

PERFORMING SILENCE, PERFORMING SPEECH:
GENRE AND GENDER IN STUART DRAMA

By

Miranda Garno Nesler

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Approved:

Professor Leah S. Marcus

Professor Lynn Enterline

Professor Kathryn Schwarz

Professor Michael Neill

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For Ryan, my best friend and truest partner in all things;

And for Mable, who made me brave.

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CHAPTER I

GENRE, GENDER, AND THE QUESTION OF SILENCE: AN INTRODUCTION

As John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1628) approaches its climax, Soranzo confronts his new wife, Annabella, about the illegitimate pregnancy she kept secret before their wedding:

Harlot, rare, notable harlot,
That with thy brazen face maintain'st thy sin,
Was there no man in Parma to be bawd
To your loose cunning whoredom else but I?
[...] Could none but I
Be picked out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sports? [...] Tell me by whom. (4.3.4-6, 10-12, 29)

Despite a profusion of violent language, Soranzo cannot prevail in discovering the name of Annabella's lover. Indeed, the same silence through which Annabella obtained Soranzo as a husband gives her an effective mode of claiming authority in response. "Nay, and you will not hear," she calmly tells him, "**I'll speak no more**" (4.3.33, emphasis mine). Rather than a demure marker of shamefastness, Annabella's silence constitutes an active denial of her husband's power. Without her vocal confirmation, Soranzo cannot access the information within her, even if he were to "rip up [her] heart and [try to] find it there" (4.3.54). And yet silence was often promoted as a desirable quality in a wife; Annabella abides within the letter (if not the spirit) of early modern conduct prescriptions regarding feminine vocality. Moments like this suggest silence's position as a complex form of disruptive compliance—a way to disturb patriarchal rule even while obeying it. Yet silence such as this not only troubles masculine hegemony; it

challenges the very discourses that define vocality as active and silence as a passive, dominated enclosure.

In much of the conduct literature aimed at women during the Stuart period, writers invoke silence as a passive feminine virtue. In *The Excellency of Good Women* (1613), for example, Barnabe Riche asserts that the ideal woman “openeth not her mouth” because she needn’t speak; she passively relies on the men around her to provide all necessary meaning (E2v). Fellow manual writer Richard Brathwait is of the same mind. “Truth is,” Brathwait claims in *The English Gentlewoman* (1631), “[women’s] tongues are held their defensive armour: but in no particular detract they more from their honour than by giving too free scope to that glibbery member” (84); a woman’s speech reveals assertiveness, so it better “become[s] her to tip her tongue with silence” (84).¹ These conduct writers turn to sources like Thomas Thomas’s *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (1587) for support; in particular, they look to the definition of “Sileo: to keepe silence, to speake nothing [...] to make no noyse.” Glossing Thomas’s meaning, such writers read silence as a transitive verb, wherein women are the direct **objects** of a curbing action that limits expression and thus maintains patriarchal supremacy. Yet the verb “sileo,” in fact, denotes that one actively “keepe[s] silence.” It marks the performer of silence as an agent—a **subject**—who makes a choice. In actively choosing “to **keepe** silence,” Stuart women could employ it as a means for sharing or withholding information, partaking in such activities as *obscurio*, which Thomas defines

¹ Riche and Brathwait are by no means alone in such assertions; what’s more, attempts to violently silence women continue after them. For a later example, refer to “A Boulster Lecture” (1640), which satirizes the *femme bavarde*.

as “to cloake, to hide, to keepe in silence, or from the knowledge of men.”² Silence, while an absence of noise, does not foreclose women’s ability to communicate; withholding vocal speech could enable women to challenge authority, protect knowledge, and covertly express their own ideas and desires. Even silent women who appeared to obey masculine instruction, then, were not wholly stabilized. Silence could be an empowering mode that allowed them to undermine masculine structures and create space for their own authority. Women’s performances uncovered the active, expressive possibilities of silence by revealing the wide semantic gap between “to speake nothing” and “to make no noyse.” Indeed, without noise, Stuart women were able to say much.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that when we trace women’s use of silence through the three dramatic forms of closet drama, masque, and London commercial theatre, we can see that all three forms were inextricably related in both performance and text—rather than being distinct genres.³ Indeed, anachronistically viewing these forms as separate genres has long concealed women’s expressive silences, forcing them into passivity and denying their dramatic power; critics viewing closet drama and masque as “non-dramatic,” “private,” or “marginal” compared to commercial theatre deny the very public and communicative nature that shaped these texts and performances. Yet by returning to more fluid early modern conceptions of drama, we can not only begin to appreciate these three forms as interrelated; we can further uncover how, when silent

² Notably, this is a practice that numerous early modern male characters employ to protect themselves and disturb the control of hegemonic groups. Not only does Iago undermine Venetian authority by refusing to disclose his motives in *Othello*—“From this time forth I never will speak word” (5.2.356)—but Hieronimo bites out his own tongue in *The Spanish Tragedy* so that he might not share information with the king. Yet, critics often look to such resulting masculine silence as active, whereas feminine silence gets positioned as passive.

³ “Dramatic form” and “dramatic genre” are two different but related categories. In referring to “drama,” I denote a genre that encompasses the sub-categories or “forms” of closet drama, masque, and commercial theatre.

women participated in one form, they gained access to the other two as well. Traveling across these permeable dramatic boundaries, women created a narrative about effective non-vocal expression and its generation of authority. Women could create positions in which they instructed other women or told their own stories. Performances of silence across closet drama, masque, and London commercial theatre drew attention to women's "forced" vocal absence; in doing so, women exposed silence as an active, powerful mode of expression. It was something women could choose and manipulate themselves. Such unveiling also commented upon Stuart women's possession of literary, dramatic, and instructional powers despite those violent limits—and such commentary could even threaten retribution. Women's ability to both powerfully communicate without speech and to use silence to deny communication raises the question of what would happen to patriarchal systems if women denied them entirely.⁴ Such a threat manifests itself in women's drama; this is because the usurpation of masculine conduct language and dramatic spaces allows women to extend their own instructional messages to wide audiences. Indeed, as feminine messages left household stages⁵ to echo in public dramatic territories, they revealed that closet drama, masque, and commercial theatre were parts of one dramatic whole—not separate genres in themselves. In this sense, my

⁴ In "Chastity, Militant and Married: Cavendish's Romance, Milton's Masque" (2000), Schwarz asserts that systems of gendered conduct rely on women's acquiescence and participation. As a result, even obedience registers as a destabilizing transgression. This is an idea that some conduct writers evince anxiety about, and they attempt to take control by vilifying those women who don't participate or try to overtly reveal their participation. One such example occurs in *The Excellency of Good Women*, where Riche asserts that women are not "curbed in with any other bridle then [*sic*] what they willingly put vpon them selves" (B2r).

⁵ Throughout this project, I use "stage" as a broad, non-architectural term to mark any site on which formalized dramatic activity occurs. Thus "stage" does not merely denote a public platform upon which paid actors performed; it also gestures to those household spaces where women acted formally or informally in masque and closet drama. After all, these household sites were related and important dramatic spaces; using the term "stage" to reference them as well draws attention to their close relationship to the London commercial stage.

dissertation challenges current trends in early modern criticism by positioning “drama” as the larger genre into which all three forms belong. I argue that the three forms overlapped and blurred into each other, allowing women engaging one form to borrow from and participate in other forms. Just as the interrelation among the forms highlighted women’s silent narratives, so too did women’s silent narratives uncover the relationship among closet drama, masque, and commercial plays.

My project takes a multi-layered approach to the question of female silence in the Jacobean and Caroline periods. Specifically, it utilizes conduct literature and drama—two genres often critically situated as sites denying women’s agency—as lenses for examining women’s dynamic employments of silence in their dramatic authorship and performance. Both genres, after all, shared commonplace assumptions about silence and the home as means for enclosing women; by denying access or by urging isolation, both allegedly hid women from the “companie of many” that threatened to take away “modest Maiden[s]” chastity and submissive temperaments by mimetically recommending new behaviors (Salter D1v). In didactic dramatic representation and conduct recommendation, women were to stay at home and “passe the time with [...] neighbores in sober conference, or [...] let bookes be your comfort” as manual writer Stephen Gosson and husbands like *Women Beware Women’s* Leantio urged (Gosson 50-51). In this sense, however, the ostensibly silent behaviors prescribed for women in conduct literature allowed them to write and act within the home; this is, as I will discuss, partially because such texts described household writing as private and emphasized physical behavior as a key method of expression. In addition, the texts offered women modes of expanding the boundaries of the “private” household so that their activities

could migrate outward and intervene in public concerns. This occurred, in large part, because conduct literature constructed even intimate domestic spaces as sites for molding behaviors and performing social roles for an audience. Conduct literature importantly engaged Neoplatonic beliefs that mimetic, repetitive action could lead women to improve themselves; as a result, it suggested the impossibility of removing oneself from public view and its related social expectations. Women's daily performances, then, diluted private/public distinctions. As women, in turn, performed closet drama and masque in their homes, those performances could reach outward into the public sphere; such performances might alter women's daily behaviors, and their publication spread ideas beyond their household of origin. Indeed, by using conduct literature's lexicon, performing women could adopt didactic roles and use their performances to instruct other women—to, in a sense, usurp the role of instructor. Thus conduct literature is key for understanding women's dramatic contributions.

Conduct literature exhortations that instruct women to use silence to surrender “[t]hir priuate will, and appetite” to men (Tilney B6v) have garnered significant attention from recent critics. Jennifer Richards calls such instruction an act of “aggressive conquest and colonization” (3). Similarly, Anthony Fletcher examines it as an oppressive measure that reveals that controlling women was “an aspect of [men's] potency [...] at the heart of the early modern gender system” (12). More recently, critics like Wendy Wall and Kathryn Schwarz have argued for women's ability to challenge such denials of subjectivity while appearing to affirm them; this is a behavioral model that I call

disruptive compliance.⁶ And critics like Christina Luckyj have examined the rhetorical history of silence to destabilize its definition as an enclosure, suggesting that silence is an alternative discourse because it functions as a “rhetoric parallel to speech” (7); while I agree that silence has potent rhetorical capabilities, however, I do not quite want to position it as a parallel. Rather, it provides women with an additional choice among discourses.⁷ My project builds on such work, which, as Wall articulates it, “replace[s] a paradigm of victimization with one of enablement” (*Imprint* 7).

The two aforementioned approaches to women’s performed silence—disruptive compliance and the alternative discourse—are foundational for my work. Following their trajectory, my project identifies several additional forms of silent performance. Silence could be an appropriation of hegemonic discourse; performing within the bounds of conduct instruction, women could adopt the roles of instructors, and they could teach other women forms of silent communication. Frequently, this model of silence coincides with two others: silence as a bodily performance, in which women utilize active silence to draw attention to the communicative abilities of their bodies, and silence as self-authorship, through which women textualize themselves and control how others read their exteriors. This is not to say that all models of silence were didactic. Indeed, as I will discuss, silence could be a challenge to discourse as well; women could use it to deny masculine terms and systems of expression, and they could choose to engage other

⁶ By “disruptive compliance” I specifically mean those moments when women perform within the bounds of conduct prescription (by maintaining silence, for example), but at the same time their performances disrupt the very structures they were prescribed to maintain.

⁷ As I’ll show, women frequently employed the alternative discourse of silence to further homosocial education and authorship.

femino-centric forms of communication like embroidery.⁸ In almost every employment of silence, insofar as they communicated didactic or resistant ideas, women revealed that silence failed as a denial of expression. Thus, silence is also a mode of exposure. It emphasizes that the violent masculine fantasy of restricting feminine speech actually invites new forms of activity and ingenuity. These modes offer women distinct possibilities for gaining authorial and performative authority, and for creating self-expression that destabilizes patriarchal systems of control. At the same time, however, these modes weave together and interact in complex ways as women enact them across the three dramatic forms. Silence, then, exceeds the limits placed upon it, allowing Stuart women to push outward and intervene in public debate and artistic production.

Because women operating within the bounds of conduct instruction were often silent (or portrayed as silent onstage) we forget that they were important participants in dramatic creation before the Restoration and their emergence as professional stage actors. Of course, before the Restoration, women did not directly walk or speak upon the London stage. However, we do well to remember that they did participate in drama within the household—and their creations also affected commercial plays. As I will show in the chapters that follow, this is largely because Stuart conceptions of drama were more flexible than our own. Closet drama and masque, two dramatic forms in which women recognizably wrote and acted, were important components of the dramatic genre and functioned closely alongside London plays. Involvement in any single dramatic form

⁸ Embroidery is only one among a host of feminine arts that silent women used for expression. Costuming, dance, and closet text-sharing are also important methods that will receive discussion in this project. Such material approaches to communication also proved highly elusive, as I will discuss in Chapter 3. The choice to express oneself through embroidery, for example, raises connections to *Philomel* and therefore suggests that enforced silence does violence to the female body.

allowed for involvement in either or both of the others.⁹ In examining the three dramatic forms of closet drama, masque, and commercial theatre together, I argue that, in related ways, utilizing silence on each of these stages allowed Stuart women to shape representations of themselves and their expressive agency.

Early modern conduct writers and modern critics share a tendency to view closets—and, by extension, closet drama—as removed from public discourse and dramatic performance. Though critics of closet drama often seek to emphasize women’s authorship, they also continue insisting as Marta Straznicky and Karen Raber do that the form’s “distance from the stage and other public domains of theatre allowed reflection on **women’s tenuous and marginal relationship to theatrical domains**” (Raber 14, emphasis mine). Yet the archives reveal that women frequently opened their closets and invited other readers and participants to enter and contribute toward reading aloud; this permitted their domestic space to operate like the early theatres that Stephen Orgel defines as merely a “group of actors and an audience” (*Illusion* 2). Even in the absence of such company, however, the closet reader was never alone because she was always in the presence of the author (via his/her words) and an imagined readerly community; thus the space was never wholly private. Whether reading was solitary and silent or communal and vocal, closet drama provided women an opportunity to perform. In the action of reading, they could adopt different voices and genders, and they could simultaneously fill the positions of actor and audience; what’s more, in the absence of complex physical staging, closet drama emphasized the coinciding power of vocal presence and of active, charged silences. In these senses, closet drama positioned silence

⁹ Importantly, “involvement” could occur at varying degrees. Women’s involvement might be direct (via the authoring or performing of a text) or indirect (via their texts’ or performances’ influences on participants within the other forms).

variously as disruptive compliance, as an appropriation of masculine discourse, and as a method for constructing a space of protection while outwardly intervening in public concerns. At the same time, women were also authors of closet drama. Just as conduct manuals encouraged women to remain in private, household spaces by staying at home to “passe the time with your neighbores in sober conference, or if you canne reade, let bookes be your comfort” (Gosson 50-51),¹⁰ so too did it allow closet authorship because of the form’s association with religious stories and didacticism. Silently, via closet texts, female authors could indirectly enter and shape other women’s closets. Under the guise of teaching virtue, these female authors could manipulate silence and instruct their readers on how to do the same. Certainly this was an effect that manual writers like Edward Gosynhyll feared, claiming in *The Schole House of Women* (1572) that women’s closeted conversations could lead the elder to instruct the younger:

Doo as I doo,
Be sharp and quick with [your husband] again
If that he chide, chide you also
And for one woord giue him twain [...]
Thus euer among they keep such schooles
The yung to drawe after the olde. (B1r-B1v)

Conduct writers saw and feared the instructive powers of women’s dramatic household performances. It was an opportunity that the space and its associated literature encouraged; so women could use licensed performance to undermine patriarchal control. In this sense, closet drama allowed authorial power—it constructed feminine authority by manipulating the assumed silence and privacy of closets. Closet drama authorship, then, drew on silence as an alternative discourse that could challenge masculine terms of

¹⁰ Ambiguity exists as to whether “being with neighbors” and “reading” are separate or connected exhortations; their connection becomes important when we consider the possibilities of women reading aloud and doing closet performances. I will discuss this issue further in Chapter 2.

expression, that could allow the body to communicate in ways that contradicted silence, and that could expose the effective cover that silence produced for female communication.

While archival discoveries have helped us to begin recognizing closet reading as performative and communicative, critics continue denying the masque similar possibilities. A form that seems to linger between dance and dumb show, masque is still critically marked as a form that forecloses women's communication. Though aristocratic male masquers performed under the same injunction of silence, that requirement only becomes limiting in criticism when linked to women masquers.¹¹ In fact, it has frequently led critics to assert that women's silence prevented them from acting.¹² Even the most progressive feminist critics of masque, who examine women's active contributions to authoring its spectacle, tend to limit its relationship to public performance by collectively describing female masquers as imprisoned "silent objects of the court gaze" (Findlay *Spaces* 132).¹³ Yet when we examine the active possibilities of silence, "silent" masques become active and performative; they are creative spaces where women generate and promote their own ideas, and they reveal that women's roles are so key to performance that they shape our critical vocabulary and approach to masque. As the embodiment of the masque texts,¹⁴ women masquers shared the activity of authoring performances with

¹¹ This should lead us to question our double-standard in considering the active/passive nature of silence as linked to gender. For more discussion on such traditions, see Christina Luckyj.

¹² See the work of Stephen Orgel and Leeds Barroll, in particular. For more, refer to Chapter 3.

¹³ Refer in particular to Alison Findlay's claim of women being "imprisoned" (*Spaces* 132), Clare McManus's assertion that "the prohibition of female speech was a constraint of the masquing woman within her corporeality" (*Stage* 16), and Sophie Tomlinson's claim that the "masquer's silence is in no way lessened by the theatricality of her role" (*Stuart* 21). Examples also exist in the work of Melinda Gough and Leeds Barroll.

¹⁴ While professional actors performed the antimasque, aristocratic masquers embodied the main masque. In addition, aristocratic masquers had a greater degree of control over their self-presentation during performance; as I'll discuss in Chapter 3, both Anna and Henrietta Maria collaborated closely with poets

male masquers and poets.. What's more, they controlled the expressions of their dancing bodies and were thus able to contribute toward authoring themselves; in this sense, women were not only subject to social forces but could respond to and influence them. Women masquers could deploy silence as a form of self-authorship, as a means for creating textuality, and as a method of bodily performance that could either challenge patriarchal discourse by denying information or by creating a pathway toward speech. Either way, women using costume and dance to communicate taught other women to do the same. Therefore they exposed the failure of patriarchy's attempts to deny their voices and limit them. Indeed, the women revealed that the very thing intending to enclose them empowered them.

As mentioned before, Stuart women did not appear in London commercial plays. Rather, the theatre was a space physically dominated by masculine homosociality. However, women's silent expression did manage to affect plays occurring in this space; such writing and performances in the household shaped London playtexts and their representations of women. As I'll argue, even on the commercial stage silence does not constitute absence, and vocal communication alone does not constitute performance. As male playwrights became increasingly aware of women's dramatic creations, they represented and borrowed from those products in their own work. While plays allowed for the portrayal and expression of anxieties over women's involvement in closet drama and masque, their reference to women's drama also pushed those texts onstage and allowed women to silently affect public audiences. Indeed, playwrights like Shakespeare and Ford, for example, used Amazon tropes from Queen Anna's masques to represent

and designers so that their bodily representations of the text corresponded to the respective messages the women wanted to communicate.

uncontrolled and assertive female performance; such direct references made women's costuming and performance choices intensely public and visible in London. What's more, playwrights like Fletcher and Shirley portrayed women's closet interactions and their performances of closet drama onstage, utilizing women's written words to inform their own representations. Silent women's expression, then, possessed an intense intertextual relationship with London plays; rather than being minor forms of drama by comparison, masque and closet drama overlapped in important ways with commercial theatre and demanded recognition. Thus women indirectly spoke onstage without being physically or vocally present.

When we consider dramatic performance, we must keep in mind the slippery definitional distinctions among the forms. In discussing masque, critics like Janette Dillon and Kate Levin have already noted the functional interchangeability of words like "pageant," "masque," "entertainment," "play," and "banquet" during the period. In addition, we have extant descriptions from early modern audience members who reveal that genre distinctions were casual at most. Describing *The Masque of Blackness*, for example, Dudley Carleton claims that "at Night we had the Queene's Maske in the Banqueting House, or, rather her Pageant" (*Letter*). Thus accuracy in division was not a governing aspect of how audiences experienced performance. Such fluidity extended into print as well. Notably, closet dramas, masques, and playtexts all enjoyed vigorous lives in print; they were purchased and circulated through similar households and, as I will discuss in the following chapters, readers used all three to create household performances. Even in libraries the distinctions among them were blurred. Not only did the Bodleian catalogue an assortment of printed "Maskes, Comedies, & Tragedies"

during the Stuart period (Kiessling viii), making no distinctions about whether they appeared as closet dramas, masques, or plays; but private sellers also indiscriminately placed “All of the Plaies that were ever printed [...] Comedies, Histories, Interludes, Masks, Pastorels, [and] Tragedies” together under the broad category of drama (in Shohet “in/as” 189). Such records suggest that in both performance and print, Stuart audiences, authors, and performers perceived slippages among the three dramatic forms; performance texts could appear in the household or in the commercial theatre, and actors in the closet, in masque, or on the public stage could read and embody them for myriad audiences.

In individual but related ways, slippages among the forms allowed women to construct positions of authority and access wide, public audiences. Closet drama participation allowed women to cross-voice and cross-perform, thus blurring gender boundaries simultaneously within the household, on the stage, and in written literature. What’s more, closet drama authorship allowed women “in the house” to claim an elite, instructional, typically masculine form of writing and enter other women’s closets as authorities carrying potentially undermining lessons. Women, then, not only spoke while reading texts in their own closets, but gained voices through the performances hosted in homes that purchased their printed texts. Masque, during the same period, helped women to further destabilize private/public boundaries. By formally inviting an audience into the household, masque overtly positioned the home as a dramatic site; it suggested that women’s daily activities were performative and linked that space to drama. Not only did women expose their bodies on the masque stage, but, as we shall see, they could help to author those bodies and manipulate audience response. Further, their expressive

exposure and usurpation of a once masculinized form became more public via publication.

The appropriations, deconstructions, and manipulations occurring within these modes received attention in the London theatre as well, highlighting the forms' interrelations. As closet drama and masque increased women's acting and authorship, London plays began portraying such activities and picked up closet drama and masque's questioning of the household as a private enclosure. The number of closet encounters on stage increased as characters like the Duchess of Malfi orchestrated rendezvous in their private domestic spaces, exposing the performativity of private moments.¹⁵ And female-centric masques like those in *Timon of Athens* or *The Tempest* suggested that the form was not only public, but also significantly marked by feminine participation. Thus women affected male playwrights' work and were able to reach the broad, multi-ranked audiences of those plays. Notably, print publication was an equalizer of the forms, further blurring distinctions. This is because, once in print, household exclusivity could not bar multi-ranked and multi-gendered audiences from purchasing and reading texts created or performed by women. Similarly, a denial of women's physical presence on the public stage could not prohibit women's performing those printed texts at home or within the closet. And injunctions against women's presence as professional actors could not prevent audiences from imagining female roles as being informed (or inhabited) by women; indeed, women's participation in closet drama and masque encouraged this.

¹⁵ *Othello* provides another rich example of closet encounters occurring onstage. Not only do Desdemona and Emilia sing for the audience in the Willow Scene, representing women's private moments as opportunities to respond to public oppression and as places for musical expression; but also, the final murder scene presents Othello describing Desdemona's murder for the audience, as if he's aware of their judgment. By the play's end, Desdemona's chamber has become an acknowledged public space. In it, Othello makes his public confession and stages his execution, and the Venetians interrogate Iago.

Silence offered a protected space from which women could publicly communicate. Indeed, silence could often allow more intense intervention than overt speech, as early modern anxieties about women's vocality produced very real social and physical consequences. Peter Stallybrass has uncovered masculine concerns about speech's connection to sexuality and its ability to ruin women's reputations; and Dymphna Callaghan has discussed how such associations and anxieties shaped masculine responses to dramatic and didactic representations of femininity.¹⁶ When we turn to contemporary literature, expressions of anxiety abound. "Femymyne" voices are presented as "euyll to please, and worse to truste" (Gosynhyll A2v); according to men like Edward Gosynhyll, their loud, large speech threatened to reduce masculine reason so it was "not worth a torde"—particularly when they gathered and combined their voices (A2v). In an attempt to foreclose such threats, tools such as the scold's bridle and social practices like *charivari* were employed both to warn women against speech, and to disempower those whose speech had already undermined masculine hierarchies.¹⁷ Meanwhile, representations of speaking women onstage frequently incited violent tirades from male characters, who, as Claudio does, transform female speech into evidence of "know[ing] the heat of a luxurious bed" (*Much Ado* 4.1.42).

¹⁶ See "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed" (1986) and *Shakespeare Without Women* (2000), respectively. For more on contemporary approaches to speech's destabilizing potential, refer to the *Hic Mulier/Haec Vir* pamphlet debates of 1620 and Linda Woodbridge's related work *Women and the English Renaissance* (1984).

¹⁷ Used almost exclusively to discipline women, the scold's bridle was composed of a metal cage fitted to control a woman's head and an iron gag bit designed to flatten and constrain the tongue. A surviving version of this tool, infamously housed in a church at Walton-on-Thames, is embroidered with a rhyme that evidences the tool's attempt to render female speech non-threatening: "Chester Presents Walton with a bridle/ To curb women's tongues that talk so idle." A contemporary image of a scold's bridle in use is available in Ralph Gardiner's *England's Grievance Discovered* (1655). For more on its use, refer to Robert Chambers's *The Book of Days* (1864), Ernest B. Pettifer's *Punishments of Former Days* (1992), or Lynda Boose's "Scolding Bridles and Bridling Scolds" (2002).

Encouraging women to avoid such danger and protect their reputations, conduct writers like Edmund Tilney advised that “the chefest way for a woman to preserue and maintayne [her] good fame is to be resident in her owne house” and keep her own counsel (C2v). Thus the household and silence became joint enclosures intending to separate women from public interaction. At the same time, women who performed such silence incited anxiety in men, who might experience interpretive confusion when limited to reading women’s exteriors. After all, control requires some knowledge about female interiority; and while silence can mark modesty, it also potentially obfuscates female motivations and limits men’s knowledge. A woman’s exterior may reveal something true about her internal nature; however, her exterior may also belie what exists inside her. This confusion clearly marks Lord Kensington’s experience in describing one of Henrietta Maria’s dance performances. Kensington’s 1624 letter to Charles¹⁸ offers a valuable example of how silent behavior can confuse. Witnessing the French princess leads Kensington to focus on the contradictions within her:

Her growth is very little, short of her age; and her wisdom infinitely beyond it. I heard her discourse with her Mother [...] with extraordinary discretion and quicknesse. She dances [...] as well as ever I saw any Creature; They say she sings most sweetly, I am sure she looks so. (MS Harley 35-36)¹⁹

Henrietta Maria’s behaviors foster confusion about whether her internal and external states correspond; here Kensington struggles to create a coherent view, first insisting that the princess’s size belies her wisdom, then later insisting that her sweetness of face testifies to the sweetness of her voice. The princess’s “proper” silence prevents Kensington from attaining certainty on what role her body plays in exposing her internal

¹⁸ The letter importantly predates Charles’s marriage to Henrietta Maria.

¹⁹ Courtesy of the British Library.

nature. Thus he cannot ascertain whether internal and external are in opposition, or whether the latter exposes the former.

Kensington's letter suggests that women's silence may challenge masculine systems of knowledge; without direct communication, after all, Henrietta Maria conveys numerous ideas to him. Attempting to mediate such contradictions, conduct writers like Gervase Markham turn to the directive "be and seem"²⁰ to instruct women on revealing their chastity "outwardly" through "apparrell and dyet" (*Huswife* 3-4). Similarly, William Gouge recommends in *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) that "wifely courtesy [is] that vertue whereby a wife taketh occasion to testifie her acknowledgment of her husband's superiority by some outward obeisance" (281). While a husband may not see into his wife's mind and witness her submission, her behavior offers vital evidence of his effective sovereignty. For the conduct writers, women's thoughts become more oblique rather than nonexistent as they maintain the silence to which they're directed.

Accordingly, the manual writers require female action to fill the lacuna between the visible and invisible. For Markham, what a woman wears or eats makes her character outwardly readable to men; her external performance should leave no doubt as to her appetites (dietary or sexual). Similarly, Gouge draws attention to performance. This is because it is not the "acknowledgment" of masculine superiority that marks a woman's courtesy; rather, it is important that her actions "testifie" to the acknowledgement. Yet, in truth, a woman may be modest or lusty—it is within her control to suggest one character or the other through the use of props and attitudes. Silence, therefore, can

²⁰ A version of this recommendation appears in Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship* (1568): "she must not onely be good, but likewise must appeare so" (C2v). However, this commonplace exhortation is frequently linked to Elizabeth Cary, who engraved it on a ring bestowed to her daughter as a wedding gift. Its history and implications will receive more discussion in Chapter 2.

function as disruptive compliance as women shape it with their bodily performances. Operating within the directive “be and seem,” a woman may either seem what she is, or she may manipulate external cues to separate the two so that “seeming” obscures her interiority; in either case, she participates in actively shaping a representation of herself and her gender role.

Silence’s potential to create self-authorship and to manipulate bodily performance relied, in part, on commonplace connections between texts and bodies. As Marta Straznicky reminds us, there existed a “tendency throughout the early modern period to associate women’s reading with the body: plays kiss ladies’ hands or sit on their laps” (“Printed Drama” 60). Texts and bodies share qualities that allow them to interact in an intimate way. Even further than sexualizing the body, however, texts shared a similar mode of communication. When women were expected to “seem in speaking to hould [their] peace, and in [their] silence seem to speake” (Riche E2v), outside viewers had to rely on facial expressions, movement, dress, and other physical cues to make women readable.²¹ Indeed, in *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1624), Thomas Wright claims that men are authoritative readers of women, and they “may learn to coniecture the affections of their subiects mindes, by a silent speech pronounced in their very countenance” (29). Bodies, then, silently communicate as texts do. Following Hero’s public shaming in *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, the Friar turns to Hero’s body as a primary text instructing viewers on her innocence. Through his own “reading [...and] observations” he “mark[s] a thousand blushing apparitions/ To start into her

²¹ Similarly, Brathwait asserts that women should avoid being “prolocutors” because “Silence, in a **Woman** is a moving rhetoric, winning most, when in words it wooeth least” (90). In each case, the conduct writers unwittingly locate silence as a form of voiceless expression. The women operating under it still evoke reactions in their viewers; though noiseless, they do say something.

face” and “burn the errors that these princes hold/ Against her maiden truth” (4.1.174, 168-69, 172-73). This can occur because bodies were perpetually visible, and conduct literature generates “the body” as a means for reading individuals and their positions.²² Thus the literature posits the body as the means for transmitting lessons about behavior. In this sense, elite women whose bodies were always already on display as potential “ideals” had the unique opportunity to adapt conduct standards through their own performed, textualized bodies. Yet attempts to gain knowledge from reading bodies frequently fall short; they mistakenly assume the body as an essential marker of gender or interiority. Such cultural assumptions gave silent women the opportunity to manipulate their readers; thus women could use external performance to challenge masculine notions of reading and behavior.

While Claudio only fears that Hero is a study in “seeming” other than what she is,²³ other dramatic scenarios exist wherein women do manipulate their bodily performances, silently appropriating masculine discourses of instruction to their own ends. *The Changeling*’s Beatrice-Joanna reveals women’s ability to take advantage in this way. Though Alsemero looks to a conduct manual to learn “how to know whether a woman be a maid or not” (4.1.40), only Beatrice-Joanna’s performance of “gap[ing], then fall[ing] into a sudden/ sneezing, last into a violent laughing” after his potion can confirm the manual’s claim and her status (4.1.47-48). And though Beatrice-Joanna mimics these

²² Ann Bryson claims that “there remains a basic limitation in the use of didactic codifications of manners” in that “written precept was not the principle means of transmission of forms of correct social conduct” (5). Rather, viewing the behaviors of social betters was a primary means. I agree—however, I would add that this emerges from the insistent association of women’s bodies with texts and that it provided women with the ability to use manipulative performance to usurp the role of conduct instructors.

²³ Specifically, when Hero asks Claudio if she ever “seem’d” unmaidenly to him, he retorts, “Out on thee, seeming! I will write against it./ You seem to me as Dian in her orb [...] But you are more intemperate in your blood/ Than Venus” (4.1.56, 57-58, 60-61). For more discussion on “being and seeming,” refer to Chapter 2.

behaviors, she unveils how a disjunctive performance of “be and seem” can assist in *obscurio* and construct authorial power.²⁴ She constructs her body as a text in a way that exceeds conduct literature expectations; while the manuals encourage women to make their bodies readable, they do not expect that women will utilize such performance to misinform viewers. The power to choose between these options provided women with the chance to author themselves; they could obtain a measure of control over the ideas they conveyed to readers. Without relying on vocal speech that might risk punishment, women could become self-authors while exposing the limits of gendered social codes. As conduct literature and drama increasingly and mutually promoted popular Neoplatonic notions of repetition and performance as means for reaching perfection, both genres broke down the line separating private from public and invited women to take a place on formal dramatic stages.

Daily performances like Beatrice-Joanna’s could reveal women’s covert authority; silence allowed them some control in the dissemination of knowledge relating to their experiences. Involvement in this activity blurred lines of authority as well as public/private boundaries. As Wendy Wall has shown in *Staging Domesticity* (2002), women could use their domestic roles as medical caregivers to inflict pain and discipline unruly husbands, positioning housewifery as a means for disruptive compliance. In this way, conduct literature allowed women to trouble household hierarchies.²⁵ I argue that

²⁴ Notably, Beatrice-Joanna obtains access to Alsemero’s manual by sneaking into his closet. By breaking into his interior space, she discovers that he is trying to access her interiority.

