebrain's voice creates space for Lady Gullman to reinscribe the meaning of the sounds that *she* hears whether or not the fictional soundscape includes the audience within earshot. Since there is no body to confirm or explain the action, Lady Gullman provides one. Daileader is right, Lady Gullman is not ventriloquizing Mistress Harebrain's voice (*Eroticism* 33) so much as she is mediating it by incorporating the vocalizations into chaste conversation. Here Frank does what we have already seen other female figures do for (or to) each other—she provides a chaste interpretation of a voice in need of signification. Paulina does this for Hermione when she interprets her apparent death as directly tied to Leontes' "tyranny / Together . . . with [his] jealousies" (3.2.177-178), and Mariam for herself through her choice of messenger to be "the relater of [her] end" (5.1.3).

As Christina Luckyj argues, "Silence leaves women, perhaps more than men, open to manipulation. As Harvey writes of the silent hysteric, 'Her "voice" and special propensity for language is transformed into a kind of somatic dumbshow, making her particularly dependent upon the men who must translate her bodily signs into language'" (Luckyj 71). Here, with no bodily signs to translate, Lady Gullman translates the inarticulate sounds which, while the lovers' bodies are hidden from view, are not yet immediately tied to meaning. Her improvisational vocal performance mediates these noises for Mistress Harebrain's "prick-eared" husband, interpreting the noises as chaste before he has a chance to do otherwise. An illustrative moment can be seen in Cordner's

production of the play at York: with each new exuberant noise from the lovers, the expressions of the actor playing Harebrain change momentarily to puzzlement, as he tries to make sense of the incongruous noises. His expression changes, however, to one of understanding satisfaction with Lady Gullman's chaste interpretations. A moan of pleasure is quickly interpreted as a sob; an exclamation of "Ay there, o there, there" (originally Lady Gullman's line) is claimed as her own "pain," so much so that "I can scarce endure your hand upon it" (3.2.224-225). Here she substitutes one bodily phenomenon for another as each breaks language down into "its smallest aural fragment[s]" in similar ways (Daileader, *Eroticism* 129). This act of mediation allows Mistress Harebrain to abandon her own performance of chastity completely and unabashedly in the fulfillment of her adulterous sexual desires. She puts her "security" (3.2.189) and reputation in Lady Gullman's capable hands. Frank's voice covers over, stands in for, and interprets Mistress Harebrain's utterances in a way that is consistent with her continued appearance of chastity.

There are moments in this scene, however, where we can notice the difficulty of maintaining this performance. Daileader remarks on the scene's duration as an indication of the lovers' enthusiastic consent: "in *A Mad World*, the wily cover-up speech of the conspiring courtesan is notable for its duration, pointed up by the verbal filler she spins out so that the lovers may enjoy themselves" (*Eroticism* 32). Though she estimates the timing of the scene's "fifty-six lines of dialogue" to take "no more than five minutes" to suggest that "there are far better reasons for speed here" in the enjoyment of their quick sexual encounter (32), we are told later that in the world of the play that "Never was hour spent better" (3.2.258). Whether comprising five minutes or an entire hour, Lady Gullman's exasperated "Still, still weeping" (3.2.216) emphasizes the length of the tryst

and the lovers' volubility. Her later inquiry, "Will you be going then?" (3.2.237) may similarly mark her growing impatience with the couple. In Cordner's York production, however, this line follows a pause after the lovers' climax, which Lady Gullman takes as her cue to shift the trajectory of her fabricated conversation. When the noises resume, however, she is forced to improvise further by adding various uncles, aunts, and cousins into the mix:

Thanks, good Mistress Harebrain. Welcome, sweet Mistress Harebrain. Pray commend me to the good gentleman your husband.

.....

And to my Uncle Winchcomb, and to my Aunt Lipsalve, and to my Cousin Falsetop, and to my Cousin Lickit, and to my Cousin Horseman, and to all my good cousins in Clerkenwell and Saint John's. (3.2.240-247)

The joke here is of course that the names she lists suggest their involvement in prostitution, but the sheer number she invents hints at the potential for her verbal filler to run out and for her performance to break down. This both adds to the comedy of the scene and serves as a reminder of the precarity of such performances. Consistency is required for the performative production of identity to appear natural. In this scene, as in life, a failure to maintain this performance would be met with significant consequences.

**"The very devil assumed thee formally"**

Penitent Brothel later and rather suddenly (if we overlook the foreshadowing of his oxymoronic name) repents his adulterous affair with Mistress Harebrain. This scene, which has sparked quite a bit of debate amongst scholars, features a succubus disguised as Mistress Harebrain in a sudden intrusion of the supernatural into what Gary Kuchar

describes as “the realistic mode of Jacobean city comedy” (“Rhetoric” 23). Scholarly debate seems to focus largely on what the scene suggests about the play’s morality. Heller situates Penitent Brothel’s conversion in Protestant theology (59-66), while Charles A. Hallett sees Penitent as a sort of “Everyman figure” to argue that “the primary function of the Succubus . . . is a psychological one; it symbolizes the last effort of Penitent’s Imagination to overcome his Judgement” (75, 81). On the other hand, Leanore Lieblein suggests that in light of the play’s focus on disguise and hypocritical reading practices, the audience should “evaluate Penitent’s repentance” with “an ironic perspective” (27), and William W. E. Slights argues “for an enlarged view of the ‘comedic framework’ which can include extreme statements of traditional piety as part of the play’s comic madness” (95).

While there is certainly much to explore here with regard to Penitent’s repentance, this scene also creates a contrast between Mistress Harebrain and her Succubus double through its representation of female sexuality. As Kuchar suggests, the Succubus appears in this scene “[a]s the overly literalized embodiment of male desire” (“Rhetoric” 24)—she is a representation of misogynist fantasy about the “itching wantonness” (1.2.55) that supposedly constitutes female desire. As such, in Kuchar’s words, “the Succubus situates Penitent in precisely the same position that he and Harebrain position Mistress Harebrain throughout the play: as the object, rather than the subject, of someone else’s desire” (“Rhetoric” 24). She is the incarnation of uncontrolled female sexuality that inverts the usual dominance of masculine virility. This sexuality is monstrous.