²⁵ Specifically, Wall reveals that while cultural discourses positioned men as “sovereigns” in the household, the home was still a vexed space in which women both were “the guardian[s] of a national and Christian stewardship” and the cause of “effeminate infantilizing” (5). Thus the household was a feminized space in which women could exercise control; not only were children subject to women’s instruction, but husbands found themselves “in the uncomfortable position of submitting to [their] wi[ves’] medical ministrations” (7).

participation across closet drama, masque, and commercial theatre importantly supplemented and emphasized silent women's authority. Though Wall emphasizes women's ability to comment on domestic hierarchies by employing medicine as punishment, I want to examine more formally staged versions of destabilization that occur when performing women employed the seemingly harmless action of silence. How did women refuse vocal utterance to uncover the household as a theatrical stage, perform "expected" behaviors upon it, and thus reveal the shortcomings of those instructions that sought to limit them? By performing this silence in any dramatic site, women could access and affect the audiences of all three dramatic forms. While Wall's work reveals that onstage domesticity uncovers the fantasy of household stability, I want to push farther and argue that dramatic scenes of silence and instruction in any of the forms function similarly, highlighting women's ability "to speake" in and beyond the household.

Women's ability to travel among the forms exists, in large part, because closet drama, masque, and commercial theatre possessed permeable boundaries that women often silently crossed. What's more, such traveling was assisted as formal household performance drew attention to the home as a dramatic space where women were encouraged to consider their audiences. In representing the daily performances of women, drama heightens the visible instability of "private" enclosures like home and silence. It reveals that while silence can protect feminine interiors, it also can help women to engage the public. Examining *King Lear*, we can see that Cordelia provides such an example from the commercial stage. Her domestic experience is public, after all, because it exists both within her father's court **and** upon a visible stage; in this way, her "privacy"

is doubly exposed. What's more, though she ostensibly holds her tongue during Goneril and Reagan's flatteries, her silence is not a complete enclosure; her asides reveal to the audience that public reticence is performed and covers an active interior. While on the exterior she seems to "love and be silent," her allegedly internal thought-processes stage a debate regarding how to perform "be and seem"—she worries about how to speak when she gets the chance, especially considering that her "love's/ more ponderous than [her] tongue" (1.1.68, 90-91). Thus, like domestic staging, the staging of silence can destabilize. Cordelia's silence is not entire, and even in literally saying "nothing," she breaks down the enclosure that silence allegedly provides (1.1.96, 98).

It is key that we recognize that the commercial stage is not alone in producing such intensified exposure; it importantly occurs in closet drama and masque as well. After all, through these forms women use their homes to author and ventriloquize variously gendered voices in closet drama, and to command audience attention in masque by revealing the body's gender fluidity. In addition, they control not only the words of the text or performance, but also the active silences that can intensely affect audience response.²⁶ For instance, though Queen Anna's silence in *Tethys' Festival* (1610) obeys conduct and masque injunctions of silence, it also replicates for the audience the same domestic silence to which she was treating her husband before their separation. In this sense, her silence also publicly exposed her denial of intimacy to James. Publicly performing silence before other viewers and giving readers access to their own literary works in print pushes women's performance outside the "private" home. While the alleged silence of "private" spaces allows women to perform and communicate within the

²⁶ For more, see Jean E. Howard's work on active silences.

home, it also allows women to push boundaries outward and participate in public activities; dramatic silence, then, gives women and their works the opportunity to migrate toward the public stage. As women's works reach a wide audience, silence provides an alternative discourse to speech, and it allows women to instruct their peers on how to use silence actively, effectively, and as a "moving rhetoric" (Brathwait 90).²⁷ When such representations are created and performed by women, as I argue they are in closet drama and masque, they give women the chance to participate authoritatively in an organizing principle of social experience—to shape instruction that deems words or actions as (un)acceptable and that defines methods of communal response. As women perform roles like Elizabeth Cary's Mariam or Salome in their closets, and when women don costumes to dance as Amazons in masque, they gain the opportunity to engage larger audiences beyond their homes and publicize texts of their own making. Dramatic participation in households gave women a stage on which to appropriate not only the role of instructor, but also the roles of author and actor. From these positions of authority, women could speak to audiences outside their households and beyond their own ranks. They proved what Thomas Edgar expressed in *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* (1632):

Women haue no voyse in Parliament, The make no Lawes, they consent to none, they abrogate none [...] their desires [are] subject to their husband, I know no remedy though **some women can shift well enough**. (emphasis mine)

A key part of this shifting originated not only from the cracks in conduct literature, but in the exchanges occurring among the three dramatic forms. Women's access to one form

²⁷ Notably, Brathwait situates silence as rhetoric in order to encourage women to avoid being "prolocutors" in favor of remaining passive (90). Yet the very equation of silence and expression points to something active at the heart of such performance. Thus silence does not foreclose prolocution.

entailed access to both others; by returning to contemporary approaches to the fluidity of the forms existent within the dramatic genre, we can redefine women's roles.

In seeking to move beyond silence's definition as "mak[ing] no noise," this project asks a key question: when is doing something saying something? In response, I argue that the connections among conduct literature and the dramatic forms provide the answer. Further, however, a number of specific theoretical and critical approaches shape this exploration. Gender theory assists this project in examining modes of understanding, controlling, and representing bodies and voices. In particular, Judith Butler and Judith Halberstam's work on the roles of performance in gender help to break apart conduct authors' and playwrights' own performances, opening cracks into which women might insert their own messages. New historicism—and particularly the groundwork laid by scholars like Peter Stallybrass, Leeds Barroll, and Leah Marcus—is key in our ability to perceive women's historical relationships to material arts like dance, journaling, embroidery, and reading, which women used to textualize their bodies and create silent textual/literary sign systems. Narrative theory helps me to direct these critical energies toward the excavation of how women not only created texts and performances, but also how these artifacts worked with culturally ingrained notions of behavior, with each other, and across time and dramatic space to construct a story about women's expressive power that could reach out of the household to even significantly shape the commercial theatre and its men. Such a narrative construction powerfully suggests that women's "absence" is a fantasy. Women do not need to be visible or audible to communicate and be heard.

When we examine women's dramatic creations during the Stuart period, the narrative that emerges from their combined consideration is as multi-medial as it is

polyphonic. It reveals that women's dramatic, narrative production was not isolated; rather, women relied on communal performance practices and on customs of appealing to cultural memory, historical imagination, and humanist commonplaces. This project's scope is limited to the roles and activities of elite women, and it does not purport to speak to all female experiences during the Stuart period; yet the feminine performances and texts I examine do affect representations of women across ranks. Indeed, they even contributed to the eventual physical appearance of women on the Restoration commercial stage and provided instruction for how those women might effectively perform.

Closet drama, as the most physically enclosed and critically "privatized" form, offers a useful starting point for this exploration. Chapter 2, "'Invisible' Stages and 'Invisible' Bodies: Closet Drama and the Personal Stage," examines a form frequently defined as non-performative and rediscovers its public, performative possibilities. In this sense, the chapter exposes the home as a potentially public dramatic stage. Here, I not only explore historical documents that uncover household performance practices that shaped the closet; I also turn to two specific closet dramas that offer opposing approaches to women's roles as closet authors and performers. Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam* and John Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, in their distinct meta-examinations of closet drama, both reveal women's ability to appropriate conduct literature expectations in order to covertly construct spaces for instruction and narration, even when they don't "make noyse." Thus silence clearly functions as disruptive compliance; as women perform it, they also use it as a bodily performance that assists them in undermining masculine power and in teaching other women to covertly do the same.

Chapter 3 turns to masque as a more formalized household stage that visually intensified closet drama's verbal meditations on silence, instruction, and their relationship to textual and bodily meaning-making. It also uses the public and political court household to query masque's associations as "private" or "domestic" performance. Here, silence importantly functions as bodily performance, self-authorship, and a challenge to masculine hegemonic discourse. "We Speak in Acts and Scorn Words' Trifling Scenes: Court Masques and Female Voices" specifically asserts that courtiers, and women in particular, were constantly engaged in performing their own bodily texts as means for manipulating outside readers and affecting perceptions of their rank. As a part of this process, Jacobean and Caroline queens' masques offered women not only the power to textualize female bodies, but also to recall memories of past female voices and to gesture to women's abilities to author male bodies and the court more generally. From her first masque to her last, Queen Anna used the masquing stage as a place where women could speak through a series of actions and allusions; in doing so, the women drew attention not only to the violent constraints placed upon their voices, but also revealed that such constraints were ineffective. Subsequent masques by Henrietta Maria build upon this via song and cross-dressing.

Women's household performances importantly registered outside the home, revealing the fluidity existent among dramatic forms. Chapter 4, "Echoes of Women's Voices in London Stage Plays," examines the "all-male" commercial stage and argues that while women weren't physically present, their closet drama and masque participations heavily influenced male playwrights, their plots, and their representations of women. Such acknowledgement of female performance reveals women's significant

contributions prior to the Restoration and highlights the cultural importance of household dramatic forms. Silence on stage can underline women's creative production elsewhere, drawing attention to ineffective attempts to prevent their public dramatic involvement. Women's participation in closet drama, and their actions' proximity to conduct recommendations, cause anxiety about gendered instructions and closet access in plays like *Hamlet* and *The Tamer Tamed*. As playwrights express anxiety over women's household authority and its extension into male territories of governance, they also express concern over women's usurpation of masculine stages. For this reason I examine representations of female masque performances in *Timon of Athens* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. In both plays, male characters exhibit discomfort at being controlled by female performances that occur in spaces once deemed masculine; what results is a power-struggle over performance and textual authority. Thus, albeit indirectly, women significantly affected the commercial theatre and carved out a space where their voices could instruct audiences and mold their views.

Female silence and the dramatic forms, when considered in conjunction, comment upon each other's mutual ability to destabilize strict categories such as public/private, active/passive, and masculine/feminine and suggest their existence as blends rather than dichotomies. Chapter 5, "Converging Stages: Jacobean and Caroline Case Studies," concludes the project with a meditation on how women's dramatic participation also influenced contemporary views on the relationships existent among closet drama, masque, and commercial stage plays. Using *Women Beware Women* and *The Bird in a Cage* as case studies, I argue that the former conceives of women's performances as uncovering the forms' chain-like linkages; I argue that the latter uses the trope of female

acting to suggest, instead, the forms' collapsibility. In both situations, these plays suggest that while women could obtain some access to commercial stages, such engagement was not more significant than their participation with closet drama or masque. Instead, the household dramatic forms provided similar public exposure; commercial theatre existed as an additional and related option for expression rather than as a superior teleological goal.

In using conduct literature as a lens for approaching drama, this project is founded on two major claims: that drama has a powerful capacity to instruct, and that those who access and direct that capacity attain an intense and potentially dangerous form of authority. Such a capacity links drama and its participants to humanist education; and the cultural capital of humanist endeavors increases the instructor's authority beyond simply molding the behaviors of others because it marks the instructor as participating within a hegemonic structure of knowledge dissemination. By operating within and manipulating injunctions to silence, women used drama to wield that power; and they used their authorial and performative positions onstage to educate other women on covertly doing the same. After all, when Annabella refuses to succumb to Soranzo's demands, she not only reveals silence's authoritative possibilities for herself; she teaches women viewing her that they may use it as an equally potent denial of patriarchal control. Suspending the equivalence between "silence" and "not speaking" unveils how women incorporated transgression into obedience; we begin to see that, rather than hammering at patriarchal structures from without, they could tear at the seams of gendered expectation by trying on the garment to reveal its poor fit. Contemporary connections among closet drama, masque, and commercial theatre allowed women to do this not only in their homes, but

also upon public stages; as the Neoplatonic demands of social behavior demanded women's performance in and out of the home, it also licensed their participation in theatrical events. Silence's complex play between exposure and protection allowed women numerous opportunities for public performance and created the chance for covert instruction; in many ways, this was even more powerful than later vocal Restoration performances because it allowed women to more directly collaborate in shaping texts and their messages. Thus, while ostensibly operating within masculine-dominated systems, elite women could use silence to literally and figuratively walk onto numerous kinds of dramatic stages, contributing to representations of themselves and their powers of expressive generativity.

CHAPTER II

‘INVISIBLE’ STAGES AND ‘INVISIBLE’ BODIES: CLOSET DRAMA AND THE PERSONAL STAGE

“I would wishe our modest Maiden to be kept from the companie of
many, for alwaies there is more to be feared in a greate companie.”
--Thomas Salter, *The Mirrhor of Modestie* (1579)

As the most physically enclosed of the three early modern dramatic forms, closet drama encourages an awareness of the related feminized spaces in the household. Closets, after all, occupied the attention of male conduct writers intending to guide women’s behaviors within their “private” homes. This connection between feminized private spaces and related female behaviors led to anxieties about secrecy and resulted in masculine instruction. As conduct literature increasingly evinced anxiety about female autonomy and secret closet behaviors, it attempted to provide “appropriate” direction; in doing so, the manuals revealed the failure of their own essential gender narratives. Conduct writers and their repetitious, frequently contradictory instructions unveiled that gender, rather than being natural, was a performance over which individuals might take some control. The women performing within their closets thus functioned like actors in masques or on stage; the narratives unfolding around them were contingent on how they decided to act. At the same time that conduct literature entered women’s closets and functioned as an intruding influence, closet drama emerged variously as an influence in and a product of women’s closets. As a dramatic form linked to instruction, closet drama was accessible to female authors, and it offered a site where authors of all genders could

make private residences sites of a female performance that offered women various models of transgressive speech and silence that they might put into practice.¹ The discourse surrounding closet drama brings it in touch with both masque and public theatre, breaking down genre distinctions and revealing that all three dramatic forms function together to comment on gender's relation to speech and silence and on the theatricality of external behaviors.

In discussing closet drama—and, specifically, Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613) and John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671)—I want to open with three key questions: 1) How do early modern cultural views construct closet drama as didactic (or as part of the conduct tradition)? 2) What does this link reveal about conduct literature's relation to or participation in drama and performance? And 3) What kind of representation do conduct manual terms of speech or silence receive in closet drama? The answers to these questions are inextricably related; they point to conduct literature and closet drama functioning not on the margins of public theatre and performance, but in greater proximity to it. Answers to these questions help us to more fully understand how texts in both genres exceed genre expectations to participate in a public performative enterprise. I argue that closet drama recreates conduct literature vocabularies surrounding speech and silence; such recreations are critiques that reveal not only the performative, theatrical qualities of conduct literature, but also the existence of the closet as a public, performative space. Such a study, then, raises the question of how we might interpret conduct literature as being **about** performance. The two genres' speaking to and borrowing from each other exposes that behavior prescriptions and dramatic narratives

¹ See, for example, Margaret Cavendish's *Sociable Letters*, where she asserts that readers of texts can not only experience an "increasing of Wit," but also can go on to "practice their actions when off from the stage" (xxix).

work toward similar ends; and it unveils that female speech and silence exceed patriarchal interpretability and control. This excess emerges, in part, because the language of didacticism is feminized—it is culturally constructed as both addressing women and shaping how women address others. The shared vocabulary between conduct literature and closet drama—indeed, closet drama’s construction as an educational form—invites women to access closet texts both as readers and authors. These forms both attempt to enclose women and demand women’s public participation.

Cary and Milton’s texts offer major contributions to this revelation; importantly, both closet dramas have implications for audience conceptions of feminine speech and silence within the texts, as well as for how such speech and silence function in relation to theatre, performance, readership, and authorship. In addition, the authors’ genders and different social contexts encourage us to see that this concern was not limited to one group; both Cary and Milton are concerned with how and when women speak, and to what degree women’s comportment corresponds to manuals’ instruction. Conduct literature’s participation in performance breaks down the critical lines that appear to separate it, closet drama, masque, and London theatre.

“Make your Chamber your private Theatre”²: Conduct Precept in the Closet

Women’s conduct literature speaks to a complex and varied audience; written by men ostensibly to describe and prescribe behavior for women, it reveals a voyeuristic impulse by which both male narrators and a closeted male audience³ peek into the

² Brathwait 48.

³ The male readership is closeted in the senses that a) conduct literature encourages the assumption that readers have contact with the text in a private space and that b) male audiences are often not explicitly

“secret” lives of women and attempt to understand (and direct) feminine behaviors. The attempt to enter into a commonly forbidden space illustrates, as Holly Crocker states, that “the category of feminine virtue is an intrinsic component of the fiction of masculine nobility” and identity (1).⁴ Further than this, however, the attempt reveals that early modern male writers perceive a gap between “being” and “seeming”—between internal states and external behaviors—where femininity is concerned.⁵ Commonly linked to Elizabeth Cary, who engraved the phrase onto a ring she gave to her daughter as a wedding gift, the exhortation “be and seem” has seen a resurgence of critical discussion.⁶ Critics once took the instruction’s “and” as a conjunction smoothing over the lacuna between internal and external; they interpreted Cary’s advice as “seem that which you are.” However, recent work has begun examining the disjunctive qualities that the “and” implies: that the state of “being” and the state of “seeming” are two separate, not always identical things. Using narrative, recommendation, and a feigned sense of empiricism, conduct manual writers attempt to fill that disjunction. What results is a group of texts that speak to the imagined private and enclosed spaces of female subjectivity as well as within the imagined enclosed spaces of women’s closets. Closet spaces were specifically

addressed but are implicitly present as the figures who should be aware of conduct instruction and should monitor women.

⁴ This is a point on which Wendy Wall’s *Staging Domesticity* (2002) also comments, although Wall takes a different approach; for her, conduct manual interest in domestic duties and feminine behaviors reveal the ways in which women and their activities were intimately tied to notions of national identity and stability (5-10). Thus men had a vested interest in guiding these activities toward desired ends at the same time that they were forced to take passive positions and respect feminine authority based in oral culture and tradition.

⁵ Of course, such gaps also exist within masculinity; characters such as *Othello*’s Iago and *Hamlet*’s Claudio embody this. Yet the concern more generally marks approaches to femininity; such performances are damaging enough when enacted by men, but they could be more unsettling to systems of power if effectively utilized by women.

⁶ An account of the gift appears in the Cary biography *Life*. Discussions of the critical history surrounding the exhortation appear in both Shari Zimmerman’s “Disaffection, Dissimulation, and the Uncertain Ground of Silent Dismissal: Juxtaposing John Milton and Elizabeth Cary” (1999) and Alexandra Bennett’s “Female Performativity in the *Tragedy of Mariam*” (2000).

envisioned as being distinct from the public “companie of many” that constantly threatened physical and moral infection to women (Salter D1v). They were further constructed as spaces in which women practiced reflection and private reading. Yet conduct writers demonstrate a great desire both to make visible and to direct the behaviors of women in these sites, despite their purported privacy and invisibility. Thus conduct literature emerges as a kind of prompt-book, guiding female “actors” not only as to how they must feel inwardly but, further, as to how they must convey the internal through **external** shows that are comprehensible to outside (male) viewers.⁷ In *The Bride Bush*, for example, William Whately states that in reverencing her husband, “the wiues speciall duty may fitly be referred to two heads; first, she must acknowledge her inferioritie: secondly, she must **carry her selfe as an inferior**” (Bb3r, emphasis mine). Whately’s discussion continues in detail, with great care focused upon the woman’s comprehensibility:

As the wiues **heart** must be affected with this louing feare, so must her **outward carriage** also fauour thereof, and **shew it** forth [...] first in her words; secondly, in her gestures and behaiour [while her words must be mild so,] **if another should stand by and heare them, hee might perceiue** [...] that these are the words of an inferiour to her better. (Cc2v, emphases mine)

In his text, Whately functions like a director, giving explicit instructions on how an actor should make emotion visible to an outside audience; in fact, the internal state receives only one mention, while the rest of the selection repeatedly highlights outside behavior

⁷ These moments bring to mind specific textual examples that point directly to stage acting and humanist practices of *actio*. In 3.3 of *Hamlet*, the players take direction from Hamlet regarding how to perform properly, suiting the “action to the word,/ The word to the action,” and making distinctions between feigned and genuine surprise and sorrow (17-18). In Chapter 4, I will also discuss how London theatre meditations on stage direction inform and are informed by meditations on instructing or directing women within their closets, as both Polonius and Hamlet attempt to do to Gertrude in 3.4.

and its interpretation by **masculine** viewers. A man's ability to perceive a woman's performance of inferiority defines the failure or success of that performance and, by extension, of that woman.⁸ While Whately examines behavior that is not specific to the closet (between a husband and wife in general) he prompts action that makes the feminine internal externally apparent.⁹ This encouragement links his work to textual moments where writers like him also attempt to make the feminine internal of the closet controlled and externally readable.¹⁰ Both passages gesture toward other conduct literature moments that voice concern about being and seeming within the public view (yet inside the closet).¹¹ After all, when it comes to prescriptions on the perception and use of closets, few are more notable than the oft-quoted biblical instruction that women perform prayer within their closets, being sure to make their recitation aloud and keep written documentation of their reflections and readings:

⁸ The measure of the woman's success, in addition, affects the measure of masculine success; as Holly Crocker has suggested, masculine identity is tied to female performance. How "well" a woman behaves/performs marks how well related men have shaped, educated, and dominated her. Yet this concern engenders an anxiety that leads much conduct literature to fracture itself as it attempts to construct women as simultaneously in need of guidance and at fault if that guidance fails them. For example, Barnabe Riche describes the "ideal" husband and wife as a captain and his ship; in the process of doing so, he creates a powerful contradiction. As a ship, the good wife "fee[s] the **Ruther** quickly and thereby to be turned, ruled, and directed" by her husband's guiding hand (B4v); yet the woman/ship is also "crosse and contrary [...and] runneth herself many times into [rocks of] shame" (B4v). Thus the woman's good actions are attributable to men's steering, but her prodigality, rather than being the sign of weak guidance, is her own fault.

⁹ In this sense, women's bodies are like texts over which the women themselves have authorial control. I will discuss this kind of self-authorship further in the chapter that follows.

¹⁰ Whately's insistence on performance also links to his suspicion that, for some women, there exists little to no internal moral possession. Regarding women's faults, he asserts that "Good bring vp may conceale them; good instructions may diminish; and good nature for a while, may keep them vnder, and keepe them secret: yea the worke of grace may mortifie, quell and ouer-master them; but nothing can altogether root them out, so long as flesh and spirit doe strive together in one soule; that is, so long as soule and bodie liue together in this life" (in Cavanagh. *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires*, 9). In this case, performance and external practice would be highly important, in that they could keep a woman in line regardless of the internal.

¹¹ See, for example, Edmund Tilney's claim in *The Flower of Friendship* (1568) that the "chefest way for a woman to preserue and maintayne [her] good fame is to be resident in her owne house" and its enclosed spaces, and to keep in mind that, when she *is* exposed, "she must not onely be good, but likewise must appeare so" (C2v).

Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
(Matthew 6:6)¹²

Such instruction implies privacy (“in secret”), yet it reveals that such privacy is superficial; even the performer of prayer performs before God. Numerous manuals pick up on this and encourage women in their closets to expand their audiences; they should perform not only before God, but also before their husbands and other household members. Robert Horne, for example, recommends that women in their closets should imagine being watched and avoid doing “that we should be ashamed should be brought before the face of men” (H1). This suggests that the private only becomes meaningful and acceptable when comprehensible to outside viewers.¹³

Traditionally, critics and historians have defined the early modern closet as “some enclosed or intimate space like a library, chapel, or room for meditation,” and considerations of women’s closets focused on their enclosure and passivity (Barish 4). Certainly contemporary conduct writers **attempted** to construct them this way; yet, just like women’s bodies, closets occupy a vexed space involved in both the public and private. This is partially because the dichotomy between public/private and active/passive breaks apart when we consider humanist education’s intent to promote

¹²While the biblical instruction seems applicable across genders, conduct writers largely use it as a model for instructing female readers. Thus women are to perform before any household members who may access their closets and texts. Arguably dissenters and recusants stir up some of this concern surrounding spiritual practice. For more on closet prayer performance, see Julie Sanders’s “The Closet is Opened” (2003) (134).

¹³This concern about reading external behaviors to understand internal states also appears in conduct literature surrounding the court and influences women’s performances in masque. For more, see Chapter 3. Also refer to Shepherd’s article “Revels End, and the Gentle Body Starts” (2002); here, Shepherd examines how contemporary views on “modes of bodily organization” are socially relevant to London theatre actors and viewers who “watch and interpret the representation” (237). For him, actors’ representations mimic or are related to behaviors performed at court (which, I argue, are also learned from conduct literature and practiced in the closet); thus, an actor representing “divine bearing” on the stage channels modes of bearing that are materially present off stage and in court.

individuals' judgment of and, thus, participation with texts (pieces of public discourse). Readers, after all, take part in collaboratively constructing texts' meanings—and this is something early modern authors understood and often encouraged in their readers. Cyndia Clegg, for example, speaks to many printed plays' epistles—such as those in *Sophonisba*, *Philaster*, and *The White Devil*—associating humanist-educated elite readers' judgments with “complicity in constructing meaning” (28). Further, Elizabeth Hutcheon asserts that, “while the historical reality for educated women was one of isolation and marginalization, the fact remained that they studied the same texts as men, using the same techniques for analyzing style” (7).¹⁴

Women, as acknowledged readers of closet texts, were also interpreters and collaborators in this process. This collaboration offered a site for male anxiety about women's unseen participations with texts, and it fostered a demand for women's literary, interpretive, and creative activities to become visible for masculine supervision. For this reason, conduct literature writers delineate appropriate and inappropriate texts for female readers; women are encouraged by manual writers to “reade that worthie booke of Martyres” (Salter C4r) while fathers are condemned for allowing daughters and wives access to “bookes, ballades, Songes, sonettes, and Ditties of daliance” that infect their sensibilities and make them lustful (Salter B2v). In this way, attitudes surrounding the closet and women's closet reading fall to extremes. On the one hand, writers and painters figure the closet as a positive location for female reflection and learning, and for the avoidance of public exposure. Numerous paintings exist, for example, from the late middle-ages and early renaissance that portray the Virgin quietly reading or being read to

¹⁴ We do well to keep in mind, as well, that audiences during the period were frequently figured as “courted women” whose response was key to inspiring the writer and continuing his literary production (*Imprint* 38). For more on this, see Wendy Wall's *The Imprint of Gender* (1993).

by her mother St. Anne¹⁵; according to Nigel Wheale, presenting this kind of “female studiousness” offered “a pervasive image suggesting [that reading encouraged] the obedient learning of Christian precept and chaste demeanor” (49). Such conceptions fit with the binaristic assumption that speaking or writing is masculine, active, and public, while reading is feminine, passive, and “is by its nature one of the most isolating of activities,” keeping women at home as Vives recommends (Barish 4). Reading and the closet seem to offer safety, allowing women to engage in restricted learning without concern for outside perception or influence. Closet drama, by connection, **appears** to offer what Marta Straznicky calls a “culturally superior alternative to performance in an ‘open’ theatre” where women might view cross-dressing or come into contact with open bodies and lasciviousness (59). On the other hand, there existed a “tendency throughout the early modern period to associate women’s reading with the body: plays kiss ladies’ hands or sit on their laps [and] licentious women have play-books in their bedchambers” (“Printed Drama” 60). Male-authored texts destabilize notions that the closet is a chaste, sealed space.¹⁶

¹⁵ Some examples resemble Vittore Carpaccio’s c. 1505 “The Virgin Reading,” which portrays Mary’s reading as private and solitary by situating her alone and tightly within the lines of the canvas so that little context can interfere with the image of her and her book; Simon Bening’s 1531 illumination in the *Da Costa Hours* takes the Virgin’s closure to the extreme by presenting her *in utero* while St. Anne reads to her. Meanwhile, others present the reading as more social, but limited to a specific kind of public (for example, Robert Campin’s “Madonna and Child with Saints,” which portrays a the Virgin and child surrounded by male saints while listening to St. Catherine read). For further reading on early modern images of women, consult Martha W. Driver’s “Mirrors of a Collective Past: Reconsidering Images of Medieval Women” (1997).

¹⁶ In this sense, the male-authored texts work in concert with the Protestant conception of Original Sin; both prevent any space, no matter how private or secure it appears, from being chaste or devoid of sinful potential.

The entrance of any other figure¹⁷ into the closet makes it public and sexualized. Male authors can covertly enter “private” female spaces—both through households’ purchase of playbooks and closet dramas that then reside in closets, and through the words that enter female minds in the action of reading.¹⁸ We do well to keep in mind Aaron Kunin’s position that reading should not be considered “isolating” because it “always takes place through the intervention of someone else” (603-604); in addition, closets were not simply private spaces used by individual women. Indeed, conduct writers like Stephen Gosson recommended that women stay at home to maintain their privacy and could “passe the time with your neighbors in sober conference, or if you cannot read, let books be your comfort” (50-51). While intending to keep women isolated to the home, such exhortations emphasized the public possibilities of reading. Women might not only read or perform texts alone, and they might not only give male authors indirect contact with their closets. Rather, such performance could literally engage a small audience, exposing a woman’s performative skill and allowing her household to engage external dramatic practices.

Certainly Margaret Cavendish and Anne Clifford’s writings evidence this for us.¹⁹

Notably, the respective work of Elizabeth Sauer and Aaron Kunin points to reading

¹⁷ While the entrance of a masculine figure more clearly altered the space during the period, additional female presences also posed the threat of eroticism. Examples of this phenomenon exist in *The Tamer Tamed* and in *The Bird in a Cage*; these texts receive further treatment in chapters 4 and 5, respectively. In addition, Nathan Field’s *Amends for Ladies* (c.1618) suggested that figures entering into private closets and bedchambers were destabilizing because it was possible for them to be multiply gendered.

¹⁸ According to Wendy Wall, the interaction between male authors and female bodies is critical to the early modern conception of authorship. “The female reader,” she asserts, “acts not only as a median space marking the forging of alliances, but more particularly as the **privileged** median space on which a class-identified understanding of reading and writing is expressed” (*Imprint* 40). The sexualized female body and the feminized text thus become conflated.

¹⁹ In fact, we’re becoming more aware of ways in which closet activities were not even entirely homosocial in nature. After all, Cavendish’s journals refer to her husband reading in the closet and of her position that he is the best and most expressive reader. Kunin’s work on Clifford reveals that, contrary to Lisa Jardine’s

within closet spaces as exceedingly active and collaborative. For Sauer, this collaboration emerges from readers' contact with authors' words and ideas, which incites the recognition of other readers' existences; the interpretive act of reading closet drama causes readers, she argues, to "develop a relationship of *communitas*" that strengthens their sense of political and class identity (200).²⁰ Such invisible social union is ultimately stronger than formalized, public bonds. Similarly, Kunin's work on Anne Clifford examines readerly communities and interpretive influence. He, however, approaches the issue in a more material sense, asserting that having a servant select texts and read to her allowed Clifford to access a facilitator who shaped her ideas through the selection of texts, while allowing for an exchange in which Clifford directed someone else's reading and interpretation (589-91). Such collaborative reading (and reading aloud) uncovers the closet as a site of intellectual exchange and activity. The custom of reading aloud was not singular to Anne Clifford's closet, in fact. In her *Sociable Letters*, Margaret Cavendish describes this activity in her own closet. What's more, she constructs the practice as highly public and performative even when that reader is alone:

[Readers] must not read a Scene as they would a Chapter; for Scenes must be read as if they were spoke or Acted [...] the very sound of the Voice that enters through the Ears, doth present the Actions to the Eyes of Fancy as lively as if it were really Acted.
(A6v)

earlier assertions about the separation of gendered bodies in closet spaces, Anne Clifford and her husband entered and were familiar with each other's closets and book holdings.

²⁰ It is important to note that Sauer discusses not only closet drama, but Milton specifically. Her position that Milton's texts condition a specific kind of public will receive more in-depth discussion later in the chapter (201).

Tapping into humanist conceptions of *enargeia*,²¹ Cavendish describes closet reading as highly theatrical and highly conscious of its performance effects.²² Her recommendations imply the presence of active listeners, and thus they trouble closet drama's position as a "reformed theatricality" that make it a safe or superior alternative to the London stage.²³

The similarities between Cavendish's instructions for closet reading and those associated with public playtexts²⁴ suggest that the closet worked in conjunction with London theatre prior to its closure; the two shared practices and audiences, supplementing each other. This raises the question of how such relationships encouraged audiences to turn toward reading both playtexts and closet dramas at home prior to and following theatre closures; as a result of their similar practices beforehand, did their shared audiences use the closet to stand in for the public stage during closures, keeping theatrical practice alive through less formalized dramatic entertainment? After all, closet drama was recognized as text "for reading alone or in small groups" (Gutierrez 236), and the gap between these options allows for closet drama readers to hear a play. Further, the instructions intensify closet readers' relationship to dramatic texts. By positioning closet inhabitants to read/perform the text as well as hear/witness the performance, closet

²¹ This was an early modern practice that trained rhetoricians to use persuasive and emotional language to engage and sway their listeners.

²² Like Cavendish, Wilmot also imagines the performance possibilities of printed texts, though he emphasizes staged plays that make the move to print. In discussing the performance possibilities of such texts, he speaks directly to his female audience (stressing theoretical concepts for his male audience). For his female readership he values "performance as a means of conveying [his] play's didactic content, but he sanctions such performance only within a private and explicitly female household setting" ("Printed Drama" 63). That female homosocial performance may take place within a purely female atmosphere suggests that any erotic possibilities are either imagined as foreclosed or deemed acceptable when masculinity is removed from the proceedings.

²³ For example, see Straznicky's claims on 59 and 114.

²⁴ Marston, for example, was particular about the ways in which his published texts should be read; he left instructions for readers within his prefaces to both *The Malcontent* and *The Fawne*, asserting that a play's "life rests much in the Actors voice" and that the texts are meant "merely to be spoken" and not "published to be read" (quoted in Straznicky 53).

practices break down the distinction between actor and audience; they allow the reader to fill both positions and to covertly take part in an activity that at first was simply considered morally transgressive and then, after 1642, was potentially legally transgressive.²⁵ When we consider that women were active play-readers and consumers of closet-drama,²⁶ we must ask what these performance possibilities offered to them as well as how the texts attempted to (de)construct women's positions relative to performances of speech and silence. Closet readings, after all, replicate the public theatre by encouraging auditory performance; they bring the very concept of theatre to its earlier definition as "not a building" but a "group of actors and an audience" (Orgel 2). Closet drama, in addition, plays on commercial theatre practices of dramatizing gender performance and slippage; within the closet, this occurred sometimes through the enlistment of multi-gendered or female actors to participate rather than by limiting action to a troupe of male performers.²⁷ Simultaneously, the texts blurred readers' experiences as audience members and performers, combining both roles and allowing participants to collaborate with the text through oration, response, and interpretation. Thus closet dramas made the body a site of dramatic contention²⁸ by which the performer was fractured

²⁵ Cavendish's description and all it implies also troubles claims—like that made by Sophie Tomlinson—that women's closet drama "thrived upon its dissociation from the public stage" (16) and that Cavendish's plays were "acted only in the blazing world of her imagination" (17).

²⁶ For statistics and information on women's textual purchases and library holdings, refer to Straznicky ("Printed Drama" 59).

²⁷ The activity breakdown within the closet could vary—in some situations, where all individuals involved took reading parts, the actors were simultaneously the audience. However, in situations like that in Anne Clifford's closet, there was an active reader present (that servant assigned to the task) as well as an audience member (Clifford herself).

²⁸ See Evenden's page 246 and his discussion of the differences between having numerous voices play one figure versus having one voice play all roles.

between the self and the character, between listening and participating, between not knowing what will happen next and being involved in constructing the action.²⁹

Yet closet dramas maintained a reputation of being, to some degree, more private, more elite, and more socially acceptable than traditionally staged dramas. The London theatre's openness—its audience's imagined openness to infectious ideas—separated it from closet drama. According to didactic polemicists like Anthony Munday, the sights and sounds of the theatre exposed its audiences (most notably its “impressionable” female audience) to sinful spectacle and excitement, causing listeners' “eares [to be] abused with amorous, that is lecherous, filthie and abominable speech” while causing their minds to withdraw from spiritual devotion and focus instead on “the pleasure of the flesh; the delight of the eie” (Munday 210).³⁰ Meanwhile, though concerns existed over printed texts,³¹ print provided an umbrella of protection over those who wanted to voice political dissent safely; for instance, Marta Straznicky gestures to Samuel Daniel, for whom publication “was a recuperative move, a way of **d**epoliticizing a dissident play and inscribing it within the construct of a literary career” (50).³² Such a move could create the illusion of depoliticization because writers and printers worked together to construct the form as intended for private household reading by educated humanists and virtuous women. Numerous closet dramas throughout the period are dedicated to women like

²⁹ James Shirley's *The Bird in a Cage* (1633) replicates this multi-layering of dramatic components and adds a double layer of gender cross-dressing as Eugenia and her ladies write, perform, and listen to/view their own version of the Danae myth. For more discussion of the representation of the closet on the London stage (and of Shirley in particular), see chapters 4-5.

³⁰ The moral infection polemicists' feared from theatrical contact found a parallel in the very real fears of plague—the spread of which closed the theatres.

³¹ In particular Achinstein notes the social discomfort with print's engagement in religious and political dissent, and the ease of communication that print provided for people of all ranks and political or religious associations (88).

³² Here Straznicky discusses the publication of *Philotas*.

Elizabeth Cary, praising their undeniable “honor” and “virtue”; such dedications³³ work in concert with the texts’ subject matter, which is frequently aligned with biblical stories, in order to “bolster the fiction that the” text in question “belongs to a ‘private’ culture of intellectual refinement” and that it provides some kind of didactic lesson even for female readers (“Printed Drama” 65). Several parties work to counteract the publicness of reading and performance, but they do so by limiting the audience as opposed to denying it completely. Straznicky has shown that marketers and playwrights alike represented their texts as confined to a specifically elite public “rather than renouncing [their] position within the public sphere” (53).³⁴ This position is one that closely links to the concerns existent within the social groups of the educated elite—voicing concerns to monarchs and governors, recording history, and engaging in political discussion (Raber 16). For example, both Stephen Gosson and William Prynne, infamous for their vitriolic attacks against drama, encouraged closet publications that operated instructionally. Indeed, both promoted the printing of George Buchanan’s *Baptistes*³⁵; while Gosson claimed that the work had a “moralizing and didactic” effect in print that performance

³³ Notably, the dedications to women like Mary Wroth and Elizabeth Cary all occur in published playtexts that were initially performed privately or were designed as closet dramas (with the important exception of *The Alchemist*); in addition, while the majority of female dedicatees were writers themselves, their work never receives verbal mention in the men’s texts. While such dedication could covertly support the women’s writing by providing name recognition and situating the female authors among educated men, it also cloistered them and presented the literary communities in which they operated as limited and private.

³⁴ Indeed, Cary uses *Mariam* to actively participate in this construction, as do male writers who precede her. Straznicky explains that the original printed text of *Mariam* is “typographically consistent with literary drama, employing the same elements of design [...] using the same ornamental borders and generous spacing to arrange the preliminaries into discrete units and setting the play in continuous columns that lend a uniform character to each page” (56-57). Needless ornament set the text up as a visual commodity for elite readers who had the money to afford and the eye to appreciate a fine text. What’s more, the layout functions not as a shield for the author, but as a shield to protect the closet drama from a wider public, situating it rather in terms of a very specific and limited kind of readership that is public, but only constitutes a small portion of the public. I want to raise the question of how Cary, and perhaps other women writers as well, use similar tactics to situate themselves as speaking publicly, but only to a very specific and limited public.

³⁵ 1541-44?

would erase, Prynne extolled the playwright for presenting the closet text “not as a play but as an history or dialogue that [...] expose[s] the king, court, and clergy as much as possible” to moral ideas (quoted in Sauer 203). Thus, even the most anti-theatrical polemicists’ positions on closet drama set it as something apart from the sinful theatre.³⁶ The form, then, begins to function as a defensive category that manages social attitudes toward dramatic texts. It allows women to speak in a literary community by presenting that community as limited both in terms of readership and performance possibilities by confining texts to the household. And yet those public possibilities *exist*.

Both Elizabeth Cary’s *Mariam* and John Milton’s *Samson* possess complex relationships with conduct-literature constructions of gendered behavior, with the intersection between subjects’ duties toward and rights of rebellion against oppressive governments (and marriages), and with the processes and conflicts involved in indoctrinating male subjects into patriarchy.³⁷ All of these concerns emerge from and emphasize the perceived gap between what one seems and what one “is,” and they reach across Cary and Milton’s differences as authors.³⁸ In early modern texts dealing with gendered behavior—and, in particular, with women’s behavior—the idea of “be and

³⁶ Sauer has, in fact, pointed to how the “sinful theatre” was set up in contrast against the “guiltless presse” (204).

³⁷ Both Herod’s and Samson’s relationships to their respective Choruses allow readers to witness this process. However, as readers we should note that Cary and Milton’s ideological positions create different treatments of these concerns. Cary’s text approaches this question from the perspective of femininity and the domestic, asking how the private sphere can overlap and become entangled with the public, political sphere; in addition, she asks to what degree women are required to remain silent and obedient, especially when their religious convictions are involved. Milton’s text, on the other hand, engages the public, political, and masculine from the start; Dalila, the only female figure, has a brief role. However, the feminine spectre hovers over the entire text, and it helps Milton to promote his masculinist divorce views and justify silent dismissal.

³⁸ Notably, while both Cary and Milton shared the experience of unhappy marriages, the two authors write from very different positions—the former as an alienated wife and a dissenting Catholic, and the latter as one who has argued the logic of divorce and silent dismissal, and whose firm religious objections to monarchy have been disappointed in the Restoration.

seem” exposes female agency because its ambiguity leaves room for performance, dissimulation, and interpretation (A. Bennett 294). Alexandra Bennett’s work on *Life* discusses this idea specifically, positing that while the author places Cary in a clear conversion/discovery narrative, anecdotes from her life reveal the tension that the lack of congruence between being and seeming introduce into any text (296). The gap between “be” and “seem” signals problems about the interpretability of behavior; it queries whether any external behavior can ever make the internal readable. Cary’s closet drama, as a result, explores the different ways that women—even Mariam—can engage in duplicity and multiplicity. For this reason, we must reconsider our ideas about the performance of conduct ideals and what narratives about those performances imply. Perhaps texts like *Mariam* and *Samson* reveal to us not a way of understanding “being” through women’s “seeming,” but, rather, help us to understand that what emerges from the disjunction are possibilities for narrative and performative control, of which both women and authors (and women authors) can take advantage.

The relationship between closet drama and conduct literature generates concerns over men and women’s using speech and silence to construct competing narratives about authority not only in the state or in marriage, but also in authorship³⁹ itself. Accordingly, both texts function meta-textually, commenting not only on characters’ claims of authorship, but also on the closet playwrights’ positions in relation to gendered speech. Further, the texts remark on readership and performance; they expose how the interaction between reader and text makes the reader’s body function as a meta-theatre that provides all the necessary components for performance (author, actor, audience) in a way that can

³⁹ Here I mean authorship both in the strict sense of creating recognizable literary texts as well as in the loose sense of individuals authoring narratives about themselves, their cultural positions, and history. For more, see Chapter 1.

comment upon more traditional theatrical sites or performances.⁴⁰ Such connection between body and text unveils closet drama's interaction with conduct literature, commenting on or recommending subversive and potentially empowering behaviors which women can perform in closet reading. Ultimately, the two closet texts provide oppositional but related views on the performativity of gendered voices—male **and** female—and how those voices are often arbitrarily constrained by the bodies from which they emerge.⁴¹ The absence of spectacular staging and professional actors' bodies leads closet performance to privilege words; this is not to say that public theatre performances devalued aural communication, but that closet drama's absence of spectacle and its tightly spaced narratives urged an excessive privileging of this dramatic component. In this sense, the two forms experience a divide, as spectacle creates a different kind of reality through representation. That is to say, as cross-dressed actors represent women on the London stage, they work to construct a certain notion of femininity via spectacle. Yet, as Dympna Callaghan points out, in London theatre "it is on the vocal level rather than the visual register that the spectacle of femininity reaches its breaking point" (52). A young actor's voice may crack and such "vocal crisis signals the interruption and rupture of seamless spectacle" (Callaghan 72). Early modern audiences recognized this as an issue; it was, in fact, what led Henry Jackson to comment in 1610 that Desdemona's

⁴⁰ Here I build on Evenden's discussion of how earlier forms of closet drama commented theatrically on individual fracture or on collective identity. For more on the body's functions as a meta-theatre, see Evenden's page 248.

⁴¹ Frequently, descriptions of gendered bodies—rather than of the effectiveness of voices or the possession of intellect—justify the privileging of men's voices. Whately, for example, asserts that men's and women's bodies offer justification for marital and gendered hierarchy as "nature hath given [authoritie] him, hauing framed [women's] bodies to tendernesse, mens to more hardnesse" (Bb3r). Such description assumes a natural correlation between bodies and the language that emerges from them. *Mariam* and *Samson* query this logic, notably because their form allows for female voices to take on both male and female roles, and also because the privileging of words draws attention away from actors'/readers'/performers' bodies and toward the capabilities of their voices.

death scene was most effective because of the actor's silence (Callaghan 71). Unlike in commercial theatre, closet drama's separation from spectacle places emphasis elsewhere, preventing cracking voices from causing a similar rupture. What results in the closet is not merely an abstraction on the stage,⁴² but a serious consideration of words' ineffectiveness in creating single, coherent meanings and of the possibilities that linguistic gaps open for strategic speech and silence to manipulate readerly interpretation in order to assert claims of authority and authorship.

“Let her reade that worthie booke of Martyres”⁴³: *The Tragedy of Mariam*

Certainly the argument that Cary's *Mariam* debates women's conduct is not new. Much critical attention centers on the Chorus and its reiteration of conduct literature commonplaces about how a woman who gives “a private word to any second ear [...] doth her glory blot” (3.3.1193-95) or about how a woman participating in public language “usurps another's right [...] and] is not chaste” because she is of “a common mind” (3.3.1203-08). Such condemnation clearly echoes conduct prescriptions issued by men like Thucydides and Barnabe Riche, that “woman to be most honest is least knowne” and “least spoken of” (Riche C2r). Yet critical attention in these moments most frequently turns to Mariam or Salome's outspokenness in the face of such limitations.⁴⁴

⁴² This is a claim that Raber makes in her work on closet drama (16); she specifically claims that the absence of the stage leads closet drama to function as an abstraction on the stage, and it leads the ‘non-performative’ genre to metatextually comment on the early modern cultural fixation with performance and theatre while not directly becoming involved in it. While I agree with Raber about the meta-commentary that closet drama provides, and while I want this project to recognize important distinctions between public, theatrical drama and closet drama, I think her position privileges staging in a way that I would like to avoid. Public theatre texts, after all, have the potential to enter into closet spaces and function similarly to closet drama. In addition, closet drama has its own staging area and actors that we must recognize.

⁴³ Salter (C4r).

⁴⁴ For example, Ilona Bell claims that while Salome embraces the role of poet/lover but refuses the constraining sonnet form, Mariam adopts and adapts the language of male poets like Petrarch (21-23).

Such discussions are undoubtedly important to a critical understanding of how overt rebellion against patriarchy succeeds or fails in the text. However, *Mariam*'s role as a closet drama—and indeed Cary's role as a female closet dramatist and closet religious dissenter—should draw focus toward quieter, more covert rebellions that mirror the form itself. How might this *Tragedy* didactically instruct or imagine new possibilities for women to curb patriarchal restraint while avoiding violent ridicule or punishment?

Mariam's subplot provides a model that reaches beyond the female voices clearly dominating the text and causing the most (re)action; in fact, it comes packed in a character so tied to the guise of silence that few readers remember her without a second or third review of the text: Graphina.⁴⁵ Who is Graphina? Cary answers this question obliquely, scattering minor details within the closet drama. Graphina is the woman whose hand King Herod “would have plucked” from his brother Pheroras's (2.1.541), the woman Herod kept from Pheroras's bed because, though her “brow's as white, her cheeks as red” as *Mariam*'s (2.1.568), she is not royal and cannot bring political gain to the monarchy. Most importantly, despite these prohibitions, she is the woman who marries Pheroras against Herod's command.

As a seemingly underdeveloped peripheral figure defined entirely through her relationship to men, Graphina often fades to the background, a simple conduct extreme in

Karen Raber posits that Salome is more effective than *Mariam* because she mimics masculine absolutism (168). Catherine Belsey has argued that *Mariam* should keep private counsel with God, while Margaret Ferguson has asserted that Salome is successful precisely because she keeps counsel with only herself (Ferguson 243). Yet, she keeps self-counsel in a public sense, revealing her thoughts and motivations to readers—thus she opens herself to judgment and interpretation outside of herself. This is an issue I will discuss in more detail later, as I examine the ways in which Graphina alone cloisters her inner life to successfully keep self-counsel and make herself more difficult to read as a result of the borrowed behaviors she performs for readers (both in the text and outside of it).

⁴⁵ Notably, the Latin origin of Graphina's name links her to the written word and the act of writing.

relation to Mariam; for critics, she is variously a “pure foil” to Mariam’s rebelliousness⁴⁶ or a figure working with Salome to reveal the potential conduct literature extremes to which Mariam could fall.⁴⁷ Thus Graphina appears to be constrained and contained within both the closet drama and its surrounding criticism. Yet these critical positions oversimplify the work that Graphina performs in Cary’s text; we should ask how and why she manages to slip under the radar dramatically and critically. While some critics assert that Graphina “is a valuable referent of female submission,” I want to question how Cary’s closing off her inner life only allows us to say that she **seems** like such a paragon (Hiscock 123, emphasis mine). A disjunction exists, and Cary limits the amount of information we have about Graphina, preventing a smooth equation between what she “is” and what she “seems.”⁴⁸ *Mariam* combines vocabularies of conduct literature and theatre, directing women toward the different possibilities that Graphina and the other female figures represent for their voices in performing as women and as authors. The conduct vocabulary covertly points to the performativity of all behavior, troubling the distinction between being and seeming; meanwhile, a theatrical vocabulary (and, potentially, theatrical reading within the closet) brings these concerns into an imagined public and transgressive space. Further, conduct literature vocabularies protect the text and author from accusations of impropriety and forwardness, allowing Cary to remain a meta-textual example of a woman whose selective speech and silence allows her to

⁴⁶ See Kelly (40).

⁴⁷ See Ferguson (237).

⁴⁸ In this sense, Graphina is related debates surrounding other female characters’ performances of silence and obedience. Notably, she resembles Shakespeare’s Bianca from *The Taming of the Shrew* (c.1596), and her performance highlights ongoing debates about the apparent gaps between Shakespeare’s Bianca and her later manifestation, Byanacha, from Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed* (c.1611). Margaret Maurer, for example, argues that Bianca and Byanacha are actually the same—and that if we read closely, we can see that Shakespeare’s Bianca covertly “manages” the men in her life. For further discussion, see Chapter 4.

perform undetected. Through the Latin origin of her name, Graphina, after all, gestures to the act of writing. Ultimately, Cary presents writing, whether represented in terms of speech or silence, as always performative and thus as always transgressive, even (or, perhaps, especially) when it slips under the patriarchal radar. And Graphina dramatizes this kind of authorship through the strategic use of conduct-recommended “constrained” speech and silence; such a performance allows her to commandeer the narrative to which she and Pheroras belong.⁴⁹

As mentioned above, much of the discussion about women’s behavior and speech in the text emphasizes success, integrity, and dissimulation where Mariam and Salome are concerned. They stress that Mariam and Salome participate in a specifically masculinized language.⁵⁰ Such approaches, however, fail to account for a major danger of speech; for, as Christina Luckyj explains, in early modern England “the greatest weapon in the patriarchal arsenal was the demand not for women’s silence but for women’s speech” (6). Urge a woman to speak and you put her in the realm of patriarchal language; suddenly her “private” inner life becomes public and, therefore, potentially comprehensible, readable, (mis)interpretable. Successfully or not, the outside viewer can begin making distinctions between what the woman is and what she seems. Mariam and Salome reveal how this occurs when women speak against conduct recommendations; both of them keep counsel with others. Mariam, who “with public voice runs on,” speaks to the reader, to the Chorus, and to all of the characters within the text; in doing this she reveals her knowledge of dissimulation and stirs anxiety by sharing too much about what

⁴⁹ This dramatization possesses an additional layer as we continue to consider that it occurs within a closet drama and within the representation of an intimate closet moment. These details suggest that in addition to dramatizing writing or authorship, Cary also uses Graphina to dramatize **closet** authorship.

⁵⁰ See, in particular, Ilona Bell’s argument about the masculine poetics in which the women participate or refuse to participate (21).

she might hide within (1.1.1).⁵¹ Like the partially visible closet space, Mariam rouses fears about what happens inside when men aren't monitoring. Meanwhile, Salome speaks directly with the reader/audience about her plan to attain power and to underhandedly gain her desired marriage; indeed, before the reader she fulfills negative conduct prescriptions by revealing her inconstancy toward Josephus and Constabarus, her lust for Silleus, and her own dissimulation to them all (1.4.271-94).⁵² Then there is Graphina, whom Margaret Ferguson connects to a liminal and "non-transgressive" space of writing (238).⁵³ While I agree with Ferguson that Graphina represents a form of authorship, I argue that this position is anything but "non-transgressive." Indeed, she draws attention to the power that reading and writing can bestow upon women; she exhibits how men's effort of reading women's behavior is thwarted when women **perform** conduct expectations and covertly assume narrative control. Such a position has implications not only for women's behavior, but also for the closet as a site that allows and protects such behavior. It reveals that silence can simultaneously provide a space of protection while allowing women's intervention in public events.

Several critics have examined the brief scene between Graphina and her lover Pheroras, where the latter speaks to the former's silence and demands that she "move [her] tongue,/ For silence is a sign of discontent" (2.1.569-70). With the exception of

⁵¹ Even within the opening scene, Mariam allows the reader to access her awareness of dissemblance as Alexandra approaches and Mariam states that her confusion "must not be to Alexandra seen:/ For if my moan be spied, but little thanks/ Shall Mariam have from that incensed queen" (1.1.76-78).

⁵² Notably, Salome, in part, blames her own speech for her present, undesirable situation: "But now, ill-fated Salome, thy tongue/ To Constabarus by itself is tied" (1.4.277-78).

⁵³ In noting that the roots of Graphina's name connect her to the act of writing, Ferguson connects Graphina to Cary as well. However, as Jonathan Goldberg points out, in making Graphina's "silent" act of writing non-transgressive, Ferguson also elides the transgressive possibilities of Cary's authorship. He asserts that "when writing is equated with an absence of speech" the way it is in Ferguson's argument, "women's writing is *eo ipso* declared already less than fully representative of women, a sign of absence and somehow therefore in itself not entirely there" (165-66). Such a position reflects the way in which critics empty Graphina of meaning as well.

Margaret Ferguson and Jonathan Goldberg,⁵⁴ many critics⁵⁵ treat the moment as one of complete masculine control and female passivity within a constraining conduct paradigm. In many of these instances, Graphina is a model of passivity dominated by Pheroras's "active" masculinity. Yet what happens when we consider the subversive possibilities of obedience,⁵⁶ particularly if we keep in mind that traditionally recognized speech transgressions backfire against Mariam, Salome, Alexandra, and Doris? I argue that such silence is a mode of disruptive compliance; it allows Graphina to covertly unsettle patriarchal structures of control by appropriating and revising their rules. After all, it is her deployment of silence that excludes Graphina from the litany of women whom the text's men see "as interchangeable entities" (Lewalski 198). Rather than using the sliding scale between Graphina and Salome to understand Mariam, we might use Mariam and Salome to understand Graphina and her performance.

In examining Graphina and Pheroras's scene, Ilona Bell posits that Pheroras wants to author a courtly love narrative of such a sublime nature that Graphina can enter into a collaborative sonnet with him as Juliet does with Romeo (22):

Had I been the equal in love's host,
For though the diadem on Mariam's head
Corrupts the vulgar judgments, I will boast
Graphina's brow's as white, her cheeks as red.
Why speak'st thou not, fair creature? Move thy tongue,
For silence is a sign of discontent:
It were to both our loves too great a wrong,

⁵⁴ These critics argue respectively that the conversation proves that "womanly 'silence' may function just as erotically as speech [...] (the conduct books never consider this possibility)" or that it is an example of the egalitarian and gender-transgressive possibilities of female authorship (Ferguson 238; Goldberg 166, 172).

⁵⁵ Most notable are Lewalski (196), Hiscock (131), Bell (22), and Zimmerman (568). Even Ferguson to some degree qualifies Graphina's behavior to keep her speech within conduct guidelines, asserting that speech can function similarly to silence where the wifely duty to obey is concerned (238).

⁵⁶ Obedience—simulated and otherwise—allows for transgression. For more, see Kathryn Schwarz's "Chastity, Militant and Married" (2003).

If now this hour do find thee sadly bent. (2.1.565-72)

In this moment, Pheroras accesses a literary tradition that scripts the poet and the mistress into a recognizable hierarchy; though both may compose the sonnet, it is the mistress who is blazoned and, consequently, commodified and ownable. Bell specifically posits that Salome and Mariam reject this figuration in their relationships to men; however, Bell attributes Graphina's failure to close Pheroras's sonnet to her exclusion from an elite literary form.⁵⁷ Yet, for Graphina, the lack of sonnet closure in this scene does not stem from a refusal or an inability to perform poetically. What Bell doesn't note is **how** Graphina flouts Pheroras's poetic design: she speaks too many lines. Following Pheroras's request that she speak, she continues not for an additional seven lines, but for **twenty**-seven. This excess goes unnoted or excused, unlike Salome's refusal to acknowledge poetic rules, because she performs it within conduct literature expectations about *when* women should speak (i.e., when prompted by men). Cary closets Graphina's poetic position, pushing intention into the gap between being and seeming. Indeed, Graphina's words actively urge Pheroras and the audience to excuse her speech, as they provide an explanation for silence that follows conduct prescriptions and eases masculine anxieties by making her reticence "readable":

If I be silent, 'tis no more but fear
That I should say too little when I speak.
But since you will my imperfections bear,
In spite of doubt I will my silence break
[...] Study still you know must silence have,
Then be my cause for silence justly weighed. (2.1.576-79, 595-96)

Thus Graphina truly seems to be the ideal woman whose speech outside observers might recognize as coinciding with conduct prescription; her language seems to be that of "an

⁵⁷ She further notes that Graphina is the only figure to perform no monologic or dialogic sonnets within Cary's text.

inferiour to her better” (Whately Cc2v) and she “seemeth in speaking to hold her peace, and in her silence she seemeth to speake” (Riche E2v). She apparently uses apologetic words to erase her own vocal performance. But just as we don’t read Mariam and Salome on their surfaces alone, neither should we approach Graphina that way—particularly when the text represents her overtly breaking conduct expectations and committing treason through her forbidden marriage.⁵⁸ What Graphina’s selective silence offers is a strategic performance of ideal femininity, which provides an illusion of Pheroras’s control over her language and over the kind of courtly narrative into which they enter.⁵⁹ Tapping into a conduct literature vocabulary allows her to manipulate how others read her⁶⁰; performing obedience and subservience reveals Pheroras’s unacknowledged reliance on her active participation in order for his narrative of love and power to exist.⁶¹ If Romeo and Juliet’s dialogic sonnet “exaggerates the collective and composite nature of literary production” as Wendy Wall suggests (*Imprint* 36), then Pheroras and Graphina’s collaboration highlights authors’ gendered struggles for control and authority within that collective. By staging the occurrence within both a “private” scene and a closet drama, Cary suggests that the closet is the territory where this quiet struggle takes place in early modern literary communities as well. It is possible that

⁵⁸ In this way, Graphina’s action is not only disobedient in a domestic sense; it pushes her into the public/political realm as well.

⁵⁹ The illusion of Pheroras’s control fits within the patriarchal expectation of masculine control. Graphina’s ability to overtake Pheroras suggests that women on a more general level would be able to perform as she does in order to avoid the constraints and disempowerment that conduct literature attempts to place upon them.

⁶⁰ Much like Clifford, she selects a text to “read aloud” and control the thoughts and interpretations of those who are also reading within the same space.

⁶¹ Pheroras, then, is a metaphor for the patriarchal system which similarly requires women’s agreement and performance to maintain control. Kathryn Schwarz’s “Chastity, Militant and Married” (2003) includes a discussion of the ways in which conduct literature prescriptions give women power, as they rely on women’s acquiescence to function.

female closet authors might claim closet authority and covertly share (or usurp) authority from their male counterparts.

A conduct literature performance allows Graphina covertly to rescript the narrative of her relationship. While critics have noted Pheroras's desire to structure a courtly love narrative, or the kind of male-controlled relationship that reflects the work of sonneteers, Graphina presents herself as Pheroras's "helpmeet." She shifts positions from "handmaid" to "mate"; while she explicitly states that it was Pheroras's "hand that lifted [her] from lowest state/ To highest eminency," she herself narrates and claims that position (2.1.587, 585-86). Goldberg's discussion of this moment highlights Graphina's role as an interpreter. Indeed, she points to Pheroras's shortcomings as a reader, asking him to "mistake [her] not" (2.1.573); though she knows how to read him, he has misinterpreted her silence. She points out his shortcoming (specifically using the word "mistake"), stepping in to provide a new reading of her own text (172). Through this speech, Goldberg asserts, Graphina positions herself in an egalitarian relationship to Pheroras (although she couches it with language that also praises Pheroras as the author of that equilibrium). Yet I would push further and assert that Graphina's movement between silence and speech situates her above Pheroras because it assists her in reframing their performative terms. Here she functions dually as both Pheroras's audience and director, much as Aaron Kunin argues Anne Clifford functioned for John Donne. Just as Clifford is Donne's ideal audience because his poetry "tells her what she wants to hear because she's one of its authors, because it's written, in a sense, at her dictation" (Kunin 589), so too does Graphina offer Pheroras the illusion of poetic or narrative authorship. All the while, however, she dictates the narrative by acquiescing, stepping in to

contribute overtly only when the terms of their text need tweaking. She authors her position in relation to the men of the text, and she does so within the terms that they've dictated so that she appears to be unthreatening. She closets her authorship. Her words straddle the line between narrative authority and "simple" language slippage that can be comfortably resituated if Pheroras (or the reader) chooses to do so for himself. This division between intention and accident suggests how complicated and powerful the slip between signifier and signified is. Language slippage, then, might never be simple or what it "seems"; it should always encourage the reader to consider its numerous functions. The metaphorical product of this dynamic is the suggestion that women may not only commandeer narratives, but that they might do so specifically within the closet form; closet drama becomes a space where women not only participate but take control.

Graphina defies the common parlance of silence as expressive erasure by manipulating it so that it only appears to work that way.⁶² Part of this performance relies on a closed-off inner life—on making herself seem interpretable, but only in the limited sense that she publicly presents. Cary constructs Graphina so that this occurs not only in relation to Pheroras, who is calmed enough by her speech that he encourages her to return to silence, but also in relation to the Chorus and the text's audience. Indeed, despite its obsession with feminine speech, the Chorus never mentions Graphina. Her seeming coherence in performing what Karen Raber terms the "calculated rhetoric of words and gestures" so common in court (Raber 176) allows her to invisibly dissemble because it's unclear without close reading that she performs. Unlike Mariam, whom Cary constructs as openly embodying the disconnect between inner and outer and who, in publicizing her

⁶² For more on this tradition, see Luckyj (2).

knowledge about performativity,⁶³ awakens violent masculine anxiety, Graphina is a closed structure; her only vocabulary for “public” speech appears to originate in the acceptable realm of conduct literature silence. Graphina is so closed that she surpasses Salome in keeping counsel with herself alone. While Salome reveals her motivations only to the reader, she does **reveal** them, exposing herself to judgment and aligning herself with the erotic, unbridled speech of the *hic mulier*. Graphina shares with no one and thus creates the illusion of absence; she manipulates conduct manual (and masculine) assumptions that the private is only meaningful when discernable to external figures. Reading her becomes difficult to the audience as well and, like Pheroras, all that readers have to go on are Graphina’s assurances. In this way, we only have her performance of what she **seems** and the knowledge that, ultimately, she gets the marriage she aspires to while escaping judgment within the text, from the audience, and within modern criticism.

Cary’s closet drama plays with the fact that theatre, conduct literature, and their audiences are always aware of the external: of external viewers and of external shows that make subjects and actions readable. What Graphina reveals within *Mariam* is that the disjunction between what one is and how one performs is not always discernable; though figures like Salome are overtly performative figures, or with figures like Mariam acknowledge but claim to refuse to perform the disjunction of “be and seem,” other options exist.⁶⁴ Graphina, then, is both a metaphor for closet drama and a model for the kind of authorship that Cary employs—one in which her speech or action doesn’t

⁶³ For further discussion, see Alexandra Bennett (302-303).

⁶⁴ For more on Mariam’s refusal, refer to Alexandra Bennett’s “Female Performativity in *The Tragedy of Mariam*” (2000). While Bennett asserts that Mariam refuses to perform within the text, I would argue that even such a verbal refusal constitutes a certain kind of performance. This is the case, for example, when the Howard sisters refused to perform in the taking-out of *Love Restored* (1612) or when Lucy Hay refused to perform in *The Temple of Love* (1634). For more on the role of refusal as performance, refer to Chapter 3.

disappear, but simply *seems* to disappear within the privatized elite spaces of the household closet (and women's closets in particular). Cary seems to operate within conduct recommendations by providing reading about a famous woman and "worthie" martyr that appears to help other women remain within socially acceptable bounds of reading and interpretation; thus Cary accesses an audience that can see the performative possibilities existent in Mariam, Salome, and Graphina and who, through closet performance, can perform and practice the disjunction hidden within the directive "be and seem."

"Not onely to seeme suche a one, but to bee suche a one"⁶⁵: *Samson Agonistes*

Cary's text highlights the disjunction between, rather than the equation of, being and seeming; therefore it unveils the exhortation's relationship to dissembling and performance. Meanwhile, Milton's *Samson Agonistes* approaches the prescription's relationship to gendered speech and silence as a means to expose the relativism not only of "seeming" but of "being" as well. Samson and Dalila's conversation in the middle of the text suggests that conflicting narratives about marriage, accountability, betrayal, and duty can bring the recommendation back into a tautology in which there is no stability but, rather, a lack of absolute truth. Being may be nothing more than seeming. The closet, by extension, is a stage where individuals can practice constructing identity for an audience (which includes the performers themselves). Samson's attempt to construct a specific kind of story about his and Dalila's marital and political relation—and Dalila's overt rewriting of that narrative—connects to the (covertly collaborative) authorship

⁶⁵ Salter (B2r).

existent between Graphina and Pheroras. Milton's characters' excessive language, however, highlights that just as feminine silence (as Graphina exemplifies) "cannot be conflated with chastity and obedience in every instance, neither can masculine speech necessarily be seen as an unproblematic site of authority in early modern culture" (Luckyj 8). Samson's abundance of language throughout the text uncovers the insufficiency of speech in suturing gaps in human understanding⁶⁶; that Dalila is able, quickly and concisely, not only to commandeer but to restructure his narrative further highlights this and throws gender hierarchies and identities—as well as the dynastic histories⁶⁷ that link individuals to their cultures—into relativism and doubt. It further suggests a kind of feminine power within the closet: women may possess an ability to appropriate traditionally male dramatic forms that have been used to convey male narratives.