While the actor playing Mistress Harebrain would undoubtedly also play the role of the Succubus, it is clear from Penitent’s startled response at her appearance—“Celestial soldiers guard me!” (4.1.31)—that he at least suspects (or fears) the Succubus’



diabolical origins. An early modern audience would also recognize similar signs throughout this scene. Her first words—“What? At a stand? The fitter for my company!” (4.1.30)—are not only a bawdy pun, suggesting a state of sexual arousal, but they also draw attention to her appearance in the moment of Penitent’s spiritual unrest, something that the devil was known to do. In his “Sermon on Deuteronomy,” Calvin warns that Satan looks for these moments of spiritual conflict: “When does Satan meet a man in some bodily shape and tangle him in his snares? When a man is in some grief of mind, or in some hatred against his neighbor, or when a woman spites her husband” (342). This timely appearance of the devil was a key feature in many trials for witchcraft. Additionally, the way that the Succubus speaks about women in her attempted seduction of Penitent seems to draw further on the early modern understanding of the nature of demons. “Had women such loves, would’t not mad em?” she asks, but her use of the words “women” and the elided “em” here signal that she does not include herself among this gender category. In his treatise *Daemonologie*, King James himself addresses the issue of the sexes of spirits, especially those that take the form of Incubi or Succubi:

And whereas yee inquire if these spirites be diuieded in sexes or not, I thinke the rules of Philosophie may easelie resolue a man of the contrarie: For it is a sure principle of that arte, that nothing can be diuieded in sexes, except such liuing bodies as must haue naturall seede to genere by. But we know spirites hath no seede proper to themselues, nor yet can they gender one with an other. (67-68)

Spirits cannot have a sex because they do not have a living body and instead take human form either through illusions or reanimating the dead.

Where the real Mistress Harebrain maintains her performance of chastity outside the safety of the sickroom guarded by Lady Gullman, the Mistress Harebrain Succubus

does not—she shows no concern for her reputation whatsoever. Instead, her speech is explicitly and aggressively sexual. The Succubus pursues Penitent, undeterred by his rejection of her, which plays on and represents early modern ideas about the insatiability of female desire:

Rouse thy amorous thoughts and twine me,  
 All my interest I resign thee.  
 Shall we let slip this mutual hour  
 Comes so seldom in our power?  
 Where's thy lip, thy clip, thy fadom?  
 Had women such loves, would't not mad 'em?  
 Art a man, or dost abuse one?  
 A love, and knowst not how to use one?  
 Come, I'll teach thee— (4.1.45-53)

Her words here are sexually aggressive, evoking images of sexual embrace and penetration, while also challenging Penitent's masculinity. The kisses and embraces she demands are not forthcoming, which, she warns him, could drive women to madness. Her use of the word "loves" in this context also invokes Penitent's male sexual anatomy, a physical characteristic that women lack. Explicitly questioning Penitent's manhood, she first suggests that he may only be pretending to be a man (which is ironic, coming from a demon in the shape of a woman), before furthering her anatomical use of "love" to suggest that he "knowest not how to use" his sexual organ. In offering to teach him, she completes her emasculation of him, suggesting that she take on the dominant sexual role to compensate for his sexual incompetence.

In Penitent's later description of the encounter to Mistress Harebrain, he is clearly unnerved by the uncanny resemblance between the Succubus and his lover. He tells her

The very devil assumed thee formally:

That face, that voice, that gesture, that attire

E'en as it sits on thee, not a pleat altered,

That beaver band, the colour of that periwig,

The farthingale above the navel, all

As if the fashion were his own invention. (4.5.26-31)

Penitent's description here is of the Succubus' outer appearance, which as the audience would recognize, is the same as the real Mistress Harebrain's since it is the same actor.

Her voice is the same, her gestures, even her attire, which, in the theatrical context especially, tends to represent identity. In practice, in *performance*, however, there is a significant difference in the behaviour of the two Mistresses Harebrain, but Penitent

admits, "had not worthier cogitations blest me, / Thy form and his enchantments had possessed me" (4.5.39-40)—he would have been taken in by the devil's sexually

aggressive impersonation. This suggests that Penitent has fallen prey to what Kuchar calls "the virgin/whore dichotomy" that is characteristic of patriarchal assumptions of female sexuality ("Rhetoric" 24), which the play's comedy consistently calls into question.

Having engaged in an adulterous affair with Mistress Harebrain, Penitent can no longer see the difference between her continued performance of chaste behaviour and the

Succubus' attempted seduction:

What knows the lecher when he clips his whore

Whether it be the devil his parts adore?

They're both so like that, in our natural sense,

I could discern no change nor difference. (4.5.53-56)

Though here he casts himself in the role of “lecher” and takes responsibility for much of the blame for their sinfulness, it is clear that he views Mistress Harebrain as a whore and therefore ascribes to her the overt sexuality of the Succubus. For Penitent, such unchaste behaviour is well within the realm of possibility for someone like Mistress Harebrain who has lost her claim to marital chastity.

However, Penitent is penitent before the arrival of the Succubus so it is important to consider what about his encounter with Mistress Harebrain could have prompted his suspicions about the uncontrolled and insatiable nature of female sexual desire that are then confirmed by the Succubus. In his analysis of his process of workshopping the play for performance, Corder suggests that the answer can be found in the lovers’ final exchange at the end of the sickroom scene, in “a passage which seems to have escaped critical comment, but made us pause in rehearsal” (19). As Mistress Harebrain takes her leave, she praises Lady Gullman’s wit before addressing her lover: “Once again, health, rest and strength to thee, sweet lady. Farewell, you witty squall. Good Master Doctor, have a care to her body if you stand her friend. I know you can do her good” (3.2.251-254). Here, as Corder suggests, Mistress Harebrain continues the sickroom charade in order to appease her listening husband, but her words also have a potential double meaning. Corder explains,

A woman who has just had sex with Penitent now recommends that he should “have a care” to another woman’s “body,” and assures him that if he “stand” that woman’s “friend,” he will be able to do her good. The use of “stand” here scarcely requires comment, while one contemporary meaning of “friend” was “lover.” So

the possibility opens up that, in gratitude for all the services she has received from the Courtesan, Mistress Harebrain now offers to share Penitent with her. (20)

What we have, then, is a woman who uses double entendre to produce a playful fissure in her appearance of chastity for the benefit of her lover (and their benefactress) alone. Her words here are unchaste in their potentially sexual meaning and her suggestion “I know you can do her good” is both praise of her lover’s sexual prowess and an acknowledgement of her own sexual fulfillment. In the presence of her lover and her friend, a courtesan turned bawd, Mistress Harebrain apparently feels safe to let her performance of chastity falter in a way that she knows her husband may hear but will not understand.

Earlier in the play, however, Penitent’s initial interest in Mistress Harebrain is focused on her apparent fidelity to her husband. In Act 1, Scene 1, Penitent describes his “adulterous motions” for “Harebrain’s wife,” suggesting that her husband’s jealousy is “fantastic but deserved” (1.1.104, 106, 108). On one hand, his suspicion is “fantastic” because Mistress Harebrain gives him no cause to doubt her fidelity, but on the other hand, it is “deserved” because there are those, like himself, who would put her chastity to the test. It is because of her husband’s watchful eye, he explains, that he must

use the means

Of one who knows no mean, a courtesan

(One poison for another) whom her husband

Without suspicion innocently admits

Into her company, who with tried art

Corrupts and loosens her most constant powers,

Making his jealousy more than half a wittol,

Before his face plotting his own abuse,  
 To which himself gives aim,  
 Whilst the broad arrow with the forkèd head  
 Misses his brow but narrowly. (1.1.110-120)

Penitent's focus here is on Harebrain and the female chastity that Harebrain jealously protects, suggesting that Penitent's desire not only "operates within a male-to-male exchange relation[ship]" between the two men (Kuchar, "Rhetoric" 24), but also that his desire for Mistress Harebrain is focused on her "most constant powers." It is her marital chastity that he finds attractive, likely because it also represents an imagined competition between the two men. His alliance with Frank Gullman is a means to an end—"one poison for another"—and it is clear that he views Frank as Mistress Harebrain's antithesis: as a courtesan, she knows "no mean," no limits to her sexuality, which Penitent finds distasteful but useful in his pursuit of Mistress Harebrain.

Penitent later expresses his repentance for his part in their adulterous affair with an image of whoredom and promiscuity that recalls Mistress Harebrain's unchaste suggestion as well as his distaste for female sexuality that "knows no mean." He tells Mistress Harebrain,

There's nothing but our virtue knows a mean.  
 He that kept open house now keeps a quean.  
 He will keep open still that he commends,  
 And there he keeps a table for his friends;  
 And she consumes more than his sire could hoard,  
 Being more common than his house or board. (4.5.62-67)

The image here is of an open home with a wife who is transformed into a prostitute, shared sexually among friends. This recalls Mistress Harebrain's suggestion that he "have a care to [Lady Gullman's] body if you stand her friend" (3.2.253), lending support to the idea that he was unnerved by her momentary lack of performative chastity. Additionally, his wording here, noting that "There's nothing but our virtue knows a mean," recalls his earlier obsession with both Mistress Harebrain's and Frank's sexuality and their positions as sexual objects within an exchange relationship between men. Mistress Harebrain's suggestion that she share her lover with her friend, however, reverses the gendering of this exchange relationship and places Penitent in the role of the one to be exchanged. Penitent's image here of an open house and table, however, re-establishes the gendered dynamic, placing Mistress Harebrain in the role of "quean," the unchaste woman exchanged between friends, suggesting that this is how he prefers to understand their relationship.

Penitent's response then is to attempt to restore the chastity that he so admired in Mistress Harebrain, suggesting that "She's part a virgin whom but one man knows" (4.5.69) before advising her to "Embrace thy husband, and beside him none: / Having but one heart, give it but to one" (4.5.70-71). This ironic advice is certainly part of the play's comedy, but it also draws attention to Mistress Harebrain's performative production of chastity throughout the play and in this scene in particular. In contrast to the Succubus whom Penitent mistakes for her, Mistress Harebrain's performance of chastity in this scene does not falter at all. When he arrives at her home, she is surprised to see him and advises him "'Twas desperately adventured" (4.5.15)—his visit threatens the coherence of her performative production of chastity. Moreover, she denies his accusation that she came to his chamber with an air of modesty: "By my life you wrong me, sir" (4.5.19).

Her words appear to reject the possibility outright—a chaste woman (or at least a woman with an eye to protecting her appearance of chastity) would not do such a thing. Though she clarifies that she had neither the means nor the opportunity, the fact that she had the motive remains chastely unsaid. Penitent’s suggestion that she may remain “part virgin”, therefore, appears a moot point. She does not need advice on how to perform chastity because, like Frank Gullman before her, she is “too deep a scholar grown / To learn [her] first rules now” (1.1.181-182).

### **“Thou’rt made honest”**

To return again to the role that female homosocial relationships play in supporting individual performances of chastity, we can see in the encounter between Follywit, Lady Gullman and her mother in Act 4, Scene 6 that Mother Gullman is instrumental in interpreting her daughter’s voice as chaste. At the beginning of the scene, Lady Gullman struggles with Follywit, rebuffing his advances. His response, “What, so coy, so strict? Come, come” (4.6.1) signals that Lady Gullman’s offstage rejection of him treads the fine line that Castiglione describes between entertaining potentially unchaste conversation and avoiding it: engage too much and risk being seen as unchaste, or too little and be interpreted as “coy,” as using the pretence of modesty only for the sake of attracting male attention. Lady Gullman’s rejection of Follywit’s advances here—“Pray change your opinion, sir, I am not for that use” (4.6.2)—shows that she seeks to distance herself from the suggestion that she may be unchaste through a performance of chastity that includes closing herself off from unchaste speech. However, this strategy, as Follywit’s comment about coyness suggests, runs the risk of misinterpretation.