Prior to Dalila's entrance in the text, readers have extended contact with a Samson struggling with narrative and closet performance as means for making his situation and his subjectivity comprehensible, both to himself and to the outside viewer.⁶⁸ At this point, he is the sole authority within the reader's closet. From the start, Milton plays with the intimacy of this dramatic form; he establishes a close relationship among author,

⁶⁶ Michael Bryson's assertion that "each of Milton's texts can, and should, be read in relation to the entire body of work" becomes important here, as this concept is important in all of Milton's literary works (3). Milton establishes that truths about God and humanity are not accessible with certainty for postlapsarian humans; human reliance on reason rather than on intuition functions as part of the punishment humans confront following the Fall. Thus, the characters in *Samson* qualify as postlapsarian and would have imperfect knowledge regarding existential and divine issues.

⁶⁷ Rosemary Kegl discusses the importance of dynastic history to *Mariam*; however, we should note that just as Cary's characters rely on bloodlines and dynasties to define their political positions, so too do Samson and Dalila.

⁶⁸ As this attempt occurs within a closet drama, it suggests an intimate relationship among all audiences (the reader/performer, its representation in the Chorus, and Samson as simultaneously reader/performer). Thus Samson's duality represents that of the meta-theatrical audience and functions as a reminder of that audience's participation in similar acts of identity performance/construction.

reader, performer, and character, simultaneously using the Chorus to dramatize the public, plural nature of that same readership. Samson jointly speaks/performs for the Chorus and the reader, and his narration reminds both that identity is always invented before an audience; recognition of that identity depends on external shows. What's more, Milton positions Samson as part of that audience; Samson requires convincing of his stability as well, and this is dramatized as a closet reader/audience member provides Samson's voice.

As the drama's first speaker, Samson is the only character Milton allows to compose a temporarily uncontested image of himself. In this sense, his isolated narrative gives Samson an illusory power to construct himself; what's more, it highlights his existence as a closet actor who, from his prison, performs identity before a closet audience. After all, Samson narrates and performs from a prison that is exposed both to the Chorus and the reader's view; in this sense, his space replicates the closet space to which the reader belongs. Yet Samson's text is weak in that fails to account for the contradictory narratives that will eventually surround it.⁶⁹ For now, however, he recognizes himself as "a prisoner chain'd, scarcely free to draw/ The air," subject to others' gazes yet unable to return them as he sits "eyeless in Gaza" (5-8, 41). He

⁶⁹ This is because the kind of narrative Samson works toward, while different from the epic the Israelites construct, functions along the same stringent, teleological lines. The Israelites construct teleological narratives that simultaneously are enforced by and seek to verify spiritual beliefs; though, as a community, they may experience suffering during the present, their narrative gives them hope insofar as it points to their eventual triumph, and it urges them to remember that their present experience is only one part of a longer process. So Samson does in regard to himself. The Philistines, on the other hand, abandon themselves to carnivalesque chaos and to the absurdity of cyclical change in order to embrace the present. This affects/relates to the kind of narrative Dalila will eventually construct—a narrative that is ultimately strengthened by contradicting narrative structures that throw ideas of morality, history, or gender into instability or relativism. For more, see my article "What Once I Was, and What Am Now": Narrative and Identity Constructions in *Samson Agonistes*" (2007).

contrasts this to what he “once was,” narrating and questioning his own dynastic history in order to understand his betrayal of duty and subsequent fall:

O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold,
Twice by an Angel, who at last, in sight
Of both my parents all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an Off'ring burned,
As in a fiery column charioting
His Godlike presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to *Abraham's* race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits[?] (23-32)

It is important that Samson utters these lines. While he expresses doubt about the future, questioning the purpose of his birth and his relationship to God, he articulates no doubt over the fact that these things **were ordained**⁷⁰; he also attempts to allay any doubts his readers may have about his authority. Indeed, he presents these events to the reader almost immediately, taking advantage of the chance to present an uncontested narrative and represent himself as an uncontested author. He **is** important, he asserts, and he needs the reader and Chorus to acknowledge it; while his choice to confess his secret to Dalila weakens (and, according to Samson, feminizes) him, he reinvigorates his authority by telling a story of dynastic destiny⁷¹ thwarted and accountability asserted. No matter how powerful God's plan is, Samson asserts himself as “sole author [...] sole cause” of his current state (373-76). Closet authorship becomes a new source of strength. In this sense, Milton presents authorship as a keystone to power and authority; it allows the speaker to blend positions of narration and performance. Yet Samson's version of

⁷⁰ Indeed, he mentions that they were foretold in excess—not only twice, but also to two witnesses. These prophesies he presents as verified truth.

⁷¹ Samson establishes himself as part of a line of chosen Judges—and as having come directly from God. According to Ashraf Rushdy, the narration also establishes him firmly within a Miltonic dynasty, as “each of Milton's major characters (for example, Adam, Jesus, and Samson) expresses a long autobiographical soliloquy” that helps to connect readers with the characters' “internal” lives (88).

authority is naturalized (it comes from God and is a given) and isolated; his authority (and authorship) relies on being the sole source of information so that it can be “true.”

Samson insists on authorship and its related authority being rooted in public performance that is self-created, externally supported, and unchallenged; for him, the closet is an enclosure that prevents external forces from interacting with and altering his text. Therefore Samson not only presents himself as a free and accountable agent within God’s plan for the Israelites; he further asserts and narrates for the audience his own failure as a man and as a husband. Early modern conduct prescriptions claim that his position relative to Dalila “required” him to “keepe his authoritie” and “vse it” in order to “maintaine himselfe in that place which his Maker hath set him” (Whately O1r); yet he “allowed” Dalila to overpower him with feminine wiles. In speaking his responsibility to an audience, he not only admits to temporarily losing his authority, he also attempts to regain it by claiming it **as his**. Conduct writers support his assertion, bolstering his confidence.

Yet this does not change the contradictions existent among Samson’s past, present, and murky future. Samson’s relationship to God and his current state fracture his sense of his communal and individual identities; Samson’s self-narration and authorship of a closet narrative endeavors to negotiate this gap between the positions of hero and human. Ashraf Rushdy points out that Samson’s soliloquy helps him to “examine his previous life” and determine how he wants his story to end (88). In having Samson narrate his own story, Milton reveals a form of readership/authorship that attempts to cover fractured self-understanding with self-representation; for this reason, Samson seeks to control his own and others’ perceptions of him and God. By representing himself in a

particular way (to himself, to readers, and to the Chorus), Samson attempts to create stability via a cohesive identity; after all, part of the activity of representation is the individual's "attempt to persuade **itself** of its being one [particular] way" (Rushdy 14-15, my emphasis). Yet narrative and performance, like the individual composing them, do not exist in a vacuum; they affect and are informed by the events and individuals around them. So, too, is the case with the closet, closet drama, and those involved in both. Just as conduct writers fear, other influences may enter the closet at any time to contradict dominant cultural messages, sexualize the space, or affect the reader's ideas and actions.

Milton presents this as the case for Samson's position in the closet as well. As he attempts a closet performance of self-comprehensibility, Samson faces numerous contradictions from the Philistines and the Israelites; this is because his profusion of speech reveals its own failures and flaws, allowing the two cultural groups to fill those narrative gaps with their own stories explaining why and how Samson has fallen.⁷² However, Dalila poses the greatest threat to Samson's narrative and closet authorship; and her presence receives the most critical attention.⁷³ In approaching the scene, we must keep in mind that Milton's closet drama combines Senecan and Christian models, fostering a textual doubleness that invites ambiguity rather than smoothing it over (Ide 156-58). Samson's text is bound to face contradiction. Unlike the Israelites and

⁷² In my previous work, I have argued that narrative struggle drives Milton's closet drama, as Samson attempts to construct an autobiography (and conceive of himself as an individual) while the cultural groups surrounding him conceive of him as part of a collective and attempt to fix him within the carnivalesque and epic, respectively. For more information, see "What Once I Was, and What am Now': Narrative and Identity Constructions in *Samson Agonistes*" (2007).

⁷³ Scholars have characterized the encounter variously as Samson's necessary "reliving of the primal traumas of his masculine development" (DiSalvo 213), as evidence of Dalila's paternalism and inability to accept egalitarian marriage (Martin 66), as proof that Dalila is "as unregenerate as Satan" or is "a deliberate perversion of [...] Eve" (Wood 99, Ulreich 185), or as Milton's critique of the seductive natures of Catholicism and monarchy (Guibbory 194). Frequently, critics examine Samson and Dalila's discussion from the point of view of victory—which character (and, at times by extension, which gender) is vindicated and triumphs over the other.

Philistines, however, Dalila is an individual author rather than a cultural influence, and she has a specific text of her own. Dalila intensifies the drama's ambiguity; she and her closet narrative/performance present a contrary model of authorship/readership to Samson's. She enters the scene as the carnivalesque embodied; she is both the conduct paradigm of the "bad" woman and a manipulator of binary conduct limitations. Her presence reveals the relativity of "being" for her, for Samson, and for the closet readers who enliven them.

Prior to Dalila's entrance into the closet drama, the text has existed in black and white; readers are limited to the black and white text on a page, which replicates the bleakness of Samson's imprisonment in Gaza. The "dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon" (80) mimics Samson's blindness (Gorman 186). Yet Dalila's entrance brings an explosion of visual activity as she nears him,

Bedeckt, ornate, and gay,
[...] This way sailing
Like a stately Ship
Of **Tarsus**, bound for th' Isles
Of **Javan** or **Gadire**
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waiving,
Court'd by all the winds that hold them play,
An Amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger. (712-21)

Reliant on words, as Samson is, the reader uses the Chorus's highly visual account to picture Dalila's appearance at her approach; its nautical allusions awaken the reader's imagination, painting a multi-hued image without directly mentioning colors. Yet the Chorus's description taps not only into the visual,⁷⁴ but also into the didactic. It unites theatrical, external markers of identity with conduct prescription. Thus Dalila reminds

⁷⁴ The visual is itself tied to Miltonic ideas about the limits of knowledge. I will discuss this in terms of Dalila's narration later in the chapter.

readers that identity is performed; she reveals, as Kathryn Schwarz puts it, that identity “emerg[es] from an appropriative rather than a naturalized relationship between body and act” (139). Describing Dalila as a ship gestures to her marital link with Samson, and it directly references the marital metaphor that Barnabe Riche promotes in *The Excellency of Good Women*: wives are like ships under the guidance of their husbands/sailors. For Riche, a wife, like a good ship, “feele[s] the **Routher** quickly and thereby [is] turned, ruled, and directed” properly, all the while aware of the “winde of wisdom” originating from her husband (B4v, B3v); under the guidance of one man, she should remain modest and never appear to be highly decorated or trimmed (C2v-C3r).⁷⁵ Dalila, however, is a ship with “tackle trim” and “streamers waiving,” directed not by a single wind but “**courted** by **all** the winds.” Unlike Salome and Mariam, who garner criticism for whispering **into** too many ears, Dalila herself is open to the speech of men; silent but visible, she permits them to whisper into her ear and is thus similar to Graphina.⁷⁶ And, as with Graphina, access to that wind or those words gives her authority. After all, Dalila is not **directed** by all the winds, but is **courted** by them; ultimately she can pick and choose which, if any, will guide or assist her to construct a narrative and an authoritative voice. What’s more, without speaking a word of her own at this point, she presents an allusive exterior that shapes audience and Chorus responses. In this sense, Milton firmly ensconces Dalila within the conduct literature tradition of women who refuse husbandly rule and gain fame (or infamy) (Riche B4v); Milton thus does not “free” her from the

⁷⁵ The concept of singular, masculine dominance also appears in John Donne’s *To His Mistress Going to Bed*, as the speaker claims that “My kingdom [is] safest when with one man mann’d” (28).

⁷⁶ According to Luckyj’s study on traditions of speech and silence, Graphina’s silence leads to an openness to penetrating male language (155-56). To some extent I agree with this assertion; however, whereas Luckyj figures the openness as a kind of vulnerability that leaves her open to seduction, I see the potential for this openness to help her gain access to others’ narrative vulnerabilities.

“strictures of conduct literature” as some critics claim, but rather appears to situate her on a specific side (Greenberg 189). Yet the effect of her narrative destabilizes her binary position in relation to conduct literature and to Samson.

For all his insistent self-narration, Samson can never rid himself of contradictory structures that others set around him. He can never take full authority over narrative or the closet form he uses to express it because the space is open to the influence of myriad authors. He represents his closet text as individual and reliant on absolute truth; **he is** accountable for his position, **he is** a martyr, **he must** serve his penance at Philistine hands, and his authority originates with God. In addition, his text is imagined as sealed off from external influences, much like the conduct writers hoped to construct the closet. His insistence, however, both causes and reveals a weakness that emerges out of Samson’s existence not as a physical being but as nothing more than words on a page (perhaps given a voice by the reader): specifically, Samson’s words assert a need for coherence in a storyworld that does not support coherence. Samson’s speaking cannot make things so. He is only as strong as his words, and, the more he speaks, the more his utterance become vulnerable to manipulation and contradiction (by others and by himself). He reveals that masculine speech, then, is not necessarily authoritative, and that silence can be a safer source of authority⁷⁷; Milton unveils that a speaking man faces similar risks to a speaking woman in the sense that he opens himself up to (mis)interpretation by inviting external readers to collaborate in his identity.

⁷⁷ According to Luckyj, early modern conduct literature expresses ambivalence where masculine speech and silence are concerned, and tropes of silence as impotence and silence as eloquence often appear side by side (16-17). While women were directed to remain silent out of respect for masculine authority, men “were enjoined to avoid talking too much to safeguard their own secrets” and to prepare for thoughtful, effective speech (46). By 1568, Tilney’s *Flower of Friendship* joins the ranks of manuals that attempt to situate men’s “borrowing” of silence as a sign of self-reliance rather than effeminacy (48).

The opening of Dalila's speech throws Samson's public identity performance into turmoil, as she claims that she "cannot but acknowledge" that she has "[his] displeasure [...] merited without excuse" (733-35); offering tears as proof of sincerity, she volunteers to "light'n what [he] suffer[s], and appease/ [His] mind with what amends is in [her] power" (744-45). In doing this, she instantly commandeers Samson's authorship position; she writes herself as accountable for what has happened, which implies that she had a serious responsibility toward Samson as well as the power to defy it. In contrast to Graphina, who keeps counsel with herself and thus offers a model of female performance that protects from the "obligation to confess" that Luckyj identifies as placing women under patriarchal control (4), Dalila manipulates speech and confession; she provides a model of performance that allows for an overt restructuring of that control. Indeed, her performance highlights that Samson's authority and identity are performative as well. They are potentially nothing more than the external shows intended to mark them.

In doing this, Dalila taps into the same code of conduct to which Samson appealed in defining himself: she recognizes and literalizes the conduct manual commonplace that William William Whately promotes in *The Bride Bush*: "man and wife should stand bound to each other, in **mutuall** bond of dutie" (B1r, emphasis mine). She further takes an active role in approaching the conduct breach in their marriage, speaking to Samson as if aware of conduct texts that "prescribe a good conuersation for the best preseruer and maintainer of [...] authoritie in the familie" (Whately O3r). This is the main vocabulary available to discuss gendered power dynamics and their interrelationship. Notably, though, Whately touts conversation as the preserver of **men's** authority in the family. That Dalila initiates the conversation insinuates that she has

begun to claim that role, or that she attempts to (re)assert some form of authority within the relationship; it also suggests that such authority emerges out of authoritative performance. Suddenly Samson is bereft of a vocabulary and an identity; Dalila borrows from socially masculinized language regarding authority and accountability. She echoes his earlier claims and pushes him to choose between continued repetition or silence.⁷⁸ As her speech gains force, and as Samson resists it, claiming her lack of sincerity and his position of responsibility, Dalila creates a narrative that mirrors Samson's. She, along with Samson, becomes the author of Milton's closet drama.

Milton presents this conflict over authorship as altering the kind of drama Samson creates. Despite earlier claims of his responsibility (and Dalila's lack of it), Samson turns on his wife. Instead of allowing her to participate in mutual responsibility, attempts to recast her as an example of "bad" femininity; she is a "hyaena"⁷⁹ whose "wonted arts/ And arts of every woman [are] false" (748-49).⁸⁰ For a time, Milton has Dalila play along; citing "a weakness/ In [her], but incident to all [her] sex" as an excuse for her

⁷⁸ Luckyj asserts that conduct texts in the early modern period increasingly addressed gendered vocabulary "borrowing" as it became more politically savvy for men to maintain silence (53-56). Milton, I argue, represents Dalila forcing Samson into this kind of reversal; in taking over speech and pushing him towards silence, she reveals that the former is not necessarily active, effective, and masculine just as the latter is not necessarily passive, repressed, and feminine.

⁷⁹ In addition to having a reputation for bottom-feeding and grave-robbing, hyena's are also recognized for their reversal of gender roles. Within hyena packs, rank is determined maternally and the group is led by a female alpha. What's more, female hyenas are "substantially more aggressive than males and they are also about ten percent larger than males" (Watts and Holekamp). What's more, during the early modern period, hyenas were considered "voice feigners." As Lynn Enterline's work on *The Duchess of Malfi* points out, hyenas became emblems for women who echoed men's voices, doubling the masculine speaker and destroying him.

⁸⁰ That Samson does this proves problematic for an argument like Catherine Martin's. She asserts that Dalila refuses the "egalitarian" offer of ethical responsibility that Samson extends toward her and, thus, proves that she conceives of marriage "as a power struggle in which the men officially on top can be secretly controlled by the women below in return for sexual favors" (Martin 66); Samson, on the other hand, learns from the conversation and accepts mutual responsibility for "**her** treachery" (63, emphasis mine). Such an approach not only fails in fulfilling its own imagined gender egalitarianism by figuring Dalila as always already guilty; further, it doesn't acknowledge that Samson himself brings the language of marriage into contact with vocabularies of power struggle and political heroism.

behavior, Dalila never “endeavor[s]/ To lessen or extenuate [her] offense” (773-74, 767-68). On the contrary, she embraces her actions and eventually rewrites them so that they function as equally epic and dynastic as Samson’s own:

Thou knowst the Magistrates
And Princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threat’n’d, urg’d,
Adjur’d by all the bonds of civil Duty
And of Religion, press’d how just it was,
How honorable, how glorious to entrap
A common enemy, who had destroy’d
Such numbers of our Nation [...] *...*
Fame, if not double-fac’t is double-mouth’d,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.
My name perhaps among the Circumcis’d
[...] To all posterity may stand defam’d
[...] But in my country where I most desire,
In Ekron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
I shall be named among the famousest
Of Women, sung at solemn festivals. (850-56, 971-84)

Just as Samson’s earlier authorial performance establishes a dynastic, epic history for himself, so too does Dalila’s here—and into Samson’s world of darkness, of black and white, she injects gradations of shade and a destabilization of absolutes. In doing this, Dalila troubles the gender hierarchy.⁸¹ She adopts certain traits of Samson’s to become stronger than he; she becomes his mirror image because she succeeds in performing her identity as an author. This occurs, in large part, because her performance is always directed outside the text at the closet audience and its ability to interpret her. She doesn’t simply present Samson with narrative possibilities, suggesting how others **might** read her within their story. Instead, she asserts authorial control and writes the narrative for

⁸¹ In this sense, she is active and independently important. She does more than merely “serv[e] the process of Samson’s regeneration” as critics like Stanley Fish and Derek Wood claim (Wood 99).

Samson and the readers, providing two contradictory ways that others **will** read and **are reading** her.⁸² Her version of heroism **is one** of the stories, and it is just as viable as Samson's; it also exposes the audience currently enlivening her and the text. Further, her text is stronger because it thrives on relativism and accounts for contradiction. Indeed, Dalila's version becomes embodied just as Samson's does; a closet reader supplying her voice also voices the Philistine version of heroism. She, her voice, and the story she authors continue in the lived performance of the closet—a performance she acknowledges and addresses as collaborative. Dalila leaves space for the closet reader's participation in her text; indeed, she needs it for her story to continue.

Dalila narrates their story, providing a model for understanding language and its capacity for fluctuation and self-movement.⁸³ Thus Dalila both affirms that there is no single truth, no single narrative that defines the couple's relationship to each other, to gender, or to morality. Creating a story that functions both in concert with and in contrast to Samson's reveals the relativity of history and perception; there is no objective, singular state of being. It all relies on external performance. In this moment, then, Dalila is more than Stanley Fish's empty "object of interpretive desire" who "gives herself up to be whatever those who gaze on her care to make of her" (Fish 584). Rather, she offers a model of authorship/readership/performance that recognizes that it cannot control all readers or their gazes. However, a lack of complete control doesn't foreclose access to

⁸² It is important to note that the power Dalila possesses in this textual moment emerges from her control over language—a control that only exists because she recognizes and embraces the ways in which speech and readerly interpretation are out of her control. Thus, Dalila does not, as Parisi argues, simply assume her husband's public strength (264). For more on Dalila's recognition of relativism and readerly interpretation, refer to my article (2007).

⁸³ This assertion thematically links *Samson* to *A Maske Performed at Ludlow Castle*. According to Beth Bradburn, Milton's masque "intimates [that] language does not behave like an inanimate object" but that it "exercises a capacity for self-movement" beyond the control of a speaker's intentions (25).

power over some audience or another; thus she can enter into the reader's closet and create a narrative that might sway some readers or suggest other potential readings. Hers is a model of closet collaboration that requires the closet reader's participation to verify and support her authorship and authority—to allow it to continue and to prove, through its embodiment by other actors, how important external performance is. By recognizing the reader's role as collaborator and interpreter, Dalila overtly performs as an author.

Through their respective narratives, Dalila and Samson reveal the failures of the “Masculine” and the “Feminine.” Dalila's assertion of her multivalent identity—as a Philistine by birth, an Israelite through marriage, as a betrayer to her husband and a hero to her people—allows her to play an active, powerful role within the text. That she can simultaneously perform all of these positions deconstructs the notion that a dramatic hero (or an author) must be male, or that “feminized” individuals or peoples are, by necessity, the weaker part of a binary. Samson consistently feminizes Dalila and the Philistines by pointing to a reliance on a savage sensuality composed of “importunity and tears,” “flattering prayers and sighs,/ And amorous reproaches to win from [him]/ [His] capital secret” (*Samson* 51, 392-94). However, in doing so, it becomes clear that Dalila's manipulation of feminine sensuality possesses strength that Samson, for all his gloried hair, lacks; whereas he proves impotent even before the loss of his hair, Dalila remains powerful.⁸⁴ Their relationship throws into turmoil conduct literature assertions that the body offers proof of strength and authority, and that the voice is a reflection of its body. Milton's *Samson* draws direct attention to the disconnect between the strength of the body and its voice, and to the arbitrary nature of strength's relation to authority and

⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Samson (who as a hero “should” be able to do as Dalila does) desires a stable narrative; however, he denies his own multiplicity, and his insistence on an autobiographical and singly-interpretable narrative leads him to fail in fulfilling an active kind of heroism.

wisdom, when Samson complains: “O impotence of mind, in body strong!/ But what is strength without a double share/ Of wisdom?” (52-54). Dalila’s voice, her narrative, combine to unsettle this commonplace. Because this conflict takes place within the closet, Milton suggests that the closet is not a safe, stably masculine space. Rather, he acknowledges that more than one voice and more than one gendered presence may participate there. While male authors’ voices may be threatening to closet “purity” and isolation, so too may female authors’.

It is not only Dalila’s broader ability to move among narrative roles that unsettles gender binaries in this closet drama; Dalila also exposes the collapsibility of gender roles and the collapsibility of identities by combining the masculine and the feminine within her narrative. Dalila holds the power in this relationship to Samson; she becomes a locus of action, and she shapes readers’ views of the entire text bearing his name. Through her fluidity she slides into an active role that permits her to authoritatively reconstruct the text—along with its moral systems—around her. These reconstructive abilities figuratively cross-dress Dalila, allowing her to destabilize the text and its gender expectations; she reveals that one figure can participate within both gender categories.⁸⁵ Thus the categories are not mutually exclusive. Meanwhile, Samson exists in a more passive position; Dalila penetrates his space, taking over both his epic role, forcing him to listen to her cultural interpretations and to take part in them regardless of his own desires. In this situation, Dalila functions as the “woman on top.”⁸⁶ Carnival turns normative

⁸⁵ This links closet drama to masque and London theatre, which also blur gender lines through the use of performance and external markers like clothing.

⁸⁶ For more information on “women on top” and other rites of reversal, see Natalie Zemon Davis’s pivotal article “Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe” (1978). See also Barbara Babcock’s article “The Novel and the Carnival World: An Essay in Memory of Joe Doherty” (*MLN* 89.6 December 1974: 911-37).

gender roles topsy-turvy, allowing her to alter patriarchal gender constructions regardless of a lack of recognizable “public” performance and use the stabilizing authority of epic to reveal the differences between Samson and her approaches to authorship, identity performance, narrative, and history. In a similar performative collapse, Milton portrays Samson as only embracing relativity and taking some semblance of control through silence at the end, as he departs the page/stage for his temple theatre and allows his survivors to eventually construct stories around his unresponsive, silent corpse.

By having Dalila perform in a way that acknowledges both subjects’ reliance on cultural interpretation and the instability of such interpretation, Milton uses his closet drama to explore language’s role in undermining stringent gender categories (both in the text and, perhaps, outside of it). Dalila’s performance raises questions about the limits and uses of language and how “being” is never one, simple thing. In addition, she points to ways that authors can utilize this relativism to create new positions of authority, particularly in the closet, where women like Cary were becoming recognizable closet authors. In doing this, Milton reminds his audience about the performativity of political and gendered identity; in using spoken narrative to constitute these performances, he highlights the fact that identity performance relies on an audience. Thus the form of closet drama is key to *Samson*’s function. Writing from a closet to a closet audience, Milton, as an author, accesses the same public but politically protected space as Cary.⁸⁷ He can engage readers with similar political concerns who might also feel uncertainty about where they fit in the Restoration or about their own communal history; the changes

⁸⁷ While the closet offers Cary security because she is a female author, it provides protection to Milton as a dissenter.

he makes in the Samson story⁸⁸ underscore humans' difficulties in unraveling history's meanings. From the closet, Milton can cast into doubt whether history functions teleologically or objectively, and whether individuals have a stable position within that matrix. *Samson's* spatial proximity to other closet texts—notably political tracts and conduct literature—draws attention to those texts' normative narratives and to the closet drama's critique of them. Such proximity encourages closet readers to consider whether gender categories are, in fact, rigid; it allows them to perform such categories and consider their implications beyond the closet. Indeed, it places them in the kind of community Elizabeth Sauer discusses, and it reveals that they may have to reconsider their own communities and their performances within them.

Dalila is important to this construction of communal history and narrative, and Milton unsettles his text by having a morally ambiguous female character voice a version of history that might explain his own context. Intentionally or not, Milton creates Dalila as a metaphor for himself and his contemporaries because, in her discussion with her husband, Samson behaves like Anglican writers of the period, attempting to empty out Dalila's ideological position of dissent by pointing to her lower rank on the gender (and moral) hierarchy (Achinstein 88). Samson's failure to make Dalila and her dissent ineffective gestures to how Milton (and dissenters like him) might retain some of their power—power that relies on narrative and on a lack of absolutes. Commenting on all this within a closet drama, Milton can access a diverse readership, can allow them to perform question the performance of identities, and can do so without drawing the potential ridicule or outrage that might accompany performances on a more traditional or open

⁸⁸ Most notably, Milton deletes the omniscient God from his version of Samson, though such a figure exists to create stability in the Judges version; in addition, Milton blends the Biblical story with Greek and Senecan tragic influences.

stage. Ultimately, Milton's text suggests that our positions relative to history are nothing more than what we create through seeming, performing, narrating.

"Being" is a concept full of contradiction and relativity. Dalila asserts a multivalent subject position, and it allows her narrative to play an active role in shaping Milton's closet drama. That subjects needn't (or simply can't) limit themselves to single, flat positions undermines the notion that gender alone can define or contain bodies. It further weakens the critical assumption that closet drama's lack of a "'real' body beneath the character"⁸⁹ (Raber 182) flattens characters' bodies so that the women, "without three-dimensional space to occupy, [have] no secret spaces, no unseen interior, no hidden orifices" to trouble male characters or audience members (Acheson 6). Both Dalila and Graphina reveal that the excesses and failures of language—that speech and silence—provide interpretive dimension and can unsettle even seemingly closed narratives; these ambiguities and interpretive dimensions are the "secret spaces," the "unseen interiors," the "hidden orifices." They reveal that language can induce as much anxiety about interpretation as bodies do. Indeed, language in the closet provides an additional layer of secret, unseen, or hidden interiority; not only can women access it as Cary (and Graphina) does, but men can play on its instability as Milton (and Dalila) does. Thus, if *Mariam* reveals what Andrew Hiscock identifies as "the cultural reflex to image human experience in spatial, architectural terms" (127)—terms that include/involve language and its ability to construct a distinction between being and seeming, between masculine and feminine—then *Samson* reveals that the same human language can have shatteringly

⁸⁹ Such a position privileges 'bodies' and 'performance' connected to traditional public theatre; but we must take into account the ways in which there **did** exist bodies and performance in connection to closet dramas. Whether closet readers read alone and silently or in groups aloud, they did provide bodies beneath; the gender of those bodies could create reversals of the cross-dressing and cross-voicing so frequently noted in relation to the public theatre.

deconstructing effects upon those very imagined constructs. Though Cary uses Graphina to hint that “seeming” may function as a defensive version of dissimulation that operates at a disjunction with internal “being,” Milton’s Dalila suggests that “being” itself is relativistic and based on interpretation—but that narration can help influence others’ readings.

“A great companie”: Closet Drama, Conduct Literature, and Performance

Elizabeth Cary and John Milton’s closet dramas have implications not only for audience conceptions of gendered speech and silence within the texts, but also for how such expressions function in relation to theatre, readership, and authorship. In neither text does narration or textual creation exist in a liminal space. Rather, both participate in the theatrical tradition by bringing readers into direct contact with performance and creating a situation of excess which breaks down the distinction between audience/reader and performer. This not only invites readers to consciously perform new identities (regardless of gender) but also invites them to access modes of dissimulation and relativism beyond drama. The texts reveal that spoken and silent communication are public endeavors that involve a gendered performance in which those who use (or withhold) their voices do so with an understanding of conduct instruction and its operation as a manipulator of audiences.

Within closet drama lies the tension between the visible and the invisible, and the texts enact the same problem of access, of “being and seeming,” that conduct writers locate in women.⁹⁰ The physical text, after all, appears to be a static, solitary, silent

⁹⁰ This play between visible and invisible, present and absent, is something that clearly links closet drama to the London stage and its practices. After all, though female characters were present and spoke on

thing.⁹¹ It privileges printed words over staged action, and the bodies behind the characters are, in some sense, invisible everywhere except in the mind's eye, where the text helps readers to imagine the dramatic world through embedded stage cues.

However, at the same time that language seems disconnected from bodies and seems to offer abstractions on gender, politics, and theatre, its fluidity allows language to attach to myriad bodies. Whoever reads, whoever speaks, gains access to the dramatic figures and embodies them. These bodies are implicated in performance.

Thus, when we consider the meta-textual performance possibilities existent for Cary and Milton's closet dramas—separately and together—we can learn something about how subjectivity and the voice connect. When drama is “all in the word” (Evenden 246) rather than in staged action, the performance or embodiment of that word reveals the possibilities for replicating or fracturing links between language and the body, as well as between gender and the body.⁹² This is particularly the case when the performance is in an anti-thespian⁹³ mode that “problematizes the link between selfhood and the body” (Evenden 246). After all, conduct literature from the period emphasizes the connection between one's strength (or weakness) and one's body, not one's voice. The manuals, rather, construct a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* claim—instructing subjects on using their

London stages, women were not physically present; and while female writers influenced the work of male playwrights, those women's texts were not directly produced onstage. London theatre performances play with such presence and absence. For more on this, refer to my discussion of *The Tamer Tamed* in Chapter 4. See also Dympna Callaghan's *Shakespeare Without Women* (1999).

⁹¹ It's possible to view a published playtext in a similar fashion; however, recent scholarship has focused intently on early modern public theatre practices and so interpretation has been affected by gender studies and considerations of how the “body beneath” functioned. The work of Peter Stallybrass has been particularly influential on this front.

⁹² This is an activity in which masque and London plays also participate; for this reason, in part, I argue that all three forms are intimately connected and must be understood in conversation with each other. The levels on which the other forms participate will receive further discussion in Chapters 3 and 4.

⁹³ Evenden defines “anti-thespian” modes of performance as those stagings that do not rely on professional actors. Typically, a performance in such a mode would feature a single amateur performer reading all of the roles. He specifically refers to Seneca's practice of reading his own texts aloud.

voices to provide evidence of strength and weakness already established in physical distinctions. Yet, in closet drama there exist no stable physical entities, and this disconnect, this vocal performance, becomes all the more obvious. Such fracturing replicates rather than corrects the excesses existent in public theatre performance⁹⁴; however, it provides repetition with a difference. London theatre performances, which will receive discussion later in this project, link gender performances to male actors' physical bodies. This is not to say that masculinity is stable as a result, or that male performances of femininity contained femininity. Rather, it is through this practice of viewing all bodies as "subspecies of male" (Callaghan 51) that gender lines become blurred and thus reveal slippages between bodies and their performances. Closet drama, on the other hand, reveals and encourages meditation on such slippage by practicing gender from the opposite end. While London theatre used male bodies to explore the gendering of all bodies, closet drama uses all bodies to explore the gendering of individual bodies. Not only might male readers perform male or female roles (and the slippages between them), but so too might female readers fill either position. Masculinity and femininity thus slip not only within the closet dramas, but also in their performances. Stripping away theatrical props and costumes brings closet drama to the purest form of "hearing a play," and by privileging language it presents human beings "stripped down to an irreducible instability"⁹⁵ that offers just as many interpretive slippages and vulnerable

⁹⁴ For more on how closet drama, and specifically *Mariam*, replicate excesses, see Kegl's "Theatres, Households, and a 'Kind of History' in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*" (1999).