Follywit is initially puzzled by her rejection of him, but he also finds her reluctance “bewitching” (4.6.19). For him, the comments that Lady Gullman found so objectionable (delivered before the beginning of the scene, so unheard by the audience) constituted flirting on his part:

’Sfoot, this is strange, I’ve seldom seen a wench stand upon stricter points. ’Life, she will not endure to be courted. Does she e’er think to prosper? I’ll ne’er believe that tree can bring forth fruit that never bears a blossom. Courtship’s a blossom and often brings forth fruit in forty weeks. (4.6.6-11)

Follywit does not understand Lady Gullman’s performance of chastity that does “not endure to be courted,” for in his mind chastity is meant to give way to prosperity—both in the sense of a growing body in pregnancy, and in the financial prosperity of marriage, one of the only methods of upward social mobility for women. There is an element of dramatic irony here, however, since we know that Frank’s performance of chastity and her rejection of Follywit’s too-forward advances, though frustrating for Follywit, are a fundamental part of her means of social advancement. She thinks to prosper by and through her rejection of such advances. Lady Gullman’s performative production of her appearance of chastity is precisely what makes her marriageable and, as we will see, this appearance of chastity is also very attractive. In fact, over the course of his speech, Follywit’s attitude begins to soften from frustration to the idea that “I ne’er saw / Face worth my object till mine eye met hers” (4.6.19-20). Her rejection of him, far from putting him off, seems to have intrigued him further.

Mother Gullman’s encounter with Follywit at this point in his consideration of her daughter helps to interpret Frank’s behaviour as chaste, even in her absence. After inquiring after Frank, Follywit admits that he “like[s] the gentlewoman well” and

describes her as “a pretty, contrived beauty” (4.6.29-30). While “contrived” in this context can certainly mean “delicately made” as Daileader suggests in her gloss of the line (442 n30), it also suggests that her beauty, no matter how delicate, could be deliberately fabricated rather than natural. Mother Gullman, however, forecloses this possibility in her response: “Ay, nature hath done her part, sir” (4.6.31). Frank’s beauty is all natural. Despite his continued fascination with the young lady, Follywit returns to his earlier frustration at her behaviour to complain that “she has one uncomely quality” in that “she’s afraid of a man” (4.6.32, 34). Here Mother Gullman adjusts Follywit’s interpretation of her daughter’s behaviour, instructing him on how to understand her behaviour as a sign of chastity: “Alas, impute that to her bashful spirit. She’s fearful of her honour” (4.6.35-36). Any coyness he might have suspected in her should instead be interpreted as maiden bashfulness.

Follywit protests, not understanding how she could be fearful of her honour: “Of her honour? ’Slid, I’m sure I cannot get her maidenhead with breathing upon her, nor can she lose her honour in her tongue” (4.6.37-39). Follywit’s response here is important because it draws attention to his ignorance of the behavioural constraints and expectations placed on women in the period and the difficulty of maintaining an appearance of chastity that is both unsullied and effortless. In light of his earlier reproductive imagery, his insistence that all he wanted to do was to speak to her, “nor can she lose her honour in her tongue” is ironic—unchaste speech is exactly how a woman can lose her appearance of chastity. Her interactions with men—her speech, her listening, her silence—are precisely what determine the appearance of the honour of which she is so fearful and protective.

Mother Gullman’s agreement with Follywit that her daughter’s fearfulness is excessive both caters to the idea that Frank had nothing to fear from him, while also

emphasizing her daughter's virginity: "but what would you have of a foolish virgin, sir, a wilful virgin" (4.6.40-41). Even in her mother's apparent disparagement, Frank's "foolish" behaviour becomes an example of the superlative nature of her chastity. In Mother Gullman's evaluation then, Frank's commitment to her virginal honour is even to her own detriment, which also suggests a willingness on Mother Gullman's part to put the question of Frank's virginity to rest and have her safely settled into marriage:

Always timorsome, always backward, ah, that same peevish honour of hers has undone her and me both, good gentleman. The suitors, the jewels, the jointures that has been offered her—we had been made women forever! But what was her fashion? She could not endure the sight of a man, forsooth, but run and hole herself presently, so choice of her honour. I am persuaded, whene'er she has husband,

She will e'en be a precedent for all married wives,

How to direct their actions and their lives. (4.6.44-53)

Here Mother Gullman both categorizes her daughter's behaviour as the epitome of virginal chastity, and distances herself as a mother from the desire for its preservation. Her desire, she claims, is to see her daughter well married. But by presenting her position in this way, Mother Gullman also emphasizes her daughter's desirability as a potential wife and directs Follywit's intentions toward marriage. Since Frank has had suitors who have offered her vast amounts of wealth and jewels, she is desired by other men. However, because she has made herself unavailable to other men—and Follywit has seen an example of such behaviour in her initial rejection of him—this is a trend that is very likely to continue when she is married, which would make her "a precedent for all married wives / How to direct their action and their lives." This, of course, is ironic, since

the audience knows that Frank Gullman is, in fact, a courtesan and has already been teaching a married woman how to perform chastity as a cover for her infidelity. She may be “a precedent for all married wives,” but not in the way that Follywit expects.

Mother Gullman’s reputation and presentation of herself as a virtuous gentlewoman is an important part of her ability to preserve her daughter’s appearance of chastity and act as an agent for her in marriage. As Panek argues in her exploration of mother-daughter relations in *A Mad World, My Masters*, there is very little in the play to separate “the successful bawd” from “the ‘good’ mother” (430). In this scene, Panek argues, Mother Gullman shows that she is “no more than ordinarily interested in wealth” thereby foreclosing what she describes as “one of the defining characteristics of the bawd; since she is not prostituting her daughter’s virginity for selfish gain, the grounds from which to pass judgement on her *as* a bawd become less clear” (429-430). Further, she argues, this scene “makes it amusingly evident that the main thing separating the bawd from the ‘good’ mother is the nature of the offer—does the suitor wish to obtain the daughter’s maidenhead with or without a formal vow?” (430). The audience is able to see both perspectives. Mother Gullman is the “good” virtuous mother at work to secure her daughter’s future in an honourable marriage, which, as Panek suggests, “sounds at the same time like a bawd brokering a deal” (430). However, I would like to emphasize that Mother Gullman’s ability to appear as a “good” mother and not a bawd in her interactions with Follywit depends entirely on her own successful presentation of herself as a virtuous gentlewoman, backed by her reputation within the community as such. Her own apparent virtue in large part determines her daughter’s eligibility and reinforces the evidence she provides for her daughter’s virginial status and commitment to chastity. Her appearance of a modest financial motive and her enforcement of an “upright courtship in Follywit”

(Panek 429) become part and parcel of the successful performance of virtuous motherhood that is required to secure her daughter's upward social mobility through marriage.