⁹⁵ Evenden specifically discusses Seneca's drama here; in arguing for their single-actor performance, he asserts that the univocality of characters performed with one voice dramatizes problems of 'self' and redistributes the subject's numerous facets to fracture any sense of cohesion (246). These ideas are important not only because of the Senecan influence on early modern closet drama, or because of contemporary concerns about selfhood, but also because of the similar performance possibilities that are open to early modern closet readers.

spaces as the body itself might (Evenden 248). For these reasons, we cannot take too literally the idea that the product of print culture is silent texts⁹⁶—rather, we should focus on the fact that these texts open up possibilities for expression, community creation, and performance.⁹⁷ Silence itself can be an active, potent form of expression.

As examples of closet drama addressing gender and the voice, *The Tragedy of Mariam* and *Samson Agonistes* offer us something in addition to views on readership and performance. Beyond examining modes of readership and performance, they also comment on how those positions relate to authorship. In their respective texts, Cary and Milton exhibit different but related anxieties about how female and male authors construct themselves or operate in public, and about the implications for how those figures' narratives conflict within the literary territory of closet drama. Cary presents female writing as effective when partially covert—the way that closet drama itself is constructed. Yet, in writing, she unmask[s] that covert effort and makes it public. Writing is both a performance of public speaking (and, simultaneously, privatized feminine behavior), as well as a critique of that position; the juxtaposition of public and private, or of performance and reading, reveals that women's writing, silence, and speaking are encouraged as performance by the very texts that attempt to limit them.⁹⁸ Women's writing exists as something active and full—rather than functioning as a liminal space or signifying absence, it uncovers how women are fully participating in literary and theatrical activities. In writing and “commit[ting] their Workes to the Press,” women, as

⁹⁶ See Luckyj (28).

⁹⁷ Leah Marcus has already discussed the orality of Milton's work. For more, see *Unediting the Renaissance* (1996), pages 208-25.

⁹⁸ This is a conduct literature contradiction that not only affects the closet but also the masque stage; as a result, the contradiction within these forms receives discussion and representation on commercial stages as well. In the following chapter, I will develop discussion on how these opposing recommendations affected and were affected by masque.

Cavendish says, perform “Publick Actions” which “expose them to Publick Censures” (quoted in Tomlinson 165-66); by allowing others to read and perform their work, women make their lives public.

Meanwhile, Milton’s text poses questions about whether male and female writing are as distinct as they seem.⁹⁹ While writing/speech seems initially to be linked to a specific gender and to masculine-gendered bodies, the relationship between Samson and Dalila suggests that not only do early modern men begin adopting “feminized” behaviors of silence in order to secure secrecy and authority,¹⁰⁰ but, rather, gendered bodies of all kinds borrow each other’s speech practices to such a degree that differentiation of masculine/feminine speech or silence is impossible.¹⁰¹ Milton marks Dalila both as a strong dramatic author who explains a new mode of understanding history (and Milton’s historical context), as well as a morally ambiguous figure; this combination creates moral anxiety about genders coexisting in a single space. Indeed, as Milton presents Dalila and women as taking over aspects of masculinity—in which closet drama authorship is included—he also presents male authors as being capable of adopting those feminine authorial practices. Both Cary and Milton implicate conduct literature recommendations for gendered behavior in their closet dramas; both create scenes in which conduct

⁹⁹ Notably, Milton himself had an androgynous authorial reputation, particularly in his early career. At university he was specifically nicknamed “The Lady.”

¹⁰⁰ For more on this point, refer to Luckyj, who asserts that conduct manuals began to excuse and justify men’s silences so that they signified not as passive but as active; as more secular models of gender emerged, manual writers needed to temper previous models in order to ‘prevent’ a blending of gender categories (56).

¹⁰¹ Regarding Milton’s position on gender difference and hierarchy, Ronald Corthell’s observation is key. In his work on *A Maske Performed at Ludlow Castle*, Corthell asserts that while “Milton continued throughout his career to revert to binary opposition of male and female [...] Milton seems in contradiction with himself on his insistence on male superiority” (120). In particular, his portrayals of the Lady and Dalila suggest feminine intelligence and independence that outstrips male counterparts.

performance is crucial as a way of publicly marking (or failing to completely mark) bodies and texts.

Conduct literature therefore becomes publicly implicated in performance. Inter- and extra- textual involvement with the conduct literature genre allows closet drama to reveal that the same narrative concerns about absolutes and relativity emerge in the instructional genre as well—and conduct literature becomes unmasked as a fiction, a drama, a fantasy.¹⁰² As Wheale explains, the critique implicit in conduct-performances is that “gender codes, no less than the social hierarchy [...] were defensive categories employed to manage or resist social change” by which one group might share qualities or gain power typically held by another (113). By presenting readers as judges as well as collaborators, audience members, and performers of closet drama, early modern authors like Cary and Milton create a position by which those participants can enter into judgment on conduct literature’s functions—its successes and failures—in describing and prescribing social behaviors and revealing their inherent flux. Conduct literature becomes implicated in directing individuals’ performances of stringent and distinct gender positions at the same time that it admits and attempts to account for those same individuals’ shared traits and common behaviors. What’s more, these activities are not contained within the closet. Like Samson, individuals can perform identity within the closet; but they can also leave that enclosure to perform in public, as Samson does at the text’s end.

¹⁰² Even within themselves the conduct texts possess fissures such as these. Already I’ve mentioned the problematic example of Riche’s ship metaphor. Edmund Tilney’s *Flower of Friendship* offers additional proof of this. For example, while Tilney asserts women’s duty to tell the truth; yet he also argues against himself, saying that if performing this duty is problematic (i.e., might reveal a man’s secret) then it is a woman’s duty “to dissemble the matter” (1204-1206). Thus women are duty bound to truth-tell **and** to lie. Thus closet drama does not create cracks within conduct recommendations, but highlights and widens them.

As closet drama and conduct literature enter into a conversation that is variously figured as private and safe or as political and classed, they reveal themselves not only as performative but as public forms. The concerns with which they bring their audiences into contact, and those audiences' active involvements with those ideas, reveal that closet drama and conduct literature work in concert with public theatre and masque; thus the forms are all "exceptionally social and public art" rather than silent or isolating (Barish 4). Not only are speaking and performing activities that bring individuals into contact with a great company, but reading and interpreting become fully public and active endeavors as well. Closet drama—and the closet itself—is not a closed entity, controlled and quiet. We must reconsider how such texts turned the home into—or brought attention to the home's existence as—a performative space filled with a "greate companie." Closet drama breaks down genre distinctions between itself and its more commonly deemed "performative" cousins, revealing that stages and theatres do not have to architecturally resemble The Globe, Blackfriars, or the Whitehall banqueting house to be public. Other alternatives exist, and they open chances for marginalized voices to participate in commenting on gender's operations. Further, while closet drama might shrink down the kind of space in which performances take place, that space exists in the same realm as those spaces in which masques took place; home-settings help the theatrical forms of masque and closet drama to bring attention to daily courtly performance by blurring the lines between the actors and audience, the stage and the home, and therefore implicate all spaces in public discourse and activity.

In the chapter that follows, I will turn from the closets of elite homes to another household performance space that offered women a site for performance, authorship, and

play between speech and silence: the masque stage. There, I will interrogate how masques blended London theatre practice and with closet drama practice in order to carve out new kinds of vocal and written performance that might instruct women toward new behaviors.

CHAPTER III

“WE SPEAK IN ACTS AND SCORN WORDS’ TRIFLING SCENES”:

COURT MASQUES AND FEMALE VOICES

“[The court was] a continued *Maskerado*, where [the Queen] and her Ladies, like so many Sea-Nymphs or Nereides, appeared often in various *dresses* as to the *ravishment* of the beholders.”

--Arthur Wilson, *History of Great Britain* (1653)

This chapter continues interrogating the vexed public/private household space and its relationship to performance, particularly as tied to conduct texts; such texts, after all, urged performance by encouraging men and women to make their internal states readable to external viewers. I argue that the Jacobean and Caroline courts were household spaces where courtiers were always already engaged in authorship and acting. Court masques highlighted the performative contingency of courtiers’ execution of daily conduct recommendations; in doing so, they raised questions about those guidelines’ ability to make bodies readable. Yet masque held additional significance for women. By placing women on a stage and exposing their positions as actors, the Stuart queens’ masques in particular allowed women to underscore their past and present participations in literary/dramatic communities; they also unveiled women’s authorship in textualizing their own bodies for outside viewers. As authors with some control over key cultural texts—the female body and the masque as **embodied** by female bodies—women attained positions of authority by which they could help or hinder their readers’ interpretations.

Thus female masquers shared control (and publicly performed that control) in the dissemination of knowledge within their court.

Further empowering was the complex communication that emerged from the critically vaunted masque injunction of silence. While both male and female masquers were required to forego speech on stage, modern critics treat these silences separately; while male masquers are simply silent, female masquers were oppressed within this construct and prevented from being actors.¹ Yet within the Jacobean court (and especially in Queen Anna's masques) we can locate evidence that the court stage and its "silence" opened up multiple possibilities for women's participation in recognizable acts of speech, in challenges to patriarchal forms of discourse, in the creation of communicative texts, and in the establishment of multi-medial sign-systems.² In Chapter 2, I established that silence does not always signify obedience or subordination; in this chapter I continue this argument, claiming that silence can function as a potent denial of another's authority. As masques pushed women to reiterate cultural practices of constraint before an audience, that repetition failed to create the socially intended controlling effects. Rather, masque silence generated meaning; women thus had the chance to promote their own importance in the household and court by reacting to or changing the terms of expectations placed upon them. As a result, their visible behaviors could reach and potentially instruct a multi-gendered audience both in and out of the court. Women's

¹ Foremost among such critics is Stephen Orgel, who uses the injunction in his *Illusions of Power* (1978) to explicitly claim that "masquers were not actors" because of their courtly positions (39). More recently, Sophie Tomlinson has claimed that masquers exist between "inhabiting and feigning a role" and therefore are unlike actors (*Stuart* 28). I will show in this chapter that such justifications for the division between "masquer" and "actor" actually justify the one-way equation of these positions—actors may not always be masquers, but masquers are always actors.

² By this I mean systems of communication that function like speech but use a variety of media in addition to the voice itself. Such sign-systems utilize the textualized body, feminine arts such as embroidery or dance, and costume in addition to music and literary/historical allusion.

performances reveal that speech is not always active, silence not always passive; participation in court structures, as well as their disruption,³ allowed for women's empowerment via authorship and performance. It further allowed them to collaborate not only with male authors and actors, but with the social forces surrounding them. By manipulating their performances of silence, masquing women exposed both the violence inherent in social denials of feminine communication and creativity as well as the failures of such enclosures.

While touted as a vocally "silent" form,⁴ masque, like the other dramatic forms in this project, offers a narrative about effective female speech; court masque narrative specifically uncovers the influence of Anna's (and, later, Henrietta Maria's) "feminine comon welthe" (in Findlay *Spaces* 118).⁵ Within these queens' courts, female masquers were actors, and the masques they performed were simultaneously literary and theatrical.⁶

³ This is, in part, because even refusal or disruption constitutes performance. For more, see my discussion of Mariam's "refusal to perform" in Chapter 2; in addition, refer to the selection on the Howard sisters and Lucy Hay that appears later in this chapter.

⁴ It should be noted that while I argue women masquers weren't necessarily silent and that such an assertion hinders our ability to fully understand masque, my position is influenced by recent feminine groundwork that does assume such silence. Critics like Leeds Barroll, Clare McManus, Sophie Tomlinson, and Melinda Gough have all revealed that masque is not a purely masculine, elite arena, but one that frequently deconstructs patriarchal power by providing a space where women's creativity and agency can function "as [a] vivid and mobile force" (Tomlinson "Threat" 192), unveiling women's "centrality to statecraft" (Gough "Voice" 56). Such work has been integral to creating new critical and historical nuances regarding the constitution of political power, national identity, gender, and women's roles in all three. Yet, these critics' shared assumption that women pre-1617 were always silent constructs women's physicality as constraining.

⁵ The Earl of Worcester first described Anna's court this way in a 1604 letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury.

⁶ In *The Masque of Stuart Culture* (1990), Jerzy Limon asserts that masques had dual lives as performance and literary texts; these two positions were separate. For Limon, the former life is irrecoverable and thus we should privilege the latter; doing so further supports our notions of single-author models and assists in our understanding of masque texts. Yet, as Kate Levin has more recently argued, masque theatricality is not any more lost to us than stage-play theatricality. Both are composed of "the same dramaturgical building blocks," and it "is not necessary to recuperate the original performances of masques to engage with their theatrical—not just their literary—qualities" (18). Thus I agree with one of Levin's main critiques of the divisions Limon creates: "Should be not, after all, be paying attention to what Thomas Heywood though he was doing [...] than we should to the havoc that Heywood's conception of masque plays with Jerzy Limon's interpretive categories?" (11).

Women were not only authors of masques⁷; they also authored their so-called “silent” presences on stage as expressive, empowering, and public.⁸ In order to responsibly consider transgressive communication in performance, we must acknowledge that acting is not always vocal, and that individuals can employ non-verbal modes to express themselves; what’s more, non-verbal modes may allow communication beyond the control of their creators. Court conduct practices reveal, after all, that the visual and textual played central roles in narrating one’s position and experiences. Women were not always constrained by their bodies in masque; rather, physical bodies were important sites that coincided with and aided women’s speech and expressions. Masques are not only spaces in which women move, and their movements aren’t merely physical; they are also spaces where acts of expression are bound up in women’s bodies. For these reasons, we need an approach to women’s performances that recognizes that it is not speech alone that constitutes acting in the early modern period; it is also the interrelation between the gazer and the gazed-upon.⁹ To understand women’s voices in masque, we should reconsider Sophie Tomlinson’s question “when is saying something doing something?” (*Stuart* 32) and ask the converse: when is doing something saying something?

This question frames my critical approach to masque and uncovers that speech occurs in several different forms—that it is a visual as well as oral sign-system. When we examine Jacobean masque closely, we see that from her first English masque in 1604

⁷ There exists a long-standing tradition discussing the importance of queens’ roles as authors and poets. For more recent work on this topic, see Jonathan Goldberg’s *Desiring Women Writing* (1997), the editorial preface to *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (2000), Leeds Barroll’s *Anna of Denmark: Queen of England* (2001), and Karen Britland’s *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* (2006).

⁸ As I will discuss, doing this could comment upon and counteract the violence of social denial that **claimed** women’s silences were passive or non-generative.

⁹ Doing this also comments upon the performativity of early modern texts, their creation, and their publication.

until her final masque in 1617, Queen Anna presents women's speech as multi-medial and omni-present in several specific ways. To begin with, her masques stage "accidental" or "spontaneous" speech throughout performances,¹⁰ giving "silent" female masquers a voice. They also use clothing to manipulate women's gender positions or to reference past female speech, which thus allow for indirect speech in performance. Further, the masques utilize recognized forms of both male and female textuality (dancing, embroidery, and props) to present women as authors and create a form of speech that exceeds the vocal (operating much like sign-language). Finally, they are collaborative artistic creations influenced by women at all stages (verbal, textual, visual, performative) and thus exist as women's expressions. This chapter argues that women were "speaking" and acting in masques long before Ann Watkins's performance as Fortune in *Cupid's Banishment* (1617)¹¹ and before Henrietta Maria and her ladies awed their English audience with *Artenice* (1626).¹² Rather, Stuart women use masque to create multi-medial voices and, thus, redefine what it means "to speak." Such deconstruction of masque silence affects and is affected by closet drama performance—and it comments on London theatre practice while giving commercial plays an issue upon which to remark. Masque's existence in a wider matrix of literature and theatre allows women to contribute significantly in those spaces; this participation counteracts the violence that characterizes social attempts to constrain or deny such activity.

¹⁰ I assert that she does this in two separate ways—both of which borrow from masculine behaviors to excuse or justify them.

¹¹ As I will discuss later in this chapter, White's playtext specifically notes Ann Watkins as an "actor" and gives her a speaking role in the masque.

¹² In this masque, Henrietta Maria and her ladies not only spoke but cross-dressed as old men in beards.

To support these assertions, this chapter examines six specific Jacobean queen's masques; heavily influenced by Queen Anna on both literary and dramatic levels,¹³ the masques, when viewed chronologically, construct a narrative that publicly presents and practices effective methods by which women can claim positions as authors and actors. Further, the message within these masques shapes the entertainments of Anna's successor, Henrietta Maria; the masques even affect the eventual acceptance of professional female actors on the Restoration stage and shape representations of how women came to inhabit that space.

Masque Spaces and the Issue of Privacy

As aforementioned, courtiers were constantly engaged in authorship and acting; the queen's masques highlighted this, incorporating such performances to meta-comment on women's public roles. The Jacobean court, which provided a stage for royal masques, was simultaneously public/political (as the seat of the king and his government) and private/domestic (as a functioning household and the site of such daily activities of dressing, sleeping, and eating). Many of James I's policies, however, increased the difficulty of distinguishing between the court's public and private functions (and respective spaces). As of 1603, James reinvented the uses of both the Privy and Bed chambers, which were ostensibly the smallest and most intimate domestic spaces at court. Neil Cuddy points out that privy chamber functions increasingly became "important

¹³ Much recent feminist and historicist work highlights Anna's role as an author of the queen's masques; I would like to engage this work and build on it, arguing that her involvement in literary authorship is linked to her authorship over her body and her body's authorship of the masque-in-performance. For more on Anna as a literary author, consult in particular Barbara Lewalski's *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (1998), Leeds Barroll's cultural biography of Anna (2001), and Clare McManus's *Women on the Renaissance Stage* (2002).

event[s] to which spectators might be admitted” to watch the king perform private activities; meanwhile, James used his bedchamber for closing out an undesirable, inherited Elizabethan council and for creating policy with more favored advisors (Cuddy 68, 72). Accordingly, domestic spaces noticeably became sites of policy-making and performance. By expanding the court from sixty peerage holders (under Elizabeth I) to two hundred after his ascension, James further guaranteed an audience and a full household (Astington 164).

The blended public/private categorizations of court spaces made courtly behavior all the more important because it assisting in defining space, which, as Alison Findlay stresses, “is the grid that commands bodies, prescribes and proscribes movements and gestures” (*Spaces* 1). In addition, style—both physical and rhetorical—was an essential component in how early modern individuals understood their identities. Grant Williams points out that in the Renaissance “style is the self,” and individuals worked to use words and clothes as “instruments for shaping, controlling, and beautifying” themselves for others; doing this “empower[ed] the individual to fashion his own identity” for the viewer (45).¹⁴ Certainly contemporary authors like Sir Thomas Elyot and Thomas Wright instructed courtiers on using their awareness of viewers as a means for shaping their public comportment; such public behaviors would, after all, allow courtiers to read the individual’s external actions to interpret that individual’s internal attitudes. In discussing courtiers’ dancing, for example, Elyot articulates how the activity allows courtiers to idealize themselves within a gender role: male courtiers’ dancing should be “fiers, hardy,

¹⁴ In quoting Williams, I would also qualify the sense of “identity” that he employs. For the purposes of my chapter, I do not intend to assert that style or performance allowed individuals to construct some kind of “true” or “real” identity. Rather, these acts allowed individuals to construct or manipulate the persona that outside viewers attached to them. For more on self-fashioning, refer to Stephen Greenblatt’s seminal text *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1983).

strong in opinion [and] couaitous of glorie” to express masculinity, while female dancers should be “milde, timorous, tractable, benigne, of sure remembrance, and shamfast” (236).¹⁵ Controlling behaviors in this way stages the body so that viewers/readers may reach specific interpretations.¹⁶ In this vein, Wright informs his readers that by watching others, a courtier can discover the “passions by externall actions” and can even discern one’s rank or profession (124). Thus, “fast going becommeth not grave men [...] a slow pase sheweth a magnanimous minde: and [...] a light pase argueth a light mind” (Wright 133). Courtiers, then, were always engaged in actively reading each other’s bodies and presenting their own bodies as texts. Yet these readings and constructions were always, in some sense, limited by their participants’ subjection to cultural forces beyond their control and, at times, operating beneath the surface; bodily authorship was not as pure as Elyot or Wright present it. In this sense, acting provides a unique opportunity for the individual to perform as an author who collaborates with social norms to textualizes the body with varying degrees of success.¹⁷

Clearly these actions are significant in public, where there exists a ready audience. Yet even in private spaces, performative behaviors were important; this was in large part because even private court spaces were implicated in public activity. Conduct writers like Richard Braithwait instructed individuals (and women in particular) to perform in private

¹⁵ In Elyot’s formulation, male and female dancers both actively perform in order to shape readers’ perceptions. Yet only for the female dancer does this performance constitute a denial of its own activity; the woman’s action becomes passive. Such social denial victimizes women, erasing their authorship and replacing it with gender-essentialist assumptions about inferiority.

¹⁶ This concern clearly links daily court performances (and related masque performances) to commercial London theatre. In his work on bodies, Simon Shepherd discusses the problem that actors face when performing the inset masque of *The Tempest*: how does one perform “divine bearing?” Shepherd’s work looks to how the commercial stage shaped such practices based on courtly practices of comportment; and this, inevitably, highlights the inherent performativity of the court. For more, see Shepherd’s “Revels End, and the Gentle Body Starts” (2002).

¹⁷ Engaging in this practice—and engaging in it on multiple levels in masque—gives women the ability to be authors on a wide level. This is an issue I will discuss in greater depth later in this chapter.

as if it were public—to “make [the] Chamber [a] private Theatre, wherein [one] may act some devout scene” (Braithwait 48). Using domestic spaces as stages for perfecting ideal behaviors could function Neoplatonically,¹⁸ strengthening one’s internal virtues while improving one’s appearance. In this way, private performance existed as a moral duty; acting led one to practice ideal behaviors and increased the likelihood that one might, through his or her own will and action, become a better person. In this sense, conduct writers acknowledged the individual’s power over his or her own body and attempted to harness it—encouraging courtiers to shape themselves within the social ideal rather than as texts that might disrupt authority.

Thus the aristocrat existed in a perpetual state of performance. In 1586, Elizabeth I articulated this phenomenon’s effect upon monarchs: “We princes, I tell you, are set on stages, in sight and view of all the world” (Elizabeth I 194). Such a conception of kingship trickled into James I’s philosophy as well; by 1599, as he instructed his son Henry in *Basilikon Doron*, he posited that “a King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people do gazingly behold” (James I 43).¹⁹ Both monarchs’ words suggest not only that presence at court requires performance, but that speaking does not alone constitute acting. Rather, acting also relies on the interrelation between gazer and gazed-upon; action performed with a recognition of an audience and an intent to manipulate or communicate can and does **say** something to viewers.

¹⁸ Contemporary Neoplatonism marked the valuing of spiritual ideals over the pleasure of the material body, and it represented women in particular as the embodiments of ethereal, spiritual ideals and virtues such as purity, charity, and beauty. Embracing and practicing such Neoplatonic virtues could, in turn, increase the presence of those virtues within an individual. Practice, then, had ethical effects.

¹⁹ This is not to say, however, that James enjoyed the theatricality of monarchy. Later in *Basilikon* he comments that “people are naturally inclined to counterfaite (like apes) their Princes maners” (155). Such disdain for his viewers carried into his daily performance at court, as well, and a contemporary account claims that, tired of being followed and watched on one occasion, James shouted irritably, “God’s wounds! I will pull down my breeches and they shall also see my arse!” (Oglander 197).

While it is unclear whether Elizabeth I imagined herself as a female, male, transvestite, or other kind of actor,²⁰ her equation of social roles with acting points us toward the queen consorts who wed her successors. Undoubtedly Anna helped to redefine court spaces; according to Leeds Barroll, she “cull[ed] out from the general palace culture of King James a second and specifically female ambiance of ‘court’” (*Anna* 75). Masque played an integral role in that process. Indeed, masque’s blend of public and private—underlined in its movement between large and “intimate” performance spaces²¹—mirrors the positions of Anna and Henrietta Maria who, *qua* queen consorts, were simultaneously public/political figures (queens and *femes soles*²²) and private/domestic figures (wives and mothers). Anna and Henrietta Maria, then, are also very visible figures implicated in royal performance of the kind that Elizabeth and James describe. Their roles in masque unveil and intensify this, commenting on the performative nature of the entire court. After all, the masques under Anna expanded beyond Elizabethan dance to encompass more theatrical elements.²³ Even audience members became engaged in performance. While Queen Elizabeth sat on the stage when

²⁰ Elizabeth’s position as an actor possesses numerous gendered possibilities not only because early modern theatre practice encouraged and used cross-dressing (and therefore existed within the cultural subconscious), but also because in her own public appearances and texts, Elizabeth shifted gender identities. She was variously a soft and vulnerable woman and a monarch with the stomach and heart of a prince. For more on Elizabeth’s gender identities and performances within her own writing, consult *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (2000).

²¹ Within the courts, masque spaces and audiences were varied. They could be as large as the Whitehall Banqueting House, which had two floors, dimensions of 120’x53’, and could host thirteen hundred people. However, they could also be as small as the Privy or Presence chambers at Denmark House (also called Somerset House), which resembled closets (Astington 52-53, 163, 70).

²² By 1540, under Halisbury’s Laws (viii, 578), queen consorts were created *feme sole* so that kings might avoid implication and suit in any of their wives’ debts (Fisher 316). This had the effect of providing women like Anna and Henrietta Maria with some financial and legal independence.

²³ Barroll argues that masques under Queen Elizabeth were a masculine activity (*Anna* 76), and John Peacock posits that the Stuart masque was longer and had more theatrical plot and activity than the Elizabethan mask (2).

watching masks,²⁴ James I after her received the most visible seat in the hall; as Stephen Orgel notes, James was required to “not merely see the play, he must be seen to see it” (10, 16). Though they possessed varied seats throughout the masquing hall, the audience sat in a similar viewing capacity as the king: members were observed observing. What’s more, spectators were **aware** of this state. As John Astington claims, Jacobean courtiers “desire[d] to be seen within this new court world, and to gain or maintain influence within it,” which affected attendance and behavior at masques (170). For this reason, audience apparel became an intensified marker of rank; frequent attendees like Robert Sidney insisted upon a new suit of clothing for each masque.²⁵ Barbara Ravelhofer suggests that “Sidney’s case shows that the idea of distinction affected audiences as much as performers” (130) and thus, I argue, their positions are not wholly dissimilar. The audience dressed itself in costume and provided a backdrop for luxurious masque performances; they performed their roles as observers and thus functioned as part of the action. Further, the lines between acting on stage and in the court became blurred in virtue of the audience’s participating in the taking-out.²⁶

Audience involvement in masque performance reached beyond costuming and viewing. The visuals of the set—and where masquers fit in relation—further emphasized that performance stretched beyond the stage.²⁷ In his set designs, as they became

²⁴ In order to make distinctions between the queens and their entertainments, Dillon alters the spelling of “masque”; specifically, “mask” denotes the Tudor practice, “masque” the Stuart. This is a practice I will utilize throughout my discussion.

²⁵ Records kept by Sidney’s wardrobe master—including letters passed between the two—reveal that Sidney attended seven masques between 1604 and 1610, and that he ordered a new suit of clothes for each attendance.

²⁶ However, the courtiers’ and court masquers’ shared roles as actors were not entirely identical. Indeed, masquing women were placed in a doubly performative position, and their roles were marked by an authority and control emerging from their positions as authors and embodiments of the masque text.

²⁷ Because each performance required the queen’s approval at each step, I will argue later that this is, as a result, part of the queen’s commentary, and a way for her to voice her specific message. In this sense I

increasingly influenced by Continental art, Inigo Jones used *trompe-l'oeil*, a method in which “living figures blended with others that were not real at all, but *feinto*, painted on a backdrop; or *in rilievo*, modeled and cutout to look real in the distance, blurring the distinction between painting, sculpture, and actual living figures” (Veevers 112). While Erica Veevers discusses Jones’s designs as modes of blurring the real and ideal, we can move further; indeed, the relationship between the masquers and Jones’s sets is a metaphor for the relationship between the audience and the masquers. On the first level, the masquers on stage reveal the difficulty of separating art from physical human bodies. As bodies move on stage, they sometimes used dance to present the body as a communicative vehicle and other times stood still in costume to supplement the scenery; in each situation, they caused viewers difficulty in distinguishing the performer from the art of the set. In this way, those bodies began to function *as* art because they participated in *disegno*.²⁸ The masquers were representations of themselves; both their bodies and the scenery were manipulated and stylized to affect the viewer. On another level, the masquers’ performances uncover the difficulty of separating actions performed on the stage from those performed off of it. Ultimately, the masque space defines all behaviors as performative and all courtiers as actors regardless of whether they acquiesce or refuse to conform to conduct guidelines. After all, the Howard sisters’ refusal to dance in the taking-out of *Love Restored* (1612) was a political act that changed the masque’s gender

build on the tradition of masque authorship that Lewalski, Barroll, McManus, and Schwarz argue in regard to Anna.

²⁸ *Disegno* was a practice in Continental artistic training that marked an artist’s “learning to represent the human body” (Peacock 115). Though the definition of the word points to practices like sculpture, painting, and drawing, I argue that masquers also participated—using their own bodies as medium. Just as Continental artists (and Jones, who was influenced by them) borrowed from ideals to represent something “real,” the masquers model their bodies and movements on ideals—in dance, and even in Jones’s sketches—to represent themselves a certain way.

dynamic,²⁹ just as Lucy Hay, Countess of Carlisle's refusal to dance in *The Temple of Love* (1634) publicized her rivalry with Henrietta Maria.³⁰ Thus, I agree with Orgel that a "lady or a gentleman participating [...] remains a lady or gentleman, and is not released from the obligation of observing all the complex rules of behavior at court"; yet this should not lead us to conclude as he does that "masquers are not actors" (Orgel 39).³¹ Continued performance of courtly behavior does not mitigate courtiers' positions as actors but highlights it.

Yet in a certain sense, court actors and the masquers, though related, are not identical. Masquers' performances **intensify** their positions as actors by doubling the courtiers' roles—they perform themselves and their ranks at the same time that they perform masque roles. The increased intensity of the masque actors' roles brought excessive attention to and encouraged reflection upon courtiers' daily roles—particularly about the possibilities for transgression that open up when individuals control their own bodies. Thus, the "fiction" of masque performances did "open outward to include the whole court" as Orgel notes; however, rather than the "noble spectator watch[ing] what he ultimately became" (Orgel 39) in the taking-out, the aristocrat's participation unveiled what he was all along. In this sense, what Martin Butler calls the "world of action and

²⁹ Sir John Chamberlain reports that the Howard sisters' refusal to dance forced their empty-handed male partners to dance with each other. McManus asserts that the act overthrew the court gender balance, commenting on women's covert power (*Women* 18-20). I argue that, in addition, it serves as evidence of audience (and female) collaboration in masque performances—the choices such participants made could shape the entire course of the performance.

³⁰ For more on this occasion of refusal, see page 454 of Julie Sanders's "Caroline Salon Culture and Female Agency: The Countess of Carlisle, Henrietta Maria, and Public Theatre" (2000). Notably, such refusals were also recognized and represented in London commercial theatre, as when the female characters of *Love's Labor's Lost* refuse to participate in a dance.

³¹ McManus, more recently, makes a similar argument, asserting that masque is "an elite social ritual rather than public drama" because it "derived its performance conventions from its social environment" (*Women* 6). My response to such claims is similar to my criticism of Orgel: masque's derivation of convention from its social setting points to that very setting's theatricality.

representation”(21) reveals that the “real” is as performative and imaginary as the fictional/theatrical.

Masque participation implicates courtiers in acting—in a theatrical sense and in a daily sense—so we must consider what this reveals about female courtiers’ acting and their participation in **creating** such a space of commentary. As instigators of masques, the queen consorts revealed the degree to which women were not only shaped by but also shaped court conduct and hierarchy. They revealed that women spoke and acted in masque—and that the court provided a protected space for this to occur. After all, such performance happened within a female-sanctioned and female-authored space, and the queens’ behaviors became a model for behavior in the court and beyond.³²

“Because it was her Majesty’s will”³³: Queen Anna and Expressive Masque Silence

Women expose meaning in masques and in the court; this is an idea that even shaped contemporary approaches to the form.³⁴ Anna’s court masques are necessary in piecing that meaning together. Considering Anna’s masques as a series yields a more

³² Alison Findlay, after all, asserts that the court functioned as “an exemplary arena where social interaction, including that related to gender, set standards for the population” (*Spaces* 110-11). Whether or not this was true, the idea was popular within the early modern court. Masques, then, hold a potentially didactic function (which opens them up to female participation). Because women can have a shaping influence on matters of conduct, conduct literature becomes more fluid a cultural expression than the proof of the “tyranny of the group in imposing fantasmatic institutionalized identity upon the individual” that some critics view it as (Franko 55).

³³ Jonson *Blackness* 18.

³⁴ For example, Arthur Wilson’s *The History of Great Britain* (1653) positions masque as the defining metaphor for the Jacobean court.³⁴ Wilson’s choice to define the court via masque and masque via femininity reveals that contemporary viewers understood women’s behavior as a key for understanding both the court and its metaphorical representative. The queen consort and her ladies made life at Whitehall a continual masque—by extension, they were perpetual performers, both subject to the gaze of court viewers as well as able to use their appearances to manipulate spectators. An awareness of the gaze—and actively playing to it—put Anna of Denmark and her women in positions of authorship in which they molded social perceptions of women, their bodies, and their voices for a reading audience. Wilson expressly presents such behaviors as active. The ladies “appeared” before the crowd, attired in such a way that captivated attention and controlled viewers’ interpretations of the women’s roles as demi-gods (positions with socio-political as well as dramatic implications). For more, see the epigraph to this chapter.

nuanced understanding of the type of voice she constructs for women at court—and of how that voice interacts with feminine voices in other literary and theatrical fields. Specifically, the sub-sections that follow link *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), an entertainment at Theobalds (1606), *The Masque of Queenes* (1609), *Tethys' Festival* (1610), and *Cupid's Banishment* (1617). Together the masques construct a larger picture, revealing how vocal and textual speech merge within the female body to create autonomous expression in women's court performances.