Follywit's soliloquy when Mother Gullman exits shows the effect of her influence. Rather than a source of frustration or a potential indicator of her toying with his affections, Lady Gullman's behaviour becomes an example of extreme chastity, which Follywit finds surprisingly attractive:

Would I might be hanged if my love do not stretch to her deeper and deeper.  
 Those bashful maiden humours take me prisoner. When comes a restraint upon  
 flesh, we are always most greedy upon't, and that makes your merchants' wives  
 oftentimes pay so dear for a mouthful. Give me a woman as she was made at first,  
 simple of herself, without sophistication, like this wench. I cannot abide them  
 when they have tricks, set speeches and artful entertainments. You shall have  
 some so impudently aspected, they will outcry the forehead of a man, make him  
 blush first and talk him into silence, and this is counted manly in a woman. It may  
 hold so—sure womanly it is not, no.  
 If e'er I love or anything move me,  
 'Twill be a woman's simple modesty. (4.6.57-71)

Her bashfulness now takes him prisoner. Her restraint makes her more desirable, which Follywit describes in terms of forbidden desires such as eating meat during Lent: when access is restricted, the craving intensifies. With Mother Gullman's interpretation of her daughter's behaviour, the behaviour that at first seemed coy, now, in Follywit's estimation is "simple" and "without sophistication." Her chastity appears natural and honest. With the help of her mother's testimony, Frank has achieved Castiglione's

*sprezzatura*. Instead, what Follywit comes to describe as intolerable by the end of the scene is the failure to produce an appearance of chastity that is natural and without art or deceit. The behaviour to which Follywit objects is behaviour that is intended to mimic modesty but inadvertently reveals itself as “tricks, set speeches and artful entertainments” designed to entice a man. It is this potential intent to seduce that undermines the coherent appearance of chastity in this case, suggesting instead that the sexual desire such women exhibit in this type of behaviour reveals their lack of chastity. Further, the specific behaviours that Follywit points to here are examples of a manner of speaking that would be considered unchaste. He describes women who are bold or even brazen in their manner, which for him indicates a willingness to pursue their own sexual desires. When he argues “they will outcry the forehead of a man,” the image he uses is of a cuckold’s horns, and his use of the word “outcry” makes a distinct connection between speech and the uncontrolled female sexuality that turns men into cuckolds. This speech is impudent, sexual, and enough to “make [a man] blush,” before quickly becoming much too shrewish, and overstepping the bounds of acceptable femininity. He finds Frank attractive because she does not do these things. Her speech is controlled, contained, and admits no apparent possibility of uncontrolled female sexual desire.

When Frank reappears with her mother, in what we know must be a practiced routine for the benefit of potential suitors, she initially emphasizes her status as “a poor and silly virgin” (4.6.74-75) but remains silent through much of the rest of the scene. Mother Gullman plays off of and emphasizes the chastity of her daughter’s silence, assuring the silent Frank that Follywit’s intentions are honourable and admonishing her for her apparent overcommitment to virginity. Finally, Mother Gullman assures Follywit “the way’s broke before you, / You have the easier passage” (4.6.94-95)—a bawdy hint

that Frank is not the virgin she claims to be. Significantly, Frank speaks to Follywit directly only after he assures her that his intentions are honourable: “I am no curious wooer, but in faith / I love thee honourably” and even then, only to question “How mean you that, sir?” (4.6.97-98). Her words here are brief and are intended only to secure his suggestion of marriage rather than a longer courtship—like the suitors Innes and Possibility. Here Mother Gullman steps in, speaking for her daughter while she retains her silent appearance of chastity, appearing to advocate to her chastely reticent daughter on Follywit’s behalf. Her eagerness for the match to be secured has already been explained away by her description of Frank’s overcommitment to chastity, so here it only serves to underscore Frank’s silent performance of chastity that may not be adequately sustained with any admission of desire. Even Follywit’s triumphant, “What, is’t a match?” does not require a spoken answer: “If’t be, clap hands and lips” (4.6.111). Mother Gullman interprets their kiss as performative—a mutual promise of the intention to marry in front of a witness—which is therefore legally binding, but of course she is quick to discretely counsel Follywit to “Send for a priest, and clap’t up within this hour” (4.6.116-117).

Frank finally speaks only after Follywit exits the stage. While her mother is pleased that Frank’s strategic performance of chastity has allowed her to secure the respectability that they have desired for so long, Frank is not so sure. Her worry is what will happen when Follywit finds out that she is his grandfather’s courtesan and the illusion of her chastity is broken. Her mother assures her, however, that it will not matter—“Who covets fruit ne’er cares from whence it fell. / Thou’st wedded youth and strength, and wealth will fall. / Last, thou’rt made honest” (4.6.146-148). Her past no

longer matters; her marriage to Follywit has made her an honest woman, a feat that she readily acknowledges was “worth ’em all” (4.6.148).

**“Tricks are repaid, I see”**

The moment that Follywit does find out that his new wife is his grandfather’s courtesan is a fascinating scene for our exploration of reputation and the strategic performance of chastity in this play. Not long after Follywit is revealed as a thief, which leads his new wife to lament, “Oh destiny! Have I married a thief, mother?” (5.2.268), Follywit announces to his grandfather that he has married a woman who is “both a gentlewoman and a virgin” (5.2.290). When Sir Bounteous realizes to whom his grandson refers, his first reaction is laughter—“Ah, ha, ha, ha! This makes amends for all” (5.2.295)—but his second instinct is to draw an explicit equivalency between the play’s two tricksters: “Speak, son, is’t true? / Can you gull us and let a quean gull you?” (5.2.300-301). While in most early modern plays marrying a whore is represented as a punishment, in *A Mad World, My Masters*, it is simply fitting: the two tricksters are evenly matched. Each one has been taken in by the other—in Follywit’s words, “Tricks are repaid, I see” (5.2.305).

Some scholars have focused on Frank Gullman’s role as the “romantic prize” (Slights 96) in the play’s nod to a traditionally moral comic ending; instead, however, I wish to focus on how, as a female character, she handles the sudden revelation of her lack of chastity. Silent throughout most of this scene, she speaks two lines here: “What I have been is past. Be that forgiven, / And have a soul true both to thee and heaven” (5.3.303-304). While others have argued that her words place her in the “whore-with-heart-of-gold” category (Slights 96), and indeed this may be true, her words here also perform a



complex navigation of gendered expectations for women in the period. Her initial admission of guilt is simultaneously a disavowal of her former unchaste profession: “What I have been is past.” Her words are, in a sense, performative—she is no longer a prostitute. She then follows this with the words “Be that forgiven,” which is both a conditional statement and a subtle request: *if* her new husband can overlook her former profession, then he will have a truly faithful wife. She is, after all, “made honest” (4.6.148) through their marriage: having not yet been unfaithful to her husband, she *is* a chaste wife.

As I have suggested, in most early modern comedies, marrying a prostitute is figured as a punishment largely because of the likelihood that the husband will be cuckolded by a habitually unchaste wife, but here I would argue that the play seems to indicate that this match has the potential to be a happy one, though this is by no means a foregone conclusion. As I have suggested before, the two tricksters are evenly matched, and Frank professes her intention to be faithful to Follywit if he forgives her—the conditional nature of this request, of course, provides a loophole. However, though she marries him as part of her plot for economic and social stability, there is evidence that she is also sexually attracted to him. Earlier in the scene, Frank notices Follywit disguised as a player and remarks in an aside:

O’ my troth, an I were not married, I could find my heart to fall in love with that player now, and send for him to supper. I know some i’th’ town that have done as much, and there took such a good conceit of their parts into th’ twopenny room, that the actors have been found i’th’ morning in a less compass than their stage, though ’twere ne’er so full of gentlemen. (5.2.33-40)

She may not realize it in the moment, but the object of her desire here is her husband. She imagines a sexual encounter with the mysterious player in the twopenny room of the theatre, but even though she has this desire, we can see that she is already practicing marital fidelity. This fantasy, permitted by her former lifestyle, is now precluded by her marriage. While Frank's desire for a sexual encounter with a player could suggest that she will, like Mistress Harebrain, have and potentially act on adulterous desires, the player of her fantasy is none other than her own husband. Her sexual desire in this scene is already contained in and sanctioned by her marriage. Her later vow to be "a soul true both to thee and heaven" comes after the revelation of her husband's player disguise and therefore carries with it a note of honest intention.

However, while the play itself treats the revelation of Lady Gullman's profession as a comedic trick repaid, the revelation that her identity as a chaste virgin was false has some significant implications for how Harebrain may perceive his own wife's chastity, as Cordner has suggested. It was Lady Gullman's reputation as a modest virgin, bolstered by her mother's appearance as an honest gentlewoman, that granted Frank access to Mistress Harebrain's company and her husband's trust. His wife's "only company" has turned out to be a prostitute. However, it is unclear from the text alone whether or not Harebrain realizes that he has been cuckolded since both he and his wife remain silent for the remainder of the play. As Cordner explains, the possibility that Harebrain might realize his wife has had the opportunity to be unfaithful became evident while rehearsing the play for performance:

From this moment onwards Middleton provides no dialogue for either of the Harebrains or for Penitent. The two men, however, have been centre-stage only thirty lines earlier, laughing smugly at Follywit's unmasking as a robber. In

Middleton's theatre, over-confidence is very likely to earn a fall, and theirs awaits them, because the public identification of the Courtesan's real profession finally deprives Harebrain of all his illusions. He depended on her as the sole woman in whose honesty he trusted, and into whose supervision he had surrendered his wife. . . . Now each of them is made to confront his folly, and the ignominy of his fate, in the same moment, and as a result of the same revelation. But while Middleton maps Follywit's humiliation through dialogue, he uses the opposite tactic to dramatize Harebrain's and subdues this most voluble of characters to sudden and complete silence for the remainder of the play. (23)

In Corder's production of the play at York, the actors playing Harebrain, Penitent, and Mistress Harebrain react to the news in stunned (and guilty) silence.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, there is not much that Mistress Harebrain would be able to do in this situation except to remain silent. Speaking—any explanation, any hint that she knew the true identity of her only companion—would reveal her guilt. Her performance of chastity up until this point has relied on the misrecognition or misidentification of Lady Gullman's appearance of chastity, and as such the two performances are fundamentally tied together, each supporting the other. At the end of the play, Lady Gullman's formerly uncontrolled sexuality is absorbed and absolved by her marriage to Follywit and, whether her husband realizes it or not, Mistress Harebrain's infidelity is silently contained within her own marriage. Their silence at the end of the play means that no one, except those involved in

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<sup>13</sup> The modernized script used by the RSC in their 2013 production of the play also portrays Harebrain's (Littledick's) realization of his wife's potential infidelity but scripts the moment earlier in the scene as a consequence of the revelation of Follywit as a thief. It plays out like this:

TRULY KIDMAN: Oh destiny! Have I married a thief, mother?

MRS KIDMAN: Comfort thyself; thou fooled him first. He believed you a virgin.

LITTLEDICK: What? (84-85)

After this, Littledick, Mrs. Littledick, and Penitent similarly remain silent for the rest of the play.

the sickroom plot, the audience, and perhaps Harebrain himself, knows about Mistress Harebrain's infidelity. Her chaste reputation is effectively protected by her continued performance of silent chastity and their collective public silence.