The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses (1604)

Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* was Anna's first English masque. Hosted at Hampton Court, the center of Tudor power, it bridged Elizabeth's entertainments and those of the newly emerging Jacobean court. Throughout the performance, female masquers attracted the most attention—underscoring an emerging difference between the masculine-centered masks of Elizabeth I, and the femino-centric masques that Anna would host. Indeed, women's movements were central to the action. To begin with, Daniel presents Night, the voice controlling the opening incantations, as a female figure³⁵; approaching her son Somnus, she “wakens” him “with [a] speech,” voicing commands that both drive Somnus and control the audience's sight:

Wake my Sonne, **awake** and **come**
Strike with thy Horny wand, the spirits of these
That here expect some pleasing nouelties:
And **make** their slumber to beget strange sights,
Strange visions and vnusuall properties
[...] **Make** this to seeme a Temple in their sight.
(Daniel B2r, emphases mine)

³⁵ A female antimasque character, Night would have been embodied by a professional male actor. However, Daniel chooses to present this figure, whose speech causes action and controls the viewer's sight, as a woman and mother.

Immediately, Night is agentially linked to the vision the audience will see; she conceives of and commands its occurrence.³⁶ Active female speech, then, is represented as the origin of Jacobean masque. The female masquers who emerge on stage following Night and Somnus's conversation share this agency; though no record exists of their using voices, they speak to the audience by presenting themselves authors of their own bodies and of how those bodies may be read. They control themselves and command the viewers' sight.

Because Inigo Jones had yet to invent moveable set designs, *Vision's* masquers traveled independently; they crossed the stage within the Great Hall and moved from one piece of scenery to the next. Thus the goddesses were active, self-propelled figures. They "descend" from the mount and into the crowd, later "ascend[ing] vp into the Temple, and deliuering their presents" before "return[ing] downe into the midst of the Hall, preparing themselues to their dance" (A7r-A8r). Such movements aren't prompted by any external commands³⁷; Iris is the first to appear and deliver a message to Sibyllia, who then merely asks "What shall I herein see?" (B3v) before the goddesses arrive of their own volition. Such independent movement suggested female masquers' agency within the court space; they will their own movements, deciding whether to correspond with social expectations. In addition, the women's movement uncovers the malleable division between gods and humans (in the masque), mirroring the malleable division between performers and

³⁶ In this sense, Night resembles Anna and the role she begins to establish for herself here as a masque author. As Barbara Lewalski puts it, "While entertainments of various sorts had been a staple of Queen Elizabeth's progresses, the court masque became a major genre in the early years of James's reign, and Queen Anne was midwife to it" (8). As I move into discussing *Blackness*, I will return to this image of childbirth and midwifery in textual creation.

³⁷ Notably, the male figure of Somnus alone gets represented as following commands; indeed, he responds to Night by saying, "Deare Mother Night, I your commandement/ Obay" (B2v).

audiences. The women held the singular power of entering into the audience's space to animate viewers with dance. This suggests that female masquers had the authority to acknowledge the viewers' status as court actors. In this way, the women's acting differed from the audience's; it combined with authorship and intensified the authority of the women's acting. The female masquers chose who, when, and how to incorporate or exclude other actors. And the power to deny had violent possibilities for how courtiers understood themselves.

To enhance the agency signified by the women's action, Anna made a specific visual decision that communicated her position—and other women's by extension—to court viewers. She and her ladies appeared before the crowd not only as goddesses, but as goddesses clad in the late Queen Elizabeth's clothing: Anna's inheritance. Contemporary accounts track Anna's decision to utilize the "borrow'd robes," claiming that while Anna had initially planned to "dispose of Elizabeth's gowns and jewels, she rapidly discovered that art could not devise anything more costly" (*Calendar* 64). To this end, Arbella Stuart reported that "the Queene intendeth to make a maske [...] to which end my Lady Suffolk and my Lady Walsingham [keeper of the Queen's wardrobe] have warrants to take of the late Queenes best apparell" (Stuart 197).³⁸ Such a choice marks Anna's involvement as active and directorial. Yet the decision also ran counter to Jacobean masquing practice,³⁹ suggesting that it was not so much the costliness of Elizabeth's gowns as the position of their last owner that made them desirable. In a

³⁸ For an additional reading on the use of Elizabeth's robes and the subsequent links between women's bodies and divinity, architecture, and gender performance, see Clare McManus's *Women on the Renaissance Stage* (2002) and, in particular, pages 107-108.

³⁹ While Elizabeth I's more budget-conscious administration required the recycling of court clothing and previous costumes in court entertainments, no Stuart records point to this kind of consistent costume and wardrobe reuse (Ravelhofer 143).

culture that understood material possessions, and clothing in particular, as signs of rank that referenced former owners and their histories,⁴⁰ the act drew attention to Anna as a queen, linking her to an influential female predecessor. Elizabeth's garments helped construct her public persona; they were her costumes when she spoke in public or performed her role as monarch. Here, Anna draws upon those performances, calling upon public memory to connect the women who wore those clothes. After all, though a consort rather than a ruler, Anna was also the daughter and sister of kings in addition to being the wife and mother of them. She possessed *a priori* positions of power independent of her marriage with James, to which she drew attention in her personal motto: "*La mia grandessa dal eccleso*" (Knowles 24). Marriage was not alone in defining Anna as a queen, and it did not imbue her with power; similarly, her masques and her court helped women to break free of masculine definition, providing opportunities for advancement and display regardless of marriage.⁴¹

Costuming herself with Elizabeth's garments allowed Anna to reference and utilize Elizabeth's voice. Importantly, Elizabeth spoke not only in political and domestic spaces, but also through poetry and in court entertainments, disrupting and recreating stage action based on female desire.⁴² Early modern individuals recognized Anna's

⁴⁰ See Ravelhofer's claim that garments and possessions "embod[ied] a history of former owners and bygone occasions" (124). While Ravelhofer discusses sumptuary laws and practices of clothing inheritance, such cultural beliefs have important ramifications for how viewers would understand Anna's use of Elizabeth's wardrobe.

⁴¹ Barroll examines the "opportunities for strictly female court access" that expanded within the Jacobean court (*Anna* 40). Creating a powerful feminine sphere was within Anna's power in a way that it wasn't within Elizabeth's; this is because, as the ruling monarch, Elizabeth was required to fill governing posts and counsels with men. As queen consort, Anna was free to appoint women to positions of power within her court.

⁴² Famously, Elizabeth I disrupted the Entertainment at Elvetham (1591) by commanding the Fairy Queen and her ladies to repeat a specific dance three times. The moment is one of female assertion of control over an artistic proceeding—one that sets Elizabeth up as a collaborator in the performance (rather than a passive viewer) because she is capable of shaping it to fit her wants. What's more, however, it is a moment

referential move as an effective means of transferring power; James himself later borrowed it to provide his representatives with access to his presence and authority.⁴³ Anna indirectly accesses Elizabeth's public voice; in doing so, she draws attention to those court spaces in which she herself had publicly spoken. Thus the silences onstage during *Vision* are neither entire nor constraining.⁴⁴ Rather, the women use past female speech to supplement their own performances and generate public expression. Such "silences" speak loudly; they mark the forced absence of female voices that exist and have influence in other areas of the court. They emphasize that such denials do violence to women's subjectivity, and they give women tools to combat constraint. Indeed, Anna's costuming decision uncovers her emerging control over court performance itself, allowing her to usurp a masculine role and become "Mistresse of the Revells" (in Findlay *Spaces* 117).⁴⁵

In *Vision*, Anna fosters a relationship between two queens; by extension, she defines her relationship to James and his court. The costumes create a solid female referentiality within the performance, drawing attention to how Anna consistently aligned herself with Elizabeth I rather than with James I. She allied herself more overtly to a

where Elizabeth's power also highlights itself by choosing to have dancers repeat a performance selection using her personal iconography. Thus, the Fairy Queen and her feminine cohort are thrice as important as any other performers on the stage.

⁴³ Robert Dover specifically presided over the Cotswold Games, which were established in 1612, while wearing James I's "Hat and Feather and Ruff" (*Robert Dover* 18-19). Dover used the clothing "purposely to grace him and consequently the Solemnity" (32). Leah Marcus remarks in *The Politics of Mirth* that the use of the king's clothing made James "symbolically present in the jovial person of Robert Dover" (5). I agree and further argue that such symbolic presence finds precedence in Anna's *Vision* wardrobing.

⁴⁴ Some critics assert that they are. See, for example, McManus's claim that in such moments women were "denied access to speech" (McManus *Women* 6). Yet such positions continue to equate speech *qua* communication with the definition "to make noyse" with "to speake nothing"; as I've shown in Chapter 1's discussion of Thomas Thomas's definition of silence, however, a vast gap semantically separates the definitions and leaves room for silence "to speak."

⁴⁵ Anna's contemporary Arbella Stuart made this observation at the time of *Vision*. Notably, the office of Master of the Revels was not limited to masques but extended to control political receptions and ceremonies. For more, see Cuddy (69).

community of women. Together the women claim a significant amount of power. During her first masque in the English court, Anna embodies not Juno—the representative of marriage and motherhood who is present among the goddesses—but Pallas Athena, a militant virgin and a representative of women’s art and education.⁴⁶ This representation is Anna’s decision, in fact; the text states that Pallas “was the person her Maiestie *chose* to represent” (Daniel A4v, emphasis mine). Anna actively defines herself onstage, emphasizing her authority outside the bonds of marriage. Thus, instead of embodying the marital, Anna appeared “attyred in a blew mantle, with a silver embrodery of all weapons and engines of war, with a helmet dressing on her head, and presents a Lance and Target” (Daniel A4v)—a martial figure reminiscent of Elizabeth at Tilbury.⁴⁷ The dual allusion to Athena and Elizabeth not only positions Anna as a guardian of women’s art and education; it also presents her (and those actions) as militant, transgressive, and potentially threatening toward limiting masculine structures.

This association is more than martial; Kathryn Schwarz figures it as an Amazon encounter as well. In her work on *Vision*, Schwarz argues that while the goddesses represent Amazons who “exceed the terms of [their] invention, doing violence to [their] referential conceit,” Daniel tries to contain them by using their qualities to represent the

⁴⁶ Throughout her reign, Elizabeth I’s iconography also utilized the mythological virgins Diana and Athena. It is important to later masques that Anna utilized Athena, who is also linked to both war and women’s art/education.

⁴⁷ The masque text additionally describes Anna as Pallas by saying she appeared “in her Helmet drest/ With Lance of winning, Target of defence: In whome both Wit and Courage are exprest” (B3v). The description highlights Pallas’s martial qualities, further contextualizing Anna’s role in relationship to Elizabeth’s militant and princely persona. In fact, it coincides closely to Thomas Heywood’s retrospective description of Elizabeth at Tilbury in *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women in the World* (1640): “Let me not here forget the Campe at Tilbery in which her Majestie was in person, and that if the Spaniard had prevailed by Sea to have given him battaile by land, appearing in the head of her Troopes, and encouraging her Souldiers, habited like an Amazonian Queene, Buskined and plumed, having a golden Truncheon, Gantlet, and Gorget; Armes sufficient to expresse her high and magnanimous spirit”(36). In this sense, Anna (like Elizabeth) gets linked to the Amazons—a connection that becomes further developed in *The Masque of Queenes* (1609).

King; accordingly, the “twelve goddesses appear as figures of sovereign rule [...] transformed into fragments of the king” (“Reflections” 294). Though Daniel tries to obscure the feminine threat within a narcissistic masculine construct, what emerges actually resembles the myth of Actaeon. Ultimately, Schwarz continues, “the effect of the masque's multiple bodies becomes ominous, suggesting an equation between synecdoche and fragmentation. Female masquers, as discrete aspects of the king, play to a watcher who [...] confronts the vision of his own dismemberment” (295). Yet *Vision*'s division of James—and its mythical allusion to the power of feminine speech and the feminine gaze—also suggests something significant about women's collective authorship and speech. In dividing the king's attributes, the women not only have the potential to fracture him; they also have the power to author him, to embody him, to make him whole. The female masquers, “bringing in their hands the particular figures of their power, [...] erected [the] Vertues that supported a Globe” (*Vision* A4v). As goddesses, the silent women construct and support the world; as masquers, they hold together the court and its king's power. In this sense, James relies upon them.⁴⁸

The Masque of Blackness (1605)

While *Vision* openly displayed women's ability to adopt historical and literary voices, *The Masque of Blackness* marked an increase in Anna's artistic control and speech in court masques—one that her contemporaries remarked upon. In his prologue, Ben Jonson gestures clearly toward Anna's “will” as driving the masque: “Hence (because it was her Majesty's will to have [the ladies] blackamoors at first) the invention

⁴⁸ This authorship of kingship will occur in later masques and will assert control over both James and his son. This is an issue I will discuss later in the chapter.

was derived by me, and presented thus” (*Blackness* 17-19). Some critics discuss this as Jonson’s self-extrication from the controversial decision to present aristocratic women in black-face.⁴⁹ Whatever Jonson’s motivation, his apology effectively highlighted Anna’s collaboration both with him and Inigo Jones. Not only did the Venetian secretary in attendance comment that “her Majesty was the authoress of the whole,” but Dudley Carleton called the performance “the Queenes Maske” (Carleton 448). What’s more, contemporary printers attributed the work to Anna; title pages in both the 1608 Quarto and the 1616 Folio name it “The Queenes Masqvcs.”⁵⁰ Thus Anna’s “will” conceives the masque’s invention and its final product; and will and invention constitute what many critics recognize as the period’s most “important categor[ies] linked with authorship” (Limon 25).⁵¹ As a literary artifact, *Blackness* highlighted a woman’s collaboration with male artists and to the generation of controversial products that unsettled their audience. In addition, Jonson’s prologue suggests that Anna’s control extended over and beyond his poetic work, affecting the design of Jones’s costuming. Jones had to satisfy her demands to present her in a specific way and to create a certain kind of spectacle. John Peacock

⁴⁹ Contemporaries like Sir Dudley Carleton objected to seeing the women appear as “a Troop of lean-cheek’d Moors,” and some critics have continued to see the conceit as “one awkward proviso” that compromised Jonson’s poetic genius (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 169, Meagher 1). Notably, the conceit was not entirely new. Christian IV used it in a Danish coronation entertainment in 1596 when he performed as a Moor; it was a performance with which Anna was familiar. For more, see Mara Wade’s discussion of the coronation (61).

⁵⁰ Notably, *Blackness* appeared in publication with its sequel *The Masque of Beauty* (1608), which will not be discussed in this chapter. Kathryn Schwarz’s article “Amazon Reflections in the Jacobean Queen’s Masque” (1995), however, provides a valuable contextualization and argument regarding the masque’s role in Anna’s career. Discussing Anna as a patron and author of masques, Schwarz positions *Beauty* as a performance of displacement, a usurpation of attention from the king’s figure, and a narrative of social and sexual violence in which the spectator is implicated. Ultimately, femininity reveals itself as an internal force that can overtake and conquer men from within.

⁵¹ Further, Amy Greenstadt explains that the early modern fantasy of authorship involved the author’s will or intention conditioning the ultimate creation and interpretation of a work (46). In positioning Anna this way, my argument aligns with those on women’s writing—and Anna’s in particular—as Lewalski, Barroll, and McManus have discussed it. Yet my interest differs from theirs in that I will discuss her authorship’s affects on speech and silence within the masque.

even argues that the queen and masquers' control over Jones left him constrained in designing the main masque because he had to "ensure the acceptance of his ideas by representing the courtiers to themselves as appealingly as possible" (124). The masquers, and Anna primary among them, were powerful readers and collaborators in Jones's work, then. Such accounts of *Blackness*'s performance details further underscore Anna's influence and metaphorize feminine participation in literary and theatrical economies. Within this masque, Anna performs an effective model for female authorship and silent communication; her acting and authorial contributions evidence the functionality of these practices.⁵²

For *Blackness*, the female masquers were "negroes" attired

Without difference; the colours of azure and silver, their hair thick, and curled upright in tresses, like pyramids, but returned on the top with a scroll and antique dressing of feathers, and jewels interlaced with ropes of pearl. And for the front, ear, neck and wrists, the ornament was of the most choice and orient pearl, best setting off from the black [of the women's skin]. (*Blackness* 44, 57-62)

In addition, the masquers wore men's buskins⁵³ and their dresses' diaphanous sleeves both covered and exposed the women's arms (Mickel 48-49).⁵⁴ Such costuming drew

⁵² This model of representation corresponds with that which I argue Elizabeth Cary utilizes later in *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613). For more on this argument, refer to Chapter 2.

⁵³ Buskins were male footwear typically used as emblems of epic heroism on stage. We know that Anna and her ladies wore them because contemporary viewer Orazio Busino provided a description, along with the comment that "all of them [danced] with men's shoes" (in Orgel and Strong 282). The costume choice suggests that the female masquers could and did walk upon the boards of a male space—and that the acts they performed were heroic.

⁵⁴ The masquers' sheer sleeves over blackened arms is a possible allusion to past fashion in which women covered blackwork-embroidered sleeves with gauze over-sleeves. One example of this popular style appears in a portrait of Mary Cornwallis (c.1580); an earlier example appears in the 1573 portrait of Mary's sister Elizabeth. Notably, the practice of blackwork embroidery, or "true-stitch," involved creating a piece in which both sides were recto; neither top nor bottom, front nor back revealed the tangled knots of the artist's thread. Thus, a reference to blackwork could be an ironic play on the concept of "be and seem"—a play on women's ability to hide private internal processes. Special thanks to Mimi Yui for sharing her research on blackwork. Gratitude goes to the Victoria and Albert Museum textile archives, as well.

constant attention to the women's skin; jewelry and fabric color emphasized the skin's color, which increased the focus on their bodies, and the thin fabric further exposed them to view. This exposure—particularly of the arms—gestures to Francesco Barbaro's *On Wifely Duties* (1416), where he makes his infamous indictment of women's public presence:

It is proper that not only the arms but the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs. (205)

Hardin Aasand has used this connection to assert that *Blackness* enacts Anna's marginalization on stage (271); yet I assert that, rather, this link exposes how Anna's performance constructs a very central, effective space for feminine communication. Barbaro's words do more than gesture to feminine presence as a constant danger to early modern culture; they more importantly assert an inextricable link between the female voice and body. Both aspects of femininity hold a persuasive capacity: they may not only incite lust, but can communicate philosophical positions and influence viewers. Further, the presence of one implies the presence of the other. Anna's and Jones's costumes embody this. The costumes, and their sleeves in particular, reveal that female bodies and their movements work in conjunction with language to communicate with viewers. Thus a new kind of language emerges—one not reliant upon speech or text, but one that is more akin to sign-language. Though not "speech" in a traditional sense, such performance constitutes a comprehensible voice *qua* collective discourse. This is because its sign-system circulates within a culture possessing common ideas about how communication occurs in written and spoken language.⁵⁵ In this sense, Anna's

⁵⁵ See, for example, Karen Britland's assertions about early modern communication relying on "circulat[ion] within a community that shares certain linguistic understandings" (*Drama* 119).

contributions overlap with, borrow from, and promote that mission which Peacock attributes to Jones and his art: the inculcation of England “with the idea of visual art as a meaningful language and valid discourse” (35).⁵⁶

The costumes’ sleeves, as mentioned before, are the linchpin of *Blackness*’s metaphor. Lesley Mickel asserts that the costumes’ filmy sleeves allowed Anna and her ladies to operate within the dictates of courtly “decorum and desire for exoticism,” keeping their arms covered (48-49); yet what Mickel doesn’t note is that the sleeves simultaneously allowed the women to **breach** decorum. After all, upon viewing the masque, Dudley Carleton wrote of his concern about the costumes: they were “too light and Curtizan-like for such great ones” (*Calendar* SP14). The women are covered yet visible—therefore they are even more titillating because neither entirely exposed nor obscured.⁵⁷ The sleeves’ ability to uphold and subvert decorum is a material model of feminine authorship and acting; Anna is ostensibly silent in performance, yet she speaks insofar as the text and the physical body quickening it are hers. Performance and dance make the masque text lived and visible, and they present the body as a mode of expression. While Simon Shepherd asserts that such interaction reveals “the production of body by script” (242), I would add that it also uncovers the production of script by body. In this way, the body “speaks” by offering a site for textual creation and

⁵⁶Peacock locates English resistance to this idea in Protestantism and the resulting “war[iness] of the visual arts” (36). Molly Murray’s argument about *Blackness*’s—and Jonson and Anna’s—Catholic devotion, however, can further explain why the visual arts can take such precedence over speech within the masque and can promote the body as a site of communication.

⁵⁷ In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1976), Roland Barthes argues that the “staging of appearance as disappearance” functions erotically because “the most erotic portion of a body [is] **where the garment gaps**” (9-10). The masquers’ diaphanous costumes function in a similar way, exposing and denying.

expression. Publicly, the performing body of the obviously pregnant Anna⁵⁸—author and actor—suggests that the biological generativity of the female body mirrors its capacity for artistic generativity. *Blackness* is conceived and emerges from Anna’s will,⁵⁹ and her performative body (along with accompanying women’s) sustains and enlivens it. Indeed, the feminine performances confound masculine linguistic abilities for description; they exist within the women’s actions alone. Doing something in this masque is clearly **saying something** about feminine creative power that participates in and exceeds vocality. Masculine constructs cannot contain it.

This matrix of authorship and performance becomes accessible to women in the court’s alleged domestic privacy. However, its public effects are never out of sight, and they possess the potential to mark the masquing audience. In his account, Carleton notes that coming into contact with the female masquers posed a “Danger it would have left a mark” on the hands, lips, or clothing of male dancing partners (*Calendar* SP14). Carleton appears to refer to the black make-up’s capacity for staining; yet his ambiguous referent “it” makes the statement interpretable. Does he only fear the women’s ability to stain skin or clothes? Notably, such a mark would permanently mar silk, which dominated the courtiers’ attire.⁶⁰ Yet the ability to stain gestures to women’s power more generally to mark and shape men and masculine artistic products around them. By marking men’s hands, lips, or clothing, the women would be imposing control over their male partners’

⁵⁸ At the time of the performance, Anna’s pregnancy was visible. Anna was, notably, pregnant with Henry—James’s first son and heir. Thus her body was important in its ability not only to produce offspring but to sustain and continue a ruling line and a nation.

⁵⁹ Within early modern conception, the “will” is not only intentional but also sexual.

⁶⁰ Molly Murray looks to this concern as evidence of early modern masculine fears about feminine religious conversion and the influence that women could have over others’ religious persuasions; thus the reference to color and marking gestures to conversions that were “rarely definitive” and often recidivistic (438). While my argument does not deal with religion, I think that Murray’s argument points beyond religious conversion to a more general fear of alteration.

self-representations—their performances would have a shaping effect on daily court presentation.⁶¹ In a masque that represents women’s desires as a prevailing force, the black make-up is a physical, public sign of these women’s capacity to alter the court around them.

Within the masque plot, change and women’s bodies share an intimate relationship. Not only do the women threaten to alter the audience with their makeup, but their characters propel the masque with the desire for and ability to change. Early on, Niger claims that the women’s perfection lies in their immutability, saying that “no cares, no age can change, or there display/ The fearful tincture of abhorred grey,/ Since Death herself [...] can never alter their most faithful hue” (123-26). Yet the masque is not the place for fulfilling male fantasies of stability like Niger’s; nor is it a place where men’s interpretations subjugate women’s desires. Aethiopia’s arrival signals the dominance of the women’s desires, and the stage becomes a place for women’s expression. After all, Niger’s “daughters’ labours have their periods here,” and they will eventually receive “the Wished satisfaction to their best desires” (204, 210). Thus *Blackness* ends not with James’s/Albion’s changing the women, but with the women’s promise to change. Indeed, following Aethiopia’s words, the women take charge of the masque’s activities, “advanc[ing] severally presenting their fans” with “mute hieroglyphic, expressing their mixed qualities” and “mak[ing] choice of their men” for the taking-out (238-39, 270).

⁶¹ In *Much Ado About Nothing* (c.1598) Dogberry reiterates an early modern commonplace about blackness: “Those that touch pitch will be defiled” (3.3.56). Within this masque, the proverb becomes literalized.

The women, absent⁶² in the opening discussions about their beauty, emerge to take control of the masque's end.

Entertainment at Theobalds (1606)

New opportunities to promote women's expressive performance emerged from an entertainment welcoming Anna's brother King Christian IV and his Danish aristocrats. The Danish contingent altered the court atmosphere because "the Danes brought with them their habitual propensity for drinking, and James and his Courtiers complimented the strangers by partaking of their debaucheries" (Nichols *n.1*).⁶³ According to John Harrington's account, alcoholic revelries began even before Christian IV's appearance. Harrington, arriving "a day or two before the Danish king," claimed that he had "been well-nigh overwhelmed with carousal and sports of all kinds" (Nichols 72). Not only were men involved in such carousal; indeed, the "Ladies abandon[ed] their sobriety, and [were] seen to roll about in intoxication" (72). The men's decadence, within Harrington's report, encouraged but did not excuse the public intoxication and poor behavior of the court ladies. Their behavior breached expectations that women be more careful to avoid the "weeds" of gaming and drunkenness (Tilney 540, 945).⁶⁴

By the time the Entertainment at Theobalds took place, the court was well-saturated with potent Danish liquor. Intoxication not only affected Christian's

⁶² Such absence is further highlighted by the fact that the very group the women represent was absent from England as well. Indeed, Elizabeth I banished blackamoors during her reign. For more on this exile, see Emily Bartel's "Making More of the Moor" (1990).

⁶³ Though first-hand accounts of this even point to the Danes' fault in encouraging debauchery, we should not assume that the Jacobean court was devoid of vices. Indeed, the writings provide an interesting attempt to reshape the court's image.

⁶⁴ At the same time, however, poor female behavior threatened to expose male behavior to chastisement, as the women's engagement in debauchery fit with the early modern expectation that women were more easily led astray than men. In this situation, such an argument could easily lay blame upon the male courtiers.

performance as an observing king, it also altered the choreographed entertainment itself. While Christian, at one point, insisted on dancing with the lady playing the Queen of Sheba and “fell down,” the other performers “went backward or fell down from wine” (Nichols 73). Indeed, Harrington even describes disorder in the main portion of the entertainment:

Now did appear, in rich dress, Hope, Faith, and Charity; Hope did assay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavors so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the King would excuse her brevity [...] Charity came to the King’s feet [...] in some sorte she made obeyance and brought giftes, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which Heaven had not already given his Majesty. She returned to Hope and Faith, who were both sick and spewing. (Nichols 73)

Hope, Faith, and Charity were not the only female masquers⁶⁵ whose roles went awry, however; Victory was led away “after much lamentable utterance,” and Peace “rudely made war with her olive branch,” beating those attendants attempting to remove her from the stage (Nichols 73). Thus the women in their masque roles literally spoke—and they did so repetitively and freely.

Court debauchery in some sense leveled the stage. It not only opened the door to a monarch’s interference,⁶⁶ but also for the female performers to influence the unfolding of events. Indeed, their speech and action instigated the chaos that replaced the choreographed entertainment that should have provided a mimetic document of the English court’s order and civility. Typically, Melinda Gough claims, dancing women’s “mastery and grace [...] would have held political import, displaying, through

⁶⁵ This occurrence took place during the main portion of the masque, for which text no longer exists. What is important, however, is that the masquers in these roles were women—not male actors dressed as women.

⁶⁶ A monarch—and particularly a king’s—interference was more common. Not only did Elizabeth I interject during the performance at Elvetham, but James I occasional would loudly voice disapproval during masques that moved too slowly for his taste.

synechdoche, the disciplined civility [...] of the body politic” (“Discovered” 436).⁶⁷ Here, however, the women usurp control over the text, creating new meaning—the performance implicates them as dramatic agents.⁶⁸ Even intoxicated, the female agents are responsible for recreating the meaning of the entertainment. First they uncover the debauchery of two nations’ rulers⁶⁹; then they expose how the “proper” unfolding of events at court relies on women’s choices to conform to conduct expectations.⁷⁰ The women reveal themselves as agents and authors of the court; their vocality draws attention to past physical communications and suggests that any further denial of female performative potency would be violent, uncalled for, and might incite further disruption.

The Entertainment at Theobalds is the earliest recorded instance of non-monarchical masquing women breaking with the text to make vocal utterance on the court stage.⁷¹ Working alongside Elizabeth I’s interjections at Elvetham, the event provides a model for how women’s vocality can go excused within criticism (i.e., be dismissed as

⁶⁷ If Orgel is right that performing in masque “expressed the strongest Renaissance beliefs about the nature of kingship,” then this instance reveals that kings are themselves unruly and unable to control the women around them (38). The women’s behavior on stage holds up a mirror to the court—and one could argue that, in this sense, it even has a didactic function similar to that which scholars like David Lindley attach to male masque poets’ texts.

⁶⁸ After all, early modern ethical discourse, like St. Augustine’s position on “involuntary” nocturnal emissions, situates the individual as in control of the action that initiates a transgression; even if that transgression occurs several steps removed from the first willed act, the agent is responsible for the original cause and the final product. Thus, in the case of nocturnal emission, St. Augustine asserted that the sin was one of gluttony—a man’s excessive intake of food led to an excess of blood, which then produced an excess of sperm, which culminated in a sexual dream and an ejaculation (Broaddus 210). We can draw an analogy between St. Augustine’s approach to nocturnal emissions and to the events that took place at the entertainment for Christian—after all, it was an excessive intake of alcohol that led to freedom of speech and action, and the women were in control of that consumption.

⁶⁹ Indeed, Christian IV was notorious for his drunken revelry. Sir Edward Peyton, for example, not only confirms Christian’s disastrous dance with the Queen of Sheba, but Howells also describes a later entertainment at which Christian drunkenly performed thirty-five toasts before passing out and having to be carried in his throne back to a bedchamber (Nichols n.1).

⁷⁰ Kathryn Schwarz specifically discusses conduct literature, women’s agency, and social reliance upon women’s behaviors in “Chastity, Militant and Married: Cavendish’s Romance, Milton’s Masque.”

⁷¹ I do not mean to imply that this means the occurrence is the first. In fact, it suggests that such speech occurred more often than we know, and that it simply went unrecorded.

“not performances”) when it appears to be impromptu or unrelated to the masque topic. Yet we should notice that while Harrington’s account does not overtly criticize the women’s speech and action, it does describe an attempt to obscure it. Hope, Faith, Charity, and Victory all make “lamentable utterance” and must be “led away” where they cannot expose themselves and the court to criticism. This concealment both denies and highlights the potency of such female performance. Like the skin and arms in *Blackness*, these moments are simultaneously veiled and exposed; sleeves and drunkenness cover agency or “impropriety” while simultaneously fostering them. These behaviors have the capacity to affect other masques, as well as how we read them. Indeed, they suggest that women’s power emerges not only from their participation in drama, but also in their ability to cause disruptions and challenge masculine definitions of appropriate female performance; the latter remind viewers that when the masque unfolds “properly,” it is because the female masquers choose to make it the case. This behavior, then, links to masques like *Vision*; it reminds the viewer that the women’s power to construct is paired with the potential to cause destruction.

The Masque of Queenes (1609)

In its performance and its pre-distributed model,⁷² *The Masque of Queenes* continues this reflection on violence. While Theobalds has received minimal critical attention, *Queenes* has garnered significant analysis.⁷³ Certainly the witches, played by

⁷² A printed model of the masque was distributed to the audience prior to performance; a manuscript of this text survives at the British Library. This will receive discussion further in this subsection.

⁷³ The witches attract intense focus. Some critics link them to James’s concerns about witchcraft, as Ravelhofer does. She asserts that the actor-witches’ similarity to witch-hunt text descriptions also signals an “unsettling potential for turning into reality” (193). This suggests that actions performed on stage are not free of real-life dangers and political implications; this is important when we consider the performances

professional male actors, and the queens, embodied by female masquers, are symbols that lean against each other to gain support for their meanings.⁷⁴ Earlier critics have argued that the two groups of women represent separate views of femininity⁷⁵; I agree and assert that their interrelation uncovers the functions of outward materials (like clothing) and outward actions (like dance) in aiding women's construction of their own physical, readable texts on stage. These texts, which become visible through the acting women's bodies, participate in political and humanistic allusion; thus they reveal women's access to and control over "masculine" spaces. Clad in buskins once again,⁷⁶ Anna and her ladies tread into the traditionally male space of renaissance authorship and manipulate male and female voices (from literature and from the past) to construct their own silent expressions.

Jonson's text⁷⁷ characterizes the witches as ignorant and loud at their arrival.

Accompanied by "hollow and infernal music," the witches appear "with spindles,

in which Anna and her ladies take part, and what they imply about women's public presences. Meanwhile others examine them as figures functioning as vessels for masculine anxiety. Yumiko Yamada and Lawrence Normand agree, for example, that the witches are "powerless and futile" (Normand 107); for Yamada, this makes the witches "comical and ludicrous" while, for Normand, it forces them to reveal that masculine anxiety can create power where none exists (Yamada 259, Normand 120). Incidentally, Yamada points out that weakness on the part of the witches signals a false threat and implies that Heroic Virtue's triumph over the witches is, in fact, empty and impotent in and of itself. Allison Findlay, too, participates with Yamada and Normand in debating the witches as a threat; she positions them as a threat to James in that they draw attention away from him and toward themselves—a mission that the queens take over and complete (*Spaces* 129). For additional views on the witches, refer to Suzanne Gossett's "Man-Maid Begone!" (1988) or Schwarz's "Amazon Reflections" (1995).

⁷⁴ See, for example, Gossett's claim that the requirement for "men or boy actors to play female roles in the antimasques, embodying the distorted vision of women, and for aristocratic women to play the masquers" sends the message that "'real women' are, or should be, like the masquers" (99).

⁷⁵ McManus argues that the witches and queens create separate representations of femininity—the witches offer what she calls a self-willed, non-conformist version, and the queens a natural, passive, and conformist version (*Women* 119). Notably, Schwarz also asserts that the witches and queens represent separate versions of femininity. However, in her formulation, Jonson attempts to represent the "violence of witches and the agency of queens as perfectly separable fictions" ("Reflections" 301).

⁷⁶ Surviving costume drawings represent women in both masques as clad in buskins (Ravelhofer 177).

⁷⁷ By "Jonson's text" I refer to the physical artifact of the text—not to the entire masque, which is such a collaborative project that one author alone cannot receive credit.

timbrels, rattles, or other venefical instruments making a confused noise with strange gestures” (25, 29-30). Though their clothing marks them as different from each other,⁷⁸ the witches are grouped by their “confused noise” and “strange gestures”; they are superficially marked as beyond the pale of common discourse. Struggling to communicate, the witches seem impotent. Yet they create enough volume and visual variety to attract the audience’s attention and, in some way, to place themselves at the masque’s center. Thus they function as a locus for court anxiety about incomprehensible women and interpretability.

The witches’ dance initially supports this notion. After all, their motions compared to the order and structure of the main dances seem chaotic and wild:

With a strange and sudden music, they fell into a magical dance,
full of preposterous change and gesticulation [...] [and]
contrary to the custom of men, danc[ed] back to back, hip to
hip, their hands joined and making
their circles backward to the left hand, with strange fantastic
motions of
their heads and bodies. (318-23)

The witches appear to disrupt order; yet to understand their motions as disorderly, one must place them in a binary with order. Thus the witches actually fit within a comprehensible and controlled system. The witches’ later coherent speech further uncovers their covert order. They begin by performing chants and incantations remarkably similar to those described in contemporary witch-hunt manuals, calling upon “the graves” and “the dungeons” to release their contents (49-50). In the process, however, the witches also reveal a sense of internal/external coherence that troubles the lack of civil conformity that their physical appearances and noise imply. Their names—

⁷⁸ Jonson notes that all eleven were “differently attired” (27). This is markedly different from *Blackness*, where the text notes that the women’s attire was marked by “sameness.”

Suspicion, Credulity, Falsehood, Murmur, Malice, Impudence, Slander, Execration, Bitterness, Rage, and Mischief—position them as “Faithful opposites to/ Fame and Glory” (103-16, 118-19). They operate within a structured binary that defines them through comparison, and their names denote this clearly. Indeed, it is the witches’ very goal to “show [them]selves truly envious” and “do what may beseem/ Such names and natures” (120-21). The witches use outward performances and names to define their internal states for outside viewers—just as conduct manuals suggest a courtier’s dancing or speaking should do. Indeed, in speaking to her hags, the Dame encourages action that will shape Virtue’s interpretation of them. They must perform evil—“Virtue else will deem/ Our powers decreased, and think us banished earth” (122-23). Like courtiers, the witches work to make themselves readable; worried about readerly interpretation, they conjunctively perform “be and seem” to shape viewers’ comprehension. In this way, the witches’ chaos operates not as true disorder, but as a scripted performance of it.

Clearly, the queens are supposed to **appear** to contrast the witches, and they are frequently read as doing so.⁷⁹ They are beauty against ugliness, natural against unnatural, order against chaos. Yet, as several other critics have suggested, there exists the possibility that the rise of the queens merely replaces foul mischief with fair mischief⁸⁰; such work uncovers the queens’ relationship to violence and dominance, citing their connection to the epic bloodshed depicted on the House of Fame and their participation in

⁷⁹ Normand asserts, for example, that “Jonson locates female power and virtue exclusively in the figures of the queens—the witches’ opposites” (115). At the same time that Normand links the queens to the only existent feminine power, he claims that the masque presents “gradually decreasing feminine power” (107). Thus, the queens are figures of limited strength. This is a claim that does not function logically, however—particularly when we consider the queens’ return drawn by the hags, and when we read the dance they perform at the end. In a similar vein, Orgel claims that the queens provide “context for womanly virtue” (61).

⁸⁰ See Lewalski, Schwarz, and Yamada for examples.

“a tradition of violence as old as the *Iliad*” (Schwarz “Reflections” 303). Just as the witches’ internal/external concerns destabilize their “non-conformist” characterizations, the queens’ dress and behavior unsettle the notion that their femininity is conformist.

While the witches broadly represent a “kind” of woman, the queens have individual classical referents. They align the masque and its authors with Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. Before they appear, Heroic Virtue—who has already gestured to male reliance on femininity for definition and strength⁸¹—heralds them, leaving the audience no doubt as to their identities.⁸² Familiar figures from mythology, they have roles like “Queen of the Amazons [...] present at the war in Troy” and “Queen of the Scythians” who took “comfort [...] in] greater revenge” (447-49, 476-81). Within Jonson’s descriptions, the queens resemble the canon of “vile” classical women that C. Pyrrye outlines in *The Praise and Dispraise of Women* (1569)⁸³; yet Heroic Virtue informs the audience that they are actually “crowned the choice/ Of woman-kind” for their bravery and honor (377-78).

If we take Heroic Virtue’s word, the queens’ impending arrival is the opposite of those witches who arrived “from the mouth of hell” (n.23). Yet the music described in the text connects both entrances and, as a result, links both representations of femininity.

Jonson writes of the masquers’ arrival: “the loud music sounded **as before**, to give the

⁸¹ Heroic Virtue is described as the father of Fame; she defines him. Thus he’s linked to (and representative of) the kind of dependency to which James I is subject in *Vision*. Fame’s predominance (and the power of female figures) is further apparent in the pre-distributed masque model. There, the author urges masque viewers to see Fame as the active principle: it is “the sounde of virtuous fame [that] is able to scatter and affright all that threaten it” (British Library MS Harley 6947).

⁸² The pre-distributed masque model further clarified the queens’ identities (British Library MS Harley 6947).

⁸³ Pyrrye actually informs his readers that Virgil and Ovid offer an ideal lesson-plan for educating men against the dangers women pose (25). Among these women are Medea, Scylla, Helen, Hippodame, and Byblis. Such women, like the queens, share the assertive, active qualities that Pyrrye and writers like him associate with masculinity; when tied to women’s bodies, these qualities become, for him, gross and unnatural. Indeed, they exceed and obliterate passivity, modesty, and shamefastness.

masquers time of descending” (439-40, emphasis mine). Though the queens enter from above (the opposite of the witches), the same music heralds them. Ravelhofer asserts that well-known music, when used in masque, established “an invisible link between listeners and performers” (73); in this situation, musical repetition engenders a bond by sharing information. The music suggests a troubling link between both sets of female figures; the martial queens descending may, in fact, be less comprehensible than the group of “women” preceding them. After all, while professional male actors embodied and controlled representations of the witches, female masquers controlled representations of the queens; threats existent in the latter, then, are more difficult to excuse or contain.

Though ostensibly silent, the queens immediately communicate via referentiality; classical allusion is, after all, built into the masque text. David Lindley asserts that Jonson did this to “confront the fact of the transitoriness of the performance” and establish the permanence of poetry (x-xi); for the female performers, however, the classical allusions allow them to embody and usurp masculine texts, using the very foundations of humanism to deconstruct current violent masculine systems. Collectively, the queens rely on costume to express that femininity is a powerful force in the court—one tied to masculinity and whose presence even shapes representations of classical texts at the court’s educational base. The text describes Camilla, for example, as “shining bright with bronze, a warrior-woman she [...] a maiden hardened to endure battles” (n. 470); it describes Zenobia as “always [with] her casque on” (572). Clad in buskins and helmets, the women make Homer, Virgil, and Ovid’s texts live—much as they make the masque a living thing.⁸⁴ What’s more, the martial queens refer to a feminine figure more recent

⁸⁴ Though Jonson asserted the importance of text to masque, Samuel Daniel provides evidence that some contemporaries understood masque as living through performance. In his preface to *Tethys’ Festival*

than their classical inspirations; they refer to Elizabeth I and her speech in eight-fold. Penthesilea, Camilla, Thomyris, Mithridates, Zenobia—Amazons, warriors, and cross-dressers—emblemize Elizabeth as a martial prince and virgin. They are women “of a most invincible and unbroken fortitude,” unafraid to engage in war (477).⁸⁵ Meanwhile, figures like Artemisia, Voadicea, and Amalasantha represent learned female rule that “restor[es] the courage and honour” of men and their armies (517-18). The queens, then, supplement masculine lack. Thus learned femininity is no less threatening than its martial counterpart; it suggests women’s ability to consume (thus internalizing) and perform (thus externalizing) masculine power as Artemisia does:

She is no less renowned for her chastity and love to her husband,
Mausolus, whose bones,
after he was dead, she preserved in ashes and drunk in a wine,
making herself his tomb. (496-99)

Whether the women represent physical or intellectual strength, the masque presents them as public figures exceeding the domestic expectations placed upon them. At the same time, the masquers themselves display their own relationship to classical texts—key aspects of masculine education. This feminine referentiality suggests women’s ability to consume men’s power and take over their roles. Such women not only observe men’s “great expeditions” but are capable of taking them over, “administering the government [...and] embarking [on] war” (489-94).

Martial and learned, the queens’ femininity shares political and educational practice with men. In this way they are not simply “immobile and speechless at the back of the stage until released towards the end [...] for their allowed function” as some critics

(1610), Daniel claims that masques are “things wherein the only life consists in show” (54). This was a position shared by Francis Beaumont, who considered print “the second publication” because the performance was the first text (in Gurr 1).

⁸⁵ For more on these queens’ unsettling allusions to Amazons, see Schwarz’s “Reflections.”

claim (Wynne-Davies 83). Costuming prevents such passivity, and the height of all the women's costumes allowed them to vertically dominate the visual space of the Banqueting House. Queens like Penthisilea and Thomyris, in addition, wore costumes representing their martial strength; yet at the same time that they wore helmets, armor, and carried swords, their attire was form-fitting, leaving no doubt as to the queens' sex.⁸⁶ Thus the women blended masculinity and femininity. What's more, the women themselves assisted in creating their costumes⁸⁷; this representation of the women actors' agency reveals they could be masculinized and non-ideal (no matter how ideal the masque claims they are).⁸⁸ The queens, representing two active sides of feminine authority, repetitively urge viewers to remember a female voice and to consider how each of these women also acts as a prince on a stage. Queen Elizabeth was not alone in her duality or in her "masculine" stomach.⁸⁹

Most notable among the queens, however, is Bel-Anna. She is, according to Heroic Virtue, "alone/ Possessed of all virtues, for which, one by one,/ [the queens] were so famed" (383-85). This is not sheer flattery. Bel-Anna dominates not only because she is the only living queen among the group, but because she exists in such proximity to Anna—the character's referent and performer. In effect, Bel-Anna is Anna's performance

⁸⁶ See *Festival Designs* (1968) and, in particular, images 9 and 11.

⁸⁷ We should note that while Jones claims credit for the hags' attire and the "invention and architecture of the whole scene and machine" (Orgel and Strong 131), he does not take credit for the queens' costumes. We may assume that this fell to Anna's discretion. For more general information on women's roles in selecting masque costumes and contributing to design, see Mickel (47).

⁸⁸ Refer to Schwarz's arguments about the hostility of the masquing queens, as, for example, when she states: "In the specific histories through which Anne is constructed, *Queens* parades before its royal audience a more relentless hostility than any suggested by the witches' threats. Promising to distinguish aesthetic from excess, the masque confronts the king with a queen who is an Amazon" ("Reflections" 304).

⁸⁹ Not only did Artemisia literally have a "masculine" stomach (having consumed her husband), but numerous of the other queens took over their husbands' roles or worked to "redeem [their] sex from the tyranny of men" as Valasca did (587-88). Such violent reactions to men's claims of primacy suggest dangerous repercussions for denying women spaces for public acknowledgment, creative production, or the airing of grievances. This issue will receive further discussion in Chapter 5.

of herself; the “character” draws attention to the constant state of performance in which a queen exists.⁹⁰ Lindley argues that an audience’s familiarity with a masquer widened the gaps between “real” actor and “ideal” character, preventing any equation of the two (xiv). Yet Bel-Anna, as the “person the whole scope of the invention doth speak throughout,” uncovers the process of idealization that performance generates (*Queenes* 597-98).

As Anna’s public persona, Bel-Anna creates new significance for her performance. Barroll reports that, several times throughout the masque, Anna scheduled lengthy, awkward pauses that did not coincide with traditional intermissions (Barroll *Anna* 12-13). During those breaks, Anna engaged the French ambassador, La Boderie, and his wife in conversation. The “intimate” nature of these interludes has led critics to overlook them. Their occurrence during breaks suggests that they did not occur “in the masque”—that they are somehow outside the realm of the performance. Even Barroll concludes despite them that women did not speak (“Inventing” 125). Yet a scheduled pause does not necessarily remove the conversation from the masque any more than Hope, Faith, or Charity’s unplanned speaking existed outside the performance at Theobalds. Rather, it makes the occurrence a **planned** component of the performance. In addition, such moments are public; as Sophie Tomlinson explains about scripted intimacy in pastorals, “what is spelled out as a private moment [...] carried a public dimension by virtue of the theatrical performance” that framed it (*Stuart* 63). Anna still would have

⁹⁰ Much of Anna’s private life remained hidden from the public in order to present a more united marriage with James. For example, Anna’s marriage contract guaranteed freedom of religion—and after arriving in Scotland, Anna converted to Catholicism despite the Protestant/Catholic tensions existent Britain (Murray 429). However, Anna continued to publicly attend Protestant services with James and her household, utilizing her closet as a space for performing her “true” religion. Such tension between public and private manifests itself not only in *Queenes*, but also in Anna’s Woburn Portrait (1611). There, Anna not only draws on Elizabethan iconography (borrowing symbols and backgrounds from Elizabeth’s Rainbow and Ditchley portraits), she also has Marcus Geeraerts paint her facing the right—thus ensuring that her portrait can never hang beside any of James’s (as he, too, looks to the right) (Knowles 24).

been in costume at the time; thus she engages guests as Anna *and* Bel-Anna. The identities are inextricably linked here; Bel-Anna is the external text Anna creates about herself and presents to her courtly audience. Though Jonson asserts his authorship in the masque's prologue, this event shows that Anna brought more than "variety" to *Queenes* (*Queenes* 10). She is always already a speaking actor, and she is just as influential a collaborator in the masque as Jones and Jonson.

Given these implications, we need to look anew at the queens' concluding dance. As it begins, the queens "ride in state about the stage" in chariots drawn by the hags (644-53). This suggests that the witches' overt external threat precedes and veils those threatening incomprehensibilities that the queens pose. The witches, as masculine representations of femininity, are the means by which the queens manipulate representations of themselves. They offer referents for Anna and her ladies' performances. Indeed, the witches' disruptive opening dance reemerges in audience memory as the queens performed their own dance, which Jonson called "both right and curious and full of subtle and excellent changes" (662-64). Though purportedly a sign of courtly order, the masque dance is "curious" and somehow different from those of earlier masques; the witches' dance affects that of the queens, and through such contact the female masquers write their own bodies as gender-blurring and authority-questioning texts. Through Anna and the masquers' bodies, an entrance that "should" have signified order became an active sign of disruption.

Continuing the dance, the queens "took out the men and danced the measures" before dancing, "graphically disposed into letters, and honouring the name of the most

sweet and ingenious Prince, Charles, Duke of York” (667, 678-80).⁹¹ Rather than oppressing the female masquers, forcing their bodies down beneath the weight of monarchy and patriarchy, the dance reveals the women’s power over both structures.⁹² The women’s bodies create the text of monarchy—they shape it, represent it, publicize it. In honoring him, the women expose that just as Charles relied on the generativity of the female body to provide him with life, he (and England) relied on women to author the meaning of his name and reputation. In the act of naming Charles, the women author him; they could just as easily have refused to dance his name or promote him. In this way, the women uncover how necessary they and Anna’s feminine commonwealth are in determining influence at court.⁹³ Therefore, dancing Charles’s name is the greatest taking-out within the masque. In the taking-out, the female masquers could assert power; after all, Barroll asserts that in their selection they “conferred favour upon, or withheld it from, male courtiers” (“Inventing” 129). Further, male courtiers’ acceptance of such invitations signaled an “implicit” acceptance of duty and submission to the queen herself (Findlay *Spaces* 122). Here, the masquers take-out Charles by name—and he, unable to reject it, is implicated in faith and submission to his queen and mother. He is reliant upon

⁹¹ This kind of textual dismemberment connects to both Schwarz’s position on the dismemberment of James in the goddesses of *Vision* and to the kind of textual/authorship implications that I argued such actions possess.

⁹² In this sense, I argue directly against Margaret Maurer, who calls the dance “frivolous,” and Clare McManus, who asserts that the dance textualizes the female body and physicalizes speech, but that the text is by men and about masculinity; therefore it traps the female masquers within an oppressive textual system (*Women* 38-41). These positions, though different, both have the effect of denying the female voice’s participation in writing and performance. What of the speech and authorship opportunities this moment presents—especially given the queens’ onstage allusions and appropriations of masculine classical texts, and their abilities to manipulate masculine representations even of themselves?

⁹³ As Lewalski suggests, Anna displaces James as the central figure within the masque: “the attempted containment cannot succeed: these militant Queens whose force is directed against Kings and husbands need, and find, a female referent in Queen Anne, not in King James”(35).

his biological and textual authors, and those authors use the masque to “help all tongues to celebrate this wonder” (*Queenes* 654).

This moment is reminiscent of *Vision*'s (de)construction of James; yet, here, the representation of feminine power is more multi-layered. Indeed, *Queenes* presents all versions of femininity as intimately involved in all court fracture and construction. On the one hand, the witches threaten masculine physical dismemberment. The Dame carries “a torch made of a dead man's arm” (85-86), the First Hag steals a morsel from “a raven feeding upon a quarter” (140), and the Seventh Hag came to a prisoner and “bit off a sinew [and] clipped his hair” (165). On the other, the queens threaten to dismember masculine subjectivity rooted in patriarchal monarchical power. The greatest part of this threat is that it unveils the degree to which women were responsible for shaping that position in the first place. Men like James and Charles, who watch but do not participate directly in the dance, appear to be passive figures less involved in the creation and continuation of their positions. Meanwhile, Bel-Anna is a foil to them insofar as the queens constitute a community of female authors who support and draw from Anna's power. In the pre-distributed masque model, after all, “Bellanna queene of the ocean [...] alone possesst all these virtues which were in [the queens] devided”; just as the women turn to her to unite them, she relies on them to call her forth and keep her “from oblivion [and] once again made visible to the light” (BL MS Harley 6947). Since the queens are collectively aligned under Bel-Anna, these appropriations and representations have implications for their roles off the stage and in court as well; the dance is a space for displaying this. A community of women shapes the viewers' experiences of the masque before and during its performance; and it asserts control over court rulers as well.

Ultimately, active female engagement of the court leads to interdependence between the two.

Tethys' Festival (1610)

Queenes' reflections on covert performances of speech, on women's authorship of court and courtiers, and on the performative connection between identities and masque roles led into Anna's appearance in *Tethys' Festival*. Presented at Whitehall to honor Prince Henry, *Tethys* unveils how the court mediates all gendered voices; it also shows how women use allusion to bypass such social restrictions. Such considerations would be less nuanced—and certainly less apparent to viewers—had they not been preceded by masques that constructed an arsenal of physical and symbolic speech to supplement vocality. *Tethys*, then, is inextricably indebted to *Vision's* use of costume, *Blackness's* model of authorship, and *Queenes'* emphasis on textuality for meaning-making. What results is the sequence's most intensified meditation on the violence of silencing patriarchal structures—and on silence's capacity to expose that violence and threaten retaliation.

At its opening, *Tethys* seems to be an image of patriarchal potency. King James sits in observation with his son and heir, the honored Prince Henry, while young Charles—second in line to the throne—appears grandly on stage with a message of tribute to his father and brother: “From this scene issued Zephyrus with eight naiads, nymphs of fountains, and two tritons sent from Tethys to give notice of **her intendment** [...] The Duke of York presented Zephyrus, in a short robe of green satin embroidered with golden flowers” (*Tethys* 110-13, emphasis mine). Decked in emblems of youth and

surrounded by classical representatives of the sea, Charles/Zephyrus suggests the bloom and promise of English power. Yet it quickly becomes clear that Charles—male heir or not—exists under the same injunctions as the female masquers around him. He is not supposed to speak. Instead, as he approaches James and Henry, an elaborately costumed chorus speaks on his behalf:

Youth of the spring, mild Zephyrus, blow fair,
And breathe the joyful air
Which **Tethys wishes** may attend this day
[...] Bear **Tethys' message** to the ocean King,
Say how she joys to bring
Delight unto his islands and his seas. (129-43, emphases mine)

The chorus directs his behavior and supplements him. Not only is Charles/Zephyrus prohibited from speaking the message himself, but the chorus's message reveals that the words he **would** speak are not even his own. They are, rather, Tethys'/Anna's. These two masquers, then, do not use their own bodies as texts; rather, they control the chorus and remove themselves from the audience.⁹⁴ Thus the mythological figures and their corresponding son/mother actors perform silence before the king and future king. One could read this as a sign of deference—of a social “inferior” acknowledging her unworthiness to address the king publicly. Yet one could also read the silence as a refusal to perform subordination first-hand.⁹⁵ After all, Anna's past performances present her as communicative and aware of how her speeches and silences affect and link her to

⁹⁴ Upon her eventual appearance in the masque, however, Anna does use costume to textualize her body and allude to a queenly figure: herself. Costumed in “ordinary dress,” Anna clearly tied Tethys to herself and built on the foundation of her Bel-Anna performance (*Festival Designs* 28). The everyday clothing marks Anna's daily performance, just as Elizabeth's clothes marked hers. Thus Anna performs both as Tethys and Anna, and her communication within the masque has (non)fictional messages for her viewers—especially James and Henry.

⁹⁵ Another example of the distinction between silences of reverence and disrespect appears in Milton's *Maske Performed at Ludlow Castle*. Jean Graham argues specifically that the Lady can speak before Comus because she owes him no respect, and that her silence before her father reveals knowledge of how silence operates to mark deference; on the other hand, Comus's silences are figured as disrespectful and potentially dangerous (2).

the guests around her. Here, however, she distances herself from James and the other male members of her family⁹⁶; her voice reaches James and Henry, but only through a series of male intermediaries.

Following her bi-mediated message, a set of physical props further articulate Anna's separation from the proceedings: "The song ended, Triton in the behalf of Zephyrus Tethys' message with her presents (which was a trident to the king, and a rich sword and scarf to the Prince of Wales)" (147-49). Again, the physical materials of the masque become key elements in providing female expression—and here, past uses of allusion inform our understanding of Anna's speech. Indeed, the props become so tied to past performances that they referentially speak for her in her absence and provide a "rhetorically productive ambiguity" (Tomlinson *Stuart* 3). The trident given to James is only the first piece of ambiguous symbolic speech; clearly a nautical symbol of England, the trident's three prongs could variously represent the three nations under Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) as well as the separation between James, Anna, and their respective courts. The embroidered scarf given to Henry, however, is the most important of the materials—for it is richly allusive. The decoration, after all, serves as a female art form that can be publicly but decorously exposed to members of court; what's more, as Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones have shown, embroidery allowed women to affect ideal femininity while "stitch[ing] themselves into public visibility" and "commemorat[ing] their participation not in reclusive domestic activity but in the larger public world" (*Clothing* 134).⁹⁷ Closely tied to both ideal and transgressive notions of

⁹⁶ The performance of *Tethys* corresponds to James and Anna's estrangement. For more on the history of this separation, refer to Barroll's biography.

⁹⁷ Both critics draw attention to how exotic materials and techniques, as well as the craftwork involved in embroidery, allowed women contact with a world beyond the household and even beyond England. In

femininity, the gift links Prince Henry to the women surrounding him as well. He, like Charles, relies on the court's women for life and definition. More than referencing the familial bond tying Henry and Anna, the embroidered scarf connects Anna to classical female figures and their uses of textile for effective communication; thus Athena, Arachne, and Philomel allusively appear. Anna already linked herself to the virgin goddess via her *Vision* performance; here the allusion reemerges, suggesting that a feminine text is capable of possessing not only great beauty, but also of expressing truth. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Athena's tapestry was realistic and accurate, revealing her close relationship to the other gods by portraying them "with [their] own familiar features" (Ovid 6.73). Athena's work mirrors Anna's masques in this sense; both artistic creations present aristocrats to themselves intimately, for better or worse. Meanwhile, Athena's work directly links to Arachne's, and her allusive presence hints at the ties among female texts, truth-telling, and violence. In her competition with Athena, Arachne creates an incredible tapestry. Not only does it surpass Athena's in accurately replicating visual reality, but it also contradicts Athena's praise of the gods by graphically depicting all of their "heavenly crimes" (6.132). As a result, Arachne dies at the hands of the indignant and envious Athena. Finally Philomel, whose story also appears in Ovid's sixth book, clinches these ties. Following her brutal rape and mutilation⁹⁸ by Tereus, Philomel creates a cloth with "purple signs on a white background [...] thus tell[ing] the story of her wrongs" (6.577-78). Philomel's text silently expresses the unspeakable while

Chapter 6 of *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, they specifically analyze how embroidery was linked to "narratives about ideal daughters, wives, and queens" while it also raised concerns that women might use it to "stitch political meanings into sewn texts" (134-35). *Tethys*, I argue, is a key example of this duality.

⁹⁸ Indeed, Philomel's severed tongue metaphorizes courtly denial of women's public speech and expression.

replicating the marks that Tereus left upon the text of her body.⁹⁹ This final allusion suggests that women's expression may not only incite violence, but can also respond to it. The gift of the scarf and the sword by an absent but ventriloquized queen¹⁰⁰ underscores the relationship between speaking and violence—and they suggest that Henry, as a male patriarchal figure, is implicated in their ongoing presence at court. The denial of formalized, overt female performance onstage is itself an act of violence. If not addressed, it could inspire a return of violence against male systems.¹⁰¹

Cupid's Banishment (1617)

Cupid's Banishment is the logical endpoint of the Jacobean queen's masques, for it is the first to formally recognize women as actors and speaking subjects. Ann Watkins appears at the top of the list of masquers' names, marked with the word "acted." Very soon after the opening of the masque, we indeed see Watkins's character, Fortune, literally, vocally speak. This has led critics to agree, by and large, that Ann Watkins was "the first woman in England in the early modern period to act in a court masque" (McManus "Memorializing" 81). Indeed, Clare McManus claims this is the "only use of

⁹⁹ For more on Philomel's voice and tapestry, see Lynn Enterline's *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (2000).

¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Anna is ventriloquized; however, she is the creator of this situation and the director of he who voices her. Thus *Tethys*' uses a form of ventriloquization that leaves the absent women in an active authorial position.

¹⁰¹ Philomel's embroidery reaches her sister Procne; together, the two sisters seek revenge not only on Tereus, but also upon the masculine system of authority that promoted his abuse. Thus, Philomel and Procne strike at the system of patriarchy, killing Tereus's heir and forcing father to feed upon son. In the chapters that follow, I will examine how London commercial theatre picked up on this concern and represented inset masques as spaces where women might violently react to constraints and denials placed upon them. For more, see my discussions of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Women Beware Women*.

such a phrase for a female participant” (81).¹⁰² Yet as I’ve argued, acting in the period was defined by more than speech, and speech was defined by more than oration; regardless of the absence of female speech in masque **texts**, it frequently occurred in performance. Thus Ann Watkins/Fortune is not the first woman to speak or act on the Jacobean court stage; her importance rests elsewhere, in being the first formally acknowledged in text.

The context for *Cupid’s Banishment* differs significantly from prior masques. The performance followed the queen consort’s formal separation from James’s court; while James left on progress, Anna and her courtiers chose to retire to Greenwich rather than follow.¹⁰³ In a court without a king, Anna became the most influential figure; she functioned clearly, then, as her court’s “Viceregent, not subordinate” (Knowles 33), and she revealed that her power spanned beyond the domestic sphere to affect politics and artistic production. Sponsoring a masque in this setting allowed Anna’s court to, once and for all, make a statement about women’s roles. *Cupid* achieved this by being an almost fully femino-centric event. Initiated by the Countess of Bedford for Queen Anna’s entertainment, the masque was performed by the Ladies Hall at Deptford—a “high-class, private academy that offered both academic studies and training in social skills” for girls (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 77). Embodied almost exclusively by women, the masque reflected a court in which Anna had risen to replace James—a rise in eminence that became visible as she claimed James’s seat as revered spectator. Here,

¹⁰² This is not entirely true, for in his response to 1606’s *Hymenaei*, John Pory gestured to *all* of the participants as actors: “the actors men and weomen did their partes with great commendation.” For more, see Tomlinson (*Stuart* 27).

¹⁰³ While no official list tells which courtiers left with James and which chose to join with Queen Anna’s court, there is speculation that Charles chose to follow his mother, and that he may have watched *Cupid* (McManus “Memorializing” 86).

courtiers could observe her observing; thus she claimed a new masquing role, revealing that the monarch's position as observer could be active and generative rather than passive.

Cupid divides Anna's body into two texts.¹⁰⁴ In the first, her choice to remain offstage and in the monarch's seat textualized her as both "visible [...] and reticent"—what conduct literature critics note as the contradictory expectations placed upon elite women (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 7). In this sense, Anna appears to fulfill this contradiction; yet the result is jarring. Her presence reveals both that women can only fulfill such expectations from dominant positions, and that such fulfillment creates what Jean Howard might call an uncomfortable "live silence" that "produce[s] strong reactions [in the audience] precisely because they occur when sound *is* expected" ("Orchestration" 82).

In the second textualization, Anna appeared onstage not bodily, but by name. As the antimasque chaos resolved itself and the masquers performed controlled movements that reflected the order of the monarchy, the dancers formed "*Anna Regina* in letters; in their second masquing dance [formed] *Jacobus Rex*; their departing dance [was] *Carolus P*" (White 88). Notably, only two previous masques presented names spelled in dancing: Essex in *Hymenaei* (1606), and Charles in *Queenes* (1609).¹⁰⁵ Among the Stuart family's names, Anna's takes precedence; hers is the only female name, it appears first, and it "presented the masque audience with the female-authored text of the queen consort's name" (McManus "Memorializing" 90). Yet dancing Anna's name did more than allow

¹⁰⁴ In this sense, Anna's position resembles James's. Yet, as I'll discuss, Anna's relationship to the masque and masquers alters the potential for her textual (de)construction.

¹⁰⁵ We must keep in mind, however, that Anna did create textualizations of James, Henry, and Charles in other masques as well, revealing their dependency on women.

the Deptford Hall girls to become authors; it, in fact, pointed to the women's mutual authorship.¹⁰⁶ Certainly Anna, as queen and main observer, and as author of prior masque spaces, had influence over the masquers; yet so too did the masquers hold control Anna, representing her and providing her with power that overrode that of the male Stuarts. Unlike the authoring of James and his sons, the textualization of Anna doesn't threaten dismemberment; instead, it occurs within a community she has fostered, collaborated with, and ultimately given control. In this sense, *Cupid* fulfills the promise of the model of communal feminine authorship displayed in *The Masque of Queenes*. The women's authorship is inter-related, and it reveals that Anna's centrality to artistic efforts like *Cupid*; White's masque occurs not outside of court,¹⁰⁷ but rather in its own exclusive court space.

Anna's name was further privileged following the dance, when her god-daughters, students of Deptford Hall, approached bearing gifts of needlework.¹⁰⁸ The embroidered pieces present "one, an acorn; the other, rosemary—beginning with the first letters of the QUEEN'S name" (White 88). Thus *Anna Regina* appears again in female-authored texts, providing women other than Ann Watkins the opportunity to communicate and present their artistic skills in a public venue. Such texts ensure Anna's omni-presence onstage—

¹⁰⁶ This mutual reliance is reminiscent of the construction Bel-Anna and the queens share in the *Masque of Queenes* model.

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, McManus asserts that *Cupid's Banishment* marks Anna's withdrawal from masque and that its occurrence outside of James's court signals Anna's marginalization (*Women* 79-80). I agree with Barroll, however, that James's court was not the sole court in England. Anna's separation here does not signal a decrease in power; rather, it constructs an exclusiveness that, as Barroll puts it, defined "her relationship to the court of the king" (*Anna* 89). In this situation, the king's court is unnecessary for Anna's masquing endeavor to exist.

¹⁰⁸ Notably, embroidery of this kind was a daily part of women's lives. Women carried embroidered bags containing small sewing kits and pins to maintain their dresses; in addition, they gave such bags to friends as gifts. Samplers, meanwhile, frequently contained narratives or textual messages memorializing births, deaths, and friendships. Presenting such a gift during a public performance points to the daily importance of needlework in women's communication. Special thanks to the Victoria and Albert Museum and the curators of the textile archive.

the stage and its performers create and sponsor her power. Just as the performers in *Cupid* remain visible throughout the performance, never disappearing or reappearing in a staged discovery, so too does Anna. *Cupid's Banishment* ties together representations of female expression and performance that occurred throughout the queen's masques, and asserts that women are always present and visible within the court. Silence provides women with a space for public intervention and dramatic participation. What's more, these women do not need the king's court or its approval to creatively thrive. By moving outside masculine structures, women can formally speak—yet this speech does not replace the multi-medial systems of their past performances, but supplements and exists because of them.