## Conclusion

### “Convers[ing] with Vertue”

In the face of early modern prescriptions for chaste silence for women, female speakers risk compromising the coherence and legibility of this central aspect of early modern feminine virtue. However, silence also proves to be an unstable signifier of chastity and an inadequate defence against threats to chaste reputation. Instead, as we have seen, women writers and their theatrical counterparts strategically modulate their voices to both justify their speech and mitigate the effects their voices may have on their appearance of chastity. These complex, strategic performances of speech and silence allow the early modern woman to navigate the social constraints that arise from the conflation of verbal and physical intimacy and provide important moments of agency over the public perception of her virtue.

For figures like Rachel Speght in *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, Frank Gullman and Mistress Harebrain in *A Mad World, My Masters*, and Salome in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, strategically employing their performative production of chaste identity is an attempt to foreclose the social censure that attends moments where they step outside the norms of virtuous feminine behaviour. Doing so allows them to claim the agency required to pursue their own desires. By constructing herself as one of the “wise, vertuous, and honest women” that Joseph Swetnam maligns in his pamphlet (Speght 9), Speght crafts a position from which she is able to write and publish her pamphlet under her own name. With her mother’s help, Frank Gullman deliberately performs the signifiers of chastity even where the requisite state of mind does not exist. In her interactions with men, her performative production of a mostly-silent virginal chastity helps her to not only raise

money for a dowry, but also conceal her status as a prostitute to successfully secure a legitimate marriage. Similarly, Mistress Harebrain strategically performs the markers of marital fidelity to outwit her husband so that she can fulfill her adulterous desires, and Salome, despite questioning “Why stand I now / On honourable points?” (1.4.21-22), performs a modest subservience to her brother the king that conceals her intent to dismantle her adversary’s appearance of chastity.

For Judith Butler, gender is performative in that the appearance of “an interior and organizing gender core” is produced through “the repeated stylization of the body . . . within a highly rigid regulatory frame” (*Gender Trouble* 186, 45). Chastity, as a central aspect of what it meant to be a virtuous woman in the early modern period, is also similarly performative—this internal state of mind was expected to be legible on and through the stylization of the female body. Butler notes that the repeated, performative production of gender is a compulsory act, and as such, it is a “*strategy*” for “cultural survival” and there is agency to be found “within the possibility of variation on that repetition” (*Gender Trouble* 190, 198). As we have seen, the female figures studied in this dissertation use a variety of strategies to successfully construct the appearance of chastity, even where a chaste interiority does not exist, combining speech and silence to navigate conflicting norms to ensure the bodily legibility of their claims to chastity. Speght and Elizabeth Cary use a similar strategy to what Katherine R. Larson notes of women in their letter writing, exercising “control over the boundaries delimiting a conversational encounter” (9) by limiting the intended audience of their publications. Speght addresses her double prefaces first “To all vertuous Ladies Honourable or *Worshipfull, and to all other of Hevahs sex fearing God, and loving their just reputation*” (3) and only second addressing Swetnam directly as “Not . . . the veriest Ideot that *ever*

*set Pen to Paper*" (7) in order to "accent a feminine readership," a device that Joad Raymond has argued is "characteristic of women's public writing" (282). Cary does something similar through the features of the published quarto of *The Tragedy of Mariam*: her frontispiece advertises her identity only as "that learned, vertuous, and truly noble Ladie, E. C.," which has the effect of confirming her authorship to a select audience while also emphasizing her virtue and nobility of character. Her dedicatory sonnet "TO DIANAES EARTHLIE DEPVTESSE, and my worthy Sister, Mistris Elizabeth Carye" (sig. A1), now extant in only two copies of the play, further constructs her chastity by cultivating a chaste community of women including her sister-in-law and the goddess Diana.

In dramatic contexts, we see female characters choosing when to speak and when to stay silent in order to maintain the legibility of their chastity. In her first scene of *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione speaks only after she is prompted by her husband, and even then, her speech emphasizes her former silence—"I thought, sir, to have held my peace until / You had drawn oaths from him not to stay" (1.2.28-29)—and specifically engages with only her husband until after he approves of her speech. After having been accused of adultery and later restored to life at the end of the play, Hermione chooses to speak only to the other women—Paulina and her daughter Perdita—and instead cultivates a chaste female community in quiet defiance of masculine demands. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the success of Salome's slanderous plot hinges on her concealment of her own lack of chastity, so she performs chastity and submission by distancing herself from the authorship of her own words, carefully chosen to convey her chaste submission via proxy. In *A Mad World, My Masters*, Frank Gullman stays relatively silent in her courtship with Follywit, choosing instead to allow her mother to interpret her apparent reticence as the

actions of “a foolish virgin, sir, a wilful virgin” (4.6.40-41) in a collaborative performance of chastity that secures her upward mobility through marriage.

The difficulty occurs when these performative productions of chaste identity inevitably falter. As Butler suggests, gendered identities are inaugurated and performed according to “inapproximable ideals” of behaviour, which are contradictory and exclude the possibility of their full embodiment (*Bodies that Matter* 221, 226). In the very act of speech, the speaking woman always risks speaking too much, in the wrong context, or about the wrong topic to ever fully embody a chaste identity that is fundamentally tied to silence. For Speght, the very publication of her pamphlet opened her status as a chaste woman to public scrutiny: in the eyes of her annotator, “by reason of [her] publique booke” she became “not soe good as common” (sig. B2v). In *The Winter’s Tale*, the ambiguity of Hermione’s speech to a man other than her husband allows Leontes’ jealousy to take root. Similarly, Mariam’s outspoken refusal to perform the legible markers of marital chastity upon Herod’s return in *The Tragedy of Mariam* leaves open the question of her fidelity to her marriage vows. On the other hand, in *A Mad World, My Masters*, where the female characters counterfeit their chastity, the potential fissures or failures in their performances of chaste femininity form a central part of the comedy. Middleton uses this dramatic irony to comedic effect with “Lady Gullman” using frank but coded language when speaking to Harebrain about her mother’s “excellent carriage” (1.2.34-36), and Mistress Harebrain’s adulterous vocalizations come perilously close to being overheard by her unsuspecting husband.

In the moments where their reputations for chastity are in jeopardy because of jealousy, slander, or unchaste behaviour, these female speakers come face to face with the “punitive consequences” that, Butler argues, regularly attend “those who fail to do their



gender right” (*Gender Trouble* 190). However, it is also in these moments that the female speaker’s voice cannot help her. Though Speght did everything she could to rhetorically prevent her would-be detractors, she had no opportunity to defend herself against her annotator’s eroticization of her voice in the margins of her own text. In *The Winter’s Tale*’s trial scene, Hermione recognizes that any defence she vocalizes will not help her to redeem herself in the eyes of her husband—“my integrity, / Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it, / Be so received” (3.2.25-27). Similarly, in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, though Mariam attempts to deny the accusation of adultery against her, her denial—“Mariam says not so” (4.4.36)—is ineffective and in the end, she resorts to embodying the silence that is understood to signify the chastity of her mind. And finally, in *A Mad World, My Masters*, where the construction of chastity is a metaphorical house of cards ready to topple at any moment, Frank’s performative disavowal of her former profession—“What I have been is past” (5.3.303)—and accompanying vow of fidelity represents the most effective navigation of this double bind. However, she too slips into silence for the rest of the play and Mistress Harebrain, whose appearance of fidelity crumbles with the revelation of Frank’s unchaste identity, cannot speak at all if she hopes to preserve the public perception of her virtue. Their individual voices are not enough, and simultaneously too much, to preserve their reputations for chastity.

Instead, since reputation is formed and circulated through communities of speakers who share stories about character and behaviour, homosocial alliances between women become a key factor in the success or failure of the coherent legibility of individual performances of chaste identity. Likely also socialized to strategically perform the external signifiers of their own chaste interiorities, we see other women recognize when performances of chastity begin to falter. Often they intervene, exploiting the

perlocutionary delay between potentially unchaste acts of speech and their consequent interpretation as unchaste. In *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, Speght writes to defend all women from what she calls “the scandals and defamations of the malevolent” Swetnam, which will “in time prove pernicious” (3). She notes that if Swetnam’s words “bee not at the first quenched,” they will become like “a small sparke kindled . . . [which] may worke great mischiefe and dammage” (3). Here Speght frames her pamphlet as a deliberate attempt to intercede between Swetnam’s words and the perlocutionary damage they would cause the reputation of women. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Paulina vows to be Hermione’s “advocate to th’ loud’st” (2.2.38), and while she is too late to prevent Hermione’s words from being interpreted as indicative of infidelity, she stands as witness to Hermione’s chaste identity and works to ensure Leontes’ repentance.

We see the effect of female homosocial networks on the performative production of chastity most clearly in *A Mad World, My Masters*, where the performance of chastity and marital “fidelity” used here is a collective endeavour. In the play’s notorious sickroom scene, Lady Gullman uses her already-established (though counterfeited) reputation for virginity to support Mistress Harebrain’s appearance of marital fidelity to facilitate her adultery. By engaging her friend’s unchaste vocalizations in chaste conversation, Lady Gullman’s voice covers over and stands in for Mistress Harebrain’s to provide a chaste interpretation for a voice in desperate need of such signification. The “prick-eared” Harebrain (3.2.186), jealously listening outside the room interprets the exchange as evidence of his wife’s “good nature” (3.2.215) precisely because of Lady Gullman’s perlocutionary intervention to expertly resignify what he overhears as evidence of Mistress Harebrain’s concern for her friend.

The exploitation of the perlocutionary delay between speech acts and their influence on their listeners does not always benefit the female speaker who wishes to be understood as chaste, however. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, this is how Salome works her revenge on the outspoken titular character. After Mariam refuses to perform the markers of marital fidelity that Herod demands of her, stating instead that she “will not build on . . . [the] unstable ground” of Herod’s love (4.3.62), Salome seizes on the opportunity to intervene in the perlocutionary delay following Mariam’s declarations. Though Mariam’s illocutionary intent is to foreswear Herod’s bed to maintain her integrity of body and mind, Salome’s proxy enters the scene with apparent evidence of Mariam’s infidelity, effectively resignifying the meaning of Mariam’s words. For Herod, Mariam’s earlier refusal then becomes evidence of her “falsehood” and she becomes for him a “painted devil” and a “white enchantress” (4.4.17, 18). Here we see the downside of Laura Gowing’s assessment that “[t]elling stories and judging morals made women the brokers of oral reputation” (*Domestic Dangers* 123): while other women often support the coherence of individual performative productions of chastity, they similarly have the power to destroy them.

The reason the voices of other women matter so much in these instances is twofold. First, together they collectively cohere to form the basis of reputation itself—the collective opinion of a community. Second, where the chastity of a female speaker is not at issue (or, better still, even in question), the illocutionary force of her words is more likely to have its intended effect. Taken together, this is why Speght and other women writers take great pains to carve out a chaste and modest position from which to speak through their writing and to align themselves with other chaste women in their prefaces and dedications. It is why it does not seem to matter that Paulina’s voice is loud and

shrewish: Leontes may question her chastity, but it is not her own virtue that she seeks to defend. It is also why Mother Gullman's reputation as a "virtuous matron, that good old gentlewoman" (1.2.30-31) is so important: Frank's appearance of chastity (and subsequently, Mistress Harebrain's) is tied to her mother's and its coherence is dependent on her mother's witnessing testimony. And finally, it is why Salome is so careful to perform chaste deference to her brother Herod when enacting her revenge on Mariam: her own appearance of chastity affects the legibility of her motivations. We see Herod's belief in Salome's words falter at the moment when Salome inadvertently implicates herself in her characterization of Mariam's "ebon-hued" eyes (4.7.98) as a bodily signifier for her immorality. If Salome is unchaste, her speech cannot be trusted.

The speech and silence of individual women's voices are unstable signifiers of the chaste identity that they are understood to describe. The conflation of silence with chastity in the early modern period is such that the female voice, though a woman's "defensive armour" (Brathwaite sig. M4v), is inadequate in the defence of a chastity that is fundamentally tied to her silence. Instead, communities of female speakers make all the difference to the legibility of the individual woman's performative production of chastity. Speaking when and how others cannot, these vocal collectives form the basis of chaste reputation, which allow these performances of chastity to speak for themselves.

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