“Not as myself, but as the brightest star”¹⁰⁹: Henrietta Maria's Appropriations

Considering Anna's masques as a sequence fostering women's expression recovers female agency. It also combats current critical distinctions between “the silent and emblematic participation of women in the Jacobean masque, and the far more dynamic potential for projecting female personality allowed by the declamation, action, singing, and dancing which made up **the** queen's¹¹⁰ theatrical diversions” (Tomlinson “Threat” 192, emphasis mine). We gain nothing and lose much from devaluing one consort beneath the other. Subsuming Anna into “the Jacobean” marked by silence while positioning Henrietta Maria as “**the** queen” belittles the effective communication of Anna's masques; it disavows their influence on Henrietta Maria, who expanded upon them to increase women's performance possibilities. Henrietta Maria's masques—and

¹⁰⁹ Townshend *Tempe* 145-46.

¹¹⁰ Tomlinson means Henrietta Maria, though she does not name her in this sentence.

Tempe Restored (1632) in particular—must be considered in terms of both their French **and** English influences.

Critics consistently recognize Henrietta Maria's French influences. In particular, scholars note the *ballet de cour*'s effects on Caroline entertainments. Unlike the queen's pastorals, the *ballet de cour* was also marked by dancers' silences; while performers did not speak directly to the audience, however, ushers (and even the dancers themselves) would pass out written *livrets* that narrated conversations among performers and viewers, constituting an important part of the entertainment (Gough "Discovered" 441). Not only might the *livrets* praise important figures,¹¹¹ but the *ballets* themselves frequently encouraged viewers to see young women as potential mates with potential political benefits.¹¹² All of Marie de Medici's daughters performed in *ballet de cour* and spoke in pastorals. Overt acting within the French court posed less of a threat to women's reputations than it did in England. This is, in part, because of Marie's influential assertion that chastity did not oppose public duty (Britland *Drama* 31).¹¹³ Continental court culture, then, did not equate open mouths with open sexuality; this had a clear impact on Henrietta Maria's English performances as well.

¹¹¹ One such example is a *livret* passed out during one of Henrietta Maria's dances; in it, the poet imagines Henrietta Maria praising her mother's power and highlighting her own blossoming sexuality: "If I am a new flower,/ I am one of the sunflowers [...] I turn in all directions/ Toward your celestial beauties" (translated in Gough "Discovered" 442).

¹¹² Notable among them is Anne of Austria's 1624 ballet, which occurred on the eve of negotiations for the Anglo-French alliance against Spain—a component of which was the engagement of Charles I to Henrietta Maria. Gough argues that Henrietta Maria's performance offered persuasion to the English ("Discovered" 443). Indeed, the performance was clearly effective, as Charles's representative Kensington wrote him a day later to detail Henrietta Maria's looks and performance.

¹¹³ This combined with the assertions of men like Francis de Sales, who set forth religious and conduct guidelines that valued chastity and honor "as spiritual essences, not as cultural conventions" (Britland *Drama* 44); such positions freed women to speak publicly because, as de Sales put it, "reputation is merely a notice board on the door of virtue [...] if you are called a hypocrite, it is no more than a laughing matter" (Britland *Drama* 43).

Yet these influences combine with English ones to shape Caroline entertainments. After all, upon her ascension in England, Henrietta Maria did not solely host controversial pastorals like 1633's *Shepherd's Paradise*.¹¹⁴ Attention to Caroline entertainments frequently focuses on pastorals, whose female speech and cross-dressing garnered much contemporary attention.¹¹⁵ The firestorm surrounding William Prynne's *Histrionastix* (1632)—which infamously labeled the queen and her ladies “women-actors, notorious whores” (index)—clearly affects our priorities in studying the court stage.¹¹⁶ Yet we should ask ourselves why, if masques were “stagnant” or “silent,” did Henrietta Maria continue to stage them—and to what end? In both *Chloridia* (1631) and *Tempe Restored* (1632), she clearly engaged English tradition by manipulating rules of silence as her predecessor did¹¹⁷; *Blackness* and *Tethys'* are clear models for Henrietta Maria's approach to appearing silent. Rather than speaking outright—as she already had in *Artenice* (1627) and would eventually do in *Shepherd's Paradise*—Henrietta Maria constructed a silent voice through referentiality.

As in *Cupid's Banishment*, women besides the queen spoke in *Tempe*; notably, Madame Coniack (playing Circe) and Mistress Shepherd (as Harmony) sang. Yet their vocalicity contrasted with the queen's ostensible silence at the same time that it allowed her

¹¹⁴ This pastoral masque infamously featured women's speech and cross-dressing, and some of Henrietta Maria's ladies wore beards.

¹¹⁵ In addition to speech, cross-dressing calls upon English tradition. Henrietta Maria's pastorals not only find precedent in Anna's women's buskins and short skirts, but also present a reversal of the all-male English public theatre's practices.

¹¹⁶ Following the publication, Prynne was imprisoned in the Tower of London and tried for treason. As punishment, his ears were publicly docked while an executioner axed a copy of the infamous text. For the rest of his life, Prynne was forced to wear the lovelocks he so ridiculed in order to cover his ears.

¹¹⁷ And, with *Chloridia* at least, there exists evidence that she had a similar control over Inigo Jones; she left notes for him, and he responded to her suggestions. Of an early surviving text of the masque, Jones writes to Henrietta Maria: “This designe I conceive to bee fitt for the invention and if it please her Maiestie to add or alter any thing I desier to receive hir majesties command [...] the colours are also her majesties choise” (Orgel and Strong 439).

covert communication. Using Elizabeth Harvey's concept of "transvestite ventriloquism," Melinda Gough links Harmony/Mistress Shepherd's vocal speech to Divine Beauty/Henrietta Maria's silent presence in the masque. Specifically, at the same time that Harmony silences Divine Beauty (and highlights her silence), she also fosters Divine Beauty's speech through "vicarious virtuosity" (Gough "Voice" 61). When Harmony claims, then, that she performs "not as [her]self, but as the brightest star/ That shines in heaven, come to reign this day," she uncovers her performance as a surrogate for the queen's (145-56). Thus, Henrietta Maria comments on gender politics without appearing to breach decorum. I argue that this is not only because other women speak under her authority, but also because they speak **her text**. She is, after all, a collaborator whose authorship of the masque implicates her in every line and action.¹¹⁸ Though Gough convincingly argues that Harmony's line gestures to Henrietta Maria, I think we can push further to see that Harmony not only performs as Divine Beauty, but that Henrietta Maria performs referentially as Anna. If Harmony/ Mistress Shepherd performs "not as [her]self, but as the brightest star," then this suggests that Henrietta Maria performs with reference to someone else as well; the two women's roles mirror each other (*Tempe* 145). Thus Harmony and Divine Beauty ask the audience to listen more closely to the messages in masques, urging **women** to take notice: "Ladies, lend us your ears!" (153). Silence in this case offers a pathway to speech. Women are speaking in masques, even though that speech is covert¹¹⁹; further, women in court can look to

¹¹⁸ The principal royal masquer in any performance would oversee and approve all performance details. This was clearly the case with Henrietta Maria as well, as the notes that she left for the poet and for Jones on *Chloridia*, *Coelum Britannicum*, and *The Royal Slave* still survive. For more on these notes, see Veevers (111).

¹¹⁹ Such speech is clearly contrasted against that of the male actors, cross-dressed and ventriloquizing women. Ultimately, Circe speaks out against this practice—and she points specifically to an actor

those performances as didactic and learn from them. In this way, Henrietta Maria's masque borrows Anna's models of acting and authorship; it draws power from the spaces and visual designs Anna created with Inigo Jones.

Tempe Restored enacts not exemplary feminine behavior, but the vocality of which all women are feared to be capable¹²⁰; indeed, it suggests that silent women are unstable and expressive as well, regardless of how obedient they seem. Henrietta Maria's *Divine Beauty* asserts that truth, beauty, and virtue can only exist and become comprehensible through female vocal expression; at the same time, female vocality does not guarantee a one-to-one correspondence between women's internal and external states. Women's performances may, in fact, complicate readers' comprehensions; the ways in which they layer upon and reference each other can hide transgression and mediate aggressive desires for recognition.

“And shout with joy of favour you have won”¹²¹: Masque in Dramatic Context

Masques exist in a simultaneously private/domestic and public/political space, which allowed women to participate in public affairs. Thus masque provided a formalized stage on which aristocratic women might reveal their educations or aid in constructing representations of their own subjectivity, authorship, or performance.

Masque is therefore inextricably related to the household stage of closet drama. The two forms share the household as a space of authorship and performance. Indeed, the forms

embodying Pallas Athena, one of Anna's favored guises; as the masque ends, Circe/Madame Coniack verbally unveils the male performer and his ruse, commanding “man-maid, begone!” (268).

¹²⁰ Henrietta Maria's entertainments, perhaps more so than Anna's, are recognized as a “didactic medium” for her philosophical positions on marriage, love, and gendered behavior (Orgel 20). However, as Tomlinson notes, the “good” women of these texts—like Bellessa in *Shepherd's Paradise*—are “model[s] of correct conduct for all women” and are not supposed to be viewed as exemplary (Stuart 69).

¹²¹ Jonson *Blackness* 328.

occasionally blended—in part because many of the same women participated in both. Thus women engaged in masque and closet drama would mingle representations, as Wroth did in her *Urania*,¹²² and they might use published masque texts in their closets.

Masques were born for the sake of performance; though our experience of them is solely textual, we must remember that contemporary audiences experienced them as lively spectacles that “flowed more perfectly from [...] their [dancers’] feet” than from their “author’s brain” (Jonson *Hymenaei*).¹²³ As performance, they were transient and seldom repeated.¹²⁴ As texts, they found physicality in the bodies of their female masquers. Yet masques also possessed a secondary life as literary artifacts; the roles of these texts aided in defining masque as a public form. Lauren Shohet’s work has uncovered masques’ rich dual lives as both performed and publicly printed, and she has argued that these texts “were among the information reported throughout the networks of interested readers who consumed the court gossip, political information, and opinions” that constituted “news” during the period (“Print” 179). Texts deserve attention, then, because they expanded the masque’s audience as well as its performance possibilities beyond the walls of the court. While masques-in-print foster the illusion of masques as single-authored products,¹²⁵ they also aid in publicizing their feminine contributors. Not

¹²² Indeed, during the Princess Dalina’s confinement, she and her ladies read aloud to each other as they sew, performing a text. Such blended representations also appeared on the public stage—as in Shirley’s *The Beauties*, where the princess and her ladies pass their confinement in a tower by improvising a play or masque about Jupiter and Danae. For more on such blended performances, see Chapters 2 and 4.

¹²³ For this reason, among others, I am resistant to claims like Jerzy Limon’s that we should solely focus on extant masque texts and their “singular” poets.

¹²⁴ Two masques alone were restaged: *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (because Queen Anna was sick for the first performance) and *The Temple of Love* (which was incredibly popular in its first performance) (Peacock 4).

¹²⁵ Ben Jonson worked particularly hard to use print as a method for claiming collaborative texts under his name. The move has been largely successful, as modern critics call these texts Jonson’s or Daniel’s. Limon, for example, argues forcefully that while masque-in-performance has multiple authors, masque-in-print has only one—and that, for this reason, we must consider the two versions of masque separately while

only did Anna and Henrietta Maria's women get exposure as actors in the public imagination, when audiences read the performance descriptions; the women's ideas and imaginative contributions received public exposure as well. Like public theatre actors, then, women opened themselves to public discourse. As Margaret Cavendish said of female authors, "those that perform Publick Actions, expose themselves to Publick Censures; and so do Writers, live they never so privately and retir'd, as soon as they commit their Workes to the Press" (*Plays* A2r). Publicly engaged, the potentially didactic masques had the potential to function like Edward Gosynhyll's *Schole House of Women*. They allowed women to convene together and say "doo as I doo," providing other women with models of covert disobedience and expression which they could imitate; doing so allowed women to disseminate techniques of manipulation that weakened men's authority (B1v-B3r). In passing along information and modeling behavior for women desirous of acting and writing, the queen consorts proved Cavendish's assertion that women "are no subjects unless it be to our husbands, and not always to them, for sometimes we usurp their authority, or else by flattery we get their good wills to govern" (*Sociable Letters* 27). Indeed, masque allowed the courts to evidence this. Masques could educate women about writing and performance possibilities that balanced decorum and subversion; printed masques' widespread ownership allowed non-aristocratic women access as well (Shohet "Print" 191). Masques, then, are political in print as well as in performance.¹²⁶

privileging print (28). Such a position fails to take into account, however, that masques written prior to performance were subject to Anna and Henrietta Maria's approval; meanwhile, masques written after performances were undeniably shaped by the actors and artistic scenery which had already appeared on stage. Thus, there was never one lone author.

¹²⁶ And, unlike Jerzy Limon claims, we can study them in terms of both. We are not limited to the literary masque text.

Masques' lives as print artifacts link the form more clearly to commercial theatre as well. In 1656, for example, bookseller Edward Archer's catalogue stated that he possessed "all of the Plaies that were ever printed [...] Comedies, Histories, Interludes, Masks, Pastorels, Tragedies" (Shohet "Print" 189). Similarly, a contemporary early modern catalogue at the Bodleian Library contains a list of "Maskes, Comedies, & Tragedies" (Kiessling viii). That contemporaries classified masque this way reveals that it was, in fact, understood as a dramatic form; the two forms shared practices as well as audiences and authors. Thus women were recognized to some extent as early modern dramatic actors and authors. Though some performance practices differed between masque and commercial stages, these distinctions resembled the separation between tragedy and comedy. Parallels exist within the constraints operating on male actors performing in the Swan or the Globe. Female masquing actors, as publicly performative figures, were exposed to similar criticisms as those walking the London stage.¹²⁷

In exposing aristocratic bodies—physical and textual—to public judgment, masque publication emphasizes the masque stage's (and its actors') connection with the London public stage and its participants. Like many printed plays, masque texts express awareness of their roles as both spectacle and readable material; they recognize audiences and their roles in interpretation. What's more, printed masque texts reveal a professionalism that belies their "amateur" status. This professionalism does not mark the masque poet alone, inscribing the masque within his literary career. Rather, details reveal the **actors'**—the performance participants'—professionalism and concern with pleasing, shocking, or otherwise engaging their audience. Physically, masque stages resembled

¹²⁷ Such performances were criticized by Prynne's *Histriomastix*, after all—a text which, like Rainolds's *The Overthrow of Stage Playes*, emphasized the evils of the stage and public exposure.

those in commercial theatres; Astington explains that the masquing halls hosted “large, crowded audiences,” throngs that did not always behave civilly (111). Not only were many of the spaces large, but they also utilized raised stages like those in London by 1605; theatre architecture in both places featured what Orgel calls an “openness of the stage” that prevented “rigid separation between actors and spectators” (4).¹²⁸ In addition, the masques shared costuming and rehearsal practices with the London theatre. Both Anna and Henrietta Maria promoted seriousness among their masquers; both maintained financial control over productions,¹²⁹ both oversaw costuming and text, being frequently “consulted about every detail” (Peacock 130), and both held their performers to stringent rehearsal schedules, hiring professional coaches and choreographers to ensure precise execution (Astington 115, Gough “Stage Plays” 209). That no **monetary** payment for these acting services came into play is not enough to qualify the court stage as amateur; in fact, the stakes of performance were quite high, and a good performance could reap an actor important political, social, and fiscal rewards.¹³⁰ Thus masques were spaces of exchange, and did not function merely to flatter the court, to teach behaviors, or to promote the practice and improvement of personal virtues.

In the chapter that follows, I will turn to the commercial London stage. There, I continue my interrogation of the relationship among the three dramatic forms. As women’s closet and masque interactions gained wider public recognition, their presence began to register on the London stage; male playwrights thus represent these spaces and

¹²⁸ Here, Orgel describes London’s Swan Theatre; however, the description is close to that Astington uses in illustrating Whitehall’s Cockpit and Banqueting House.

¹²⁹ For more, see Ravelhofer (139-40).

¹³⁰ Sarah Poynting asserts that masque participation could lead to women’s appointments within the queens’ courts (positions with both social and monetary rewards) or to profitable marriages (172); in addition, Martin Butler highlights how masque could help those “competing for position in and around the courtly arena” (26).

activities on stage in front of a large public audience. Such representation not only cashes in on the popularity of these forms; it further seeks to gain a greater understanding of what women's performances reveal about internal states and whether men can ever fully access or understand them. What's more, by registering the importance of women's household entertainments and positioning them onstage, London commercial theatre suggested that women already had public dramatic exposure before the Restoration.

CHAPTER IV

ECHOES OF WOMEN'S VOICES IN LONDON STAGE PLAYS

“I do not like the shuffling of these women,
They are mad beasts when they knock heads together [...]
Breaking often into violent laughters
As if the end they purpos'd were their own.”
--John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed* (1611)

The previous chapters have emphasized women's positions as actors and authors in the closet and on the masquing stage, revealing that drama's relationship to didactic texts allowed women to engage in dramatic discourses, shape representations of feminine subjectivity, and instruct female audiences on how to employ these possibilities beyond the stage. At the same time, silence provided a dynamic means of communication during these performances. As this chapter turns toward the London theatre¹ and its male-written, male-performed plays, my argument unfolds in three major parts. First, I show that London stage plays (like closet dramas and masques) accessed a conduct literature lexicon to express and explore gender anxieties relating to women. The didactic theatrical discourse both instructed women on their patriarchally defined duties and explored the limits of these subservient roles; it also, as a feminized discourse accessible to women,² allowed women's texts and performances to enter into discussion and shape

¹ This chapter will deal with plays performed in both amphitheatres and halls. The division between public and private theatres is a vexed one; for this reason I follow Andrew Gurr's cues on describing their spaces rather than their positions in a social and economic hierarchy. See Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987).

² In Chapters 2-3 I have argued that in addressing women and instructing them toward silent behaviors, conduct literature also provides a script which women adapt and manipulate. Using their own literary and

the debates occurring onstage. In this sense, though women's bodies were absent from the commercial stage, their literary voices gained indirect access. Second, I establish that women's roles as actors and authors—as key participants in closet drama and masque—registered as important cultural phenomena in stage plays.³ London plays' preoccupations with women's authorship and acting gestures to those roles as publicly recognizable; stage representations of women's dramatic activity reveal that closet drama and masque were not merely private or confined to the household, but could reach beyond those spaces to create broader literary influence. Throughout the Stuart period, men's stage plays borrowed from women's dramatic works, drawing attention toward women's existence **as contributors**. Women's contributions, in turn, affected the structure and thematics of the masculine homosocial stage, influencing its representation of women. To support this portion of my argument, I emphasize stage plays' recreations of women's closet and masque activities. An examination of closet moments in *Hamlet* (c. 1601) and *The Tamer Tamed* (1611) unveils the performativity of the space; further, it uncovers a masculine desire not only to access the closet and the feminine interior that it represents, but also to make both spaces accessible to large audiences.⁴ Yet from such staged attempts emerge concerns about the limits of male knowledge and the degree of reliance that male authors and performers have on the information that women share about themselves—and about how trustworthy these sources are. Such voyeurism relies

bodily texts, women use conduct precepts to authorize transgressive behaviors such as acting, writing, and speaking.

³ In her work on masque, Sophie Tomlinson briefly makes a similar claim about London theatre's responses to female masque performances. However, I argue that we cannot fully appreciate this relationship unless we step back and view closet drama's role as well. For more see Tomlinson ("Threat" 197).

⁴ This links the London stage with closet drama, which I've argued reveals the dual masculine anxiety that men cannot see into the closet and that men may somehow infiltrate the closet.

on women's accounts and closet documents. Therefore, it challenges patriarchal structures governing knowledge possession; the closet and the woman are figured as sites for uncontrolled performance, of masking. Men, then, are not the source of knowledge in this circumstance; they rely on women to publicize their actions or intentions. These stage plays represent men's attempts to oversee this "private" space; the resulting disruptions have violent consequences. Following my meditation on closet depictions, I turn toward representations of masque in *Timon of Athens* (c. 1608) and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1628). These plays' inset masques not only borrow from Queen Anna and Queen Henrietta Maria's versions of communicative performance, but recognize the emergence of the masque as a feminine form. Both plays present masque as a site for the airing of and retribution for women's grievances that find limited outlet in private, closet spaces; they also assume women's vocality in performance. Third, my conclusion argues that it is the inextricable relationships among the three forms—on stage and in print—that allows women authors and actors to indirectly access a London stage oft-vaunted for its masculine homosociality. Though women neither wrote nor performed London stage plays, the plays' emphasis on representations of women created a "linguistic imaginary"⁵ by which feminine presence proliferated and revealed itself as an ever-present force. Even before the Restoration, women were publicly engaged in drama. For this reason, though women did not walk the commercial stage, their voices echoed upon it.

⁵ Fiona McNeill discusses the "linguistic imaginary" in terms of *The Roaring Girl*; though the play features a limited number of female characters, its gendered language (particularly that surrounding and marking Moll's body) proliferates until, within the play (and for the audience), London seems populated by a mass of masterless women. I will discuss other applications of the linguistic imaginary during my readings of *The Tamer Tamed* and *Timon of Athens*, in particular.

“Such as will joine their profit with their pleasure”⁶: Instruction On the Stage

London theatre, like closet drama and masque, possessed an important relationship with conduct literature and instruction. Depending on whom we believe, drama was either a morally corrupting force or it had the capacity to perfect the English language and shape proper behaviors. In *Playes Confuted in Five Acts* (1582), Stephen Gosson asserts that drama’s sinfulness emerges from mimesis, the “custome of counterfaiting upon the stage” (A7v). After all, actors undertake parts different from their own characters, and,

If it should be Plaeid, one must learne to trippe it like a lady in the finest fashion, another must have time to whet his minde unto tyranny that he may give life to the picture hee presenteth, whereby [actors] learne to counterfeit, and so to sinne. (E6r-v)

For Gosson and his like-minded contemporaries, the danger of theatrical performance was multi-layered. On a foundational level, it distracted both actors and audiences from God and emphasized lesser figures: women and tyrants. What’s more, drama put actors in positions of creative authority in which they not only generated new characters and spectacles that might rival those of the external “real” world, but in which they also could alter their own and their audiences’ behaviors. In pretending to be women or tyrants, actors might *become* women or tyrants; and they might encourage such changes in their viewers. Thus, Gosson claims that his ability to confute drama “belongeth not to mee, but vnto God, vvhose manner is to beate dovvne the loftinesse of vsurpers” (*Playes* dedication 5).

While it takes the opposite stance on drama, Thomas Heywood’s *Apology for Actors* (1612) shares the vocabulary of “education” with detractors (57). However, for

⁶ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humor* (induction).

Heywood such education is positive on countless levels; drama's ability to mold its participants is a valuable resource. The action of writing, reciting, and hearing plays teaches playwrights, actors, and listeners, respectively, to improve their English and deepen national loyalties (155). Further, he claims, drama can instruct participants in how to evince appropriate emotional responses to virtue and vice. This last lesson is a strong one. Not only might drama incite fear or guilt in response to stage violence; it may also lead offstage perpetrators to confess. Thus, Heywood asserts, plays have led to the "discover[y] of many notorious murderers" who, "being publickly confest [are] arraigned, condemned, adjudged, and burned" (60). According to *Apology*, those who reveal themselves are usually women; therefore, drama causes the even "weakest" moral characters to unveil themselves rather than teaching them to hide effectively.

Despite the wide ideological gap between the polemicists' and apologists' conclusions, they mutually deploy instructional vocabularies and express concern over the links between educational mimesis and women. In this way, dramatic performance connects to contemporary conduct literature. After all, if drama shapes individual behaviors (in the theatre or outside its doors), it shares this aspiration with an instructional genre that overtly seeks to influence women's negotiations of chastity, silence, and obedience. Both engage the contradictory expectation that women be publicly reticent while also "be[ing] visible, affable, [and] endearing to men," which many modern critics note (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 7). Yet the connection between drama and conduct literature is more than a one-way link. Dramatic plots represent scenes of behavioral education and dramatic debates figure drama as educational; meanwhile, conduct literature itself engages in dramatic vocabularies and practices. Both

concern themselves with the connection of “word and deed” (I.G. 55), particularly where women’s actions are involved.

Debates about theatrical didacticism created a space for female participation in London plays. Didactic texts not only largely targeted women, but they were a form that allowed women’s public writing and speaking. After all, they stressed the individual’s betterment through the conscious repetition of “proper” behaviors; this directly relates to emerging concepts of Neoplatonism that became popular in the Stuart courts and encouraged women’s performances in closets and in the queen consorts’ masques. By engaging instructions that women had already begun adapting in their household performances and literary texts, apologists’ texts resembled women’s conduct literature. And both genres relied upon women’s voices to confirm and authorize their positions on education, as Heywood clearly does. Even anonymous and masculine-authored seventeenth-century conduct manuals had begun to recognize the authorizing power of women’s voices and subject positions⁷; in addition, closet dramas had begun giving women a literary and performative space for reshaping and putting those messages into practice. Though the polemicists decried the “negative” lessons emerging from plays, their critical deployment of educational and conduct literature vocabularies could empower apologists’ positions. Thus, if they could teach vanity and disobedience, the

⁷ Barbara McManus’s work on pamphlets and manuals is illuminating here. In examining pamphlets and manuals written in female voices, she makes a distinction between those texts (like Thomas Elyot’s) that assert a division between the male author and his created female voice (an instance when masculine dominance is performed in the text) and those texts that do not reveal any division between the author and female subject position (though their anonymous or pseudonymical natures prevent “actual” knowledge about the writer’s gender). In choosing to construct female subject positions, writers in the latter texts reveal women’s authority in narrating their own experiences. For more, see “Eve’s Dowry: Genesis and the Pamphlet Controversy About Women” (2000).

plays could also teach virtue.⁸ Because, as Charles Pastoor notes, “theoretically, the closer the circumstance of the play to the circumstance of the audience, the more effectively these lessons [could] be taught,” didactic writers sought out women and their stories in an attempt to shape them and infuse them with educational content (“Puritan” 6).⁹ Yet engaging women’s experiences gave women the ability to contribute to literary and dramatic products. And as plays and conduct literature connected through didacticism and the representation of women, they each tacitly acknowledged a mutual exchange: women shaped them at the same time that they shaped women. Women’s behaviors (as reported in their own texts and performances) registered in plays; this connection admitted their silent expressions to the stage.

Attention to women’s conduct, notably, drew attention to their presence as spectators before highlighting their texts’ roles in shaping plays. Indeed, women constituted an important theatrical and literary audience,¹⁰ and they could use the theatre’s “lessons” to provide explanations for their increasingly autonomous behaviors. The audience became an initial space for performance. As the Venetian ambassador Busino reported, women’s manners in the theatre were unexpectedly free: “these theatres are frequented by a number of respectable and handsome ladies, who come freely and

⁸ In addition to instructing women, stage plays also partook in the humanistic tradition of counseling monarchs. This is an issue of interest for Andrew Hadfield in “*Timon of Athens* and Jacobean Politics” (2003).

⁹ This tradition existed prior to the Stuart period and was linked to genres other than drama. For example, in *The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry* (1371), the narrator tells his reader that “it is a noble and fair thing for a man or a woman to see and behold themselves in the mirror of ancient stories, the which hath been written by our Ancestors for to show us good examples that they did” (4).

¹⁰ Ann Jennalie Cook and Andrew Gurr show that women also patronized the theatre as audience members—and they purchased playtexts. Both of these participations allowed women a degree of control over plays-as-commodities. In addition, fluid early modern conceptions of dramatic performance allowed women’s writing and performance elsewhere to register and appear in representations on the London stage. While I agree with Dympna Callaghan that women’s consumption of plays does not necessarily constitute approval (15), women’s positions as consumers made their presence—and, therefore, to some extent their approval—an economic if not a gender-equality concern.

seat themselves among the men without the slightest hesitation” (“Diaries” 416). Additionally, Sir John Chamberlain and Dudley Carleton report upon women’s attendance. They claim that wealthy women “could expect to see plays [...] unescorted” (in Gurr 19); they also invited male friends to accompany them, as Chamberlain reports the Lady Smith did him.¹¹ As part of the crowd, women not only questioned conduct expectations’ power¹²; they shaped conduct texts’ reactions. For example, Richard Brathwait accused female viewers of being *a priori* “libertines” in *The English Gentlewoman*, while Anthony Munday fretted about the plays altering the women’s initial goodness. “Credite me,” Munday asserts, “there can be found no stronger engine to batter the honestie as wel of wedded wiues, as the chastitie of vnmarried maids and widdowes; than are the hearing of common plaes” (157-58). To these writers, it was bad enough that players’ cross-dressing promoted male effeminacy¹³; but encouraging such behavior in women and providing it with a safe space might undermine patriarchy by

¹¹ Chamberlain reports to Carleton that “the Lady Smith would have gon [to the Globe] yf she could have persuaded me to go with her. I am not so sowre nor severe but that I wold willingly have attended her, but I could not sit so long” (Chamberlain 578). Though Chamberlain turns down the invitation, this does not mitigate the fact that the theatre became an event that gave female spectators the power to extend invitations and initiate social contact.

¹² Their behaviors and public presence helped to break down the illusion that conduct prescriptions were concrete or had control over women. For more on women’s power to rebel against or acquiesce to conduct expectations, see Kathryn Schwarz’s “Chastity, Militant and Married.” Women’s behavior in the theatre also could reverse power dynamics of sexual pursuit. In one sense, some women were active in pursuing liaisons with men in the theatres, as Stephen Gosson angrily reports; others simply made themselves available to such encounters. For more, see Leggatt 40-41.

¹³ For example, Stephen Gosson decries cross-dressing in *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), claiming that it “falsifies, forges, and adulterates [...] the express rules of God” (E3v). In his *Anatomie of Melancholy* (1621), Richard Burton takes the argument a step further by asserting that the popularity of the theatre and its cross-dressing has led to an alteration in English masculinity: “in tricking themselves up men go beyond women, they wear harlot’s colours, and do not walk, but jet and dance” (185). William Prynne famously picked up on this line of argument in *Histrionmastix, or The Player’s Scourge* (1633) by arguing that stage practices “makes the actors guilty of many sins, to wit, of vain, idle, ribaldrous, and blasphemous words, of light, lascivious, wanton gestures [...] it ingenerates in them a perpetual habit of vanity [and] effeminacy” (187). Prynne’s work also discusses the effects that playing has on women; this will receive discussion later in the chapter.

encouraging free and independent action at home.¹⁴ While women in the audience could use the interplay of conduct expectation and theatrical didacticism to allow for new behaviors, they also contributed to the immediate contingency of early modern performance. Tiffany Stern has uncovered, for example, that at the end of performances, companies would seek approval for the next day's play (57). Though audiences usually acquiesced, occasionally a choice prompted disapproval; violent opposition would alter the theatre schedule.¹⁵ Such assertions of will are not described in gendered terms; rather, the crowd becomes a single body in which women participated. Stage plays registered female presence and the threat that audience participation might constitute dramatic participation; thus, plays like *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) present female audience members not only yelling instruction from the ground, but also emerging from the audience to join actors onstage.¹⁶

The live nature of theatre gave viewers additional power over performances. Alexander Leggatt and Andrew Gurr have highlighted the intimate relationship between actors and audiences.¹⁷ Just as courtiers could interrupt masque performances with loud speech or by a refusal to participate in the taking-out, so too could London audiences

¹⁴ Kim Walker argues that transvestitism in the early modern theatre "is a visible sign of this inversion of women's subjection to men; the ground of patriarchal society is put at risk" when such inversion occurs (39).

¹⁵ See Stern's article "'On Each Wall and Corner Poast': Playbills, Title-Pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London" (2006). For an account of protests, see in particular page 57.

¹⁶ In the induction, Francis Beaumont presents the Citizen's Wife as yelling instruction from the ground; she expresses clear desire for her husband's apprentice, Rafe, to receive an important role in the play, and she goes so far as to instruct Rafe on how to act. Mid-way through the induction, the Wife climbs upon the stage to continue her instruction.

¹⁷ Gurr asserts this existed in amphitheatres and halls alike. Indeed, Gurr claims that this was true because "at neither [kind of] playhouse was there any thought of using darkness to conceal the playgoers from the players and from themselves" (47). Thus both groups were exposed and could interact with each other.

loudly disrupt and draw attention toward themselves.¹⁸ While Gurr links this practice to young men who would cat-call and perform other “attention-seeking” behaviors (47), Dympna Callaghan reveals that women also frequently interrupted. According to Callaghan, women often utilized excessive emotional reactions to disrupt plays; responding to violence, women might scream out or faint (142). Such effusion, though historically cast as “natural” timidity, often marked the intentional performance of femininity. In this sense, women used authorized behaviors to license their participation in the play, though they didn’t stand upon the stage itself. Not only did women force the audience to recognize them; they also shaped performances, urging actors to accommodate them by signaling the repercussions of female dissatisfaction. After all, as Quince suggests in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, “you should not [perform] too terribly,/ You would fright the Duchess and the ladies, that/ They would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all” (1.2.74-76).¹⁹

Women’s performances in sites other than the audience also shaped London theatre. Numerous playtext dedications addressed women writers and closet dramatists.²⁰ In addition, as Sophie Tomlinson notes, London plays increasingly noted women’s masque acting. I argue that this cross-pollination occurred because the boundaries

¹⁸ This is an issue that receives considerable discussion in Chapter 3. In addition, Simon Shepherd’s work on body movement in masque notes this possibility, commenting that Jacobean masques could “be upstaged at any moment by eruptions within the delicately maintained network of diplomatic allegiances, by mere nuances of disquiet” (245).

¹⁹ In addition to the threat that women might become like Rosalind and Viola, behaving as men or wearing the “fashionable” attire of sword and doublet, they threatened indirect violence. Thus, as Jean Howard notes, it was important for polemicists to attack women as “marginal or unruly groups discursively constructed as demonic, illegitimate, or duplicitously ‘theatrical’” (“Renaissance” 164). Yet viewing women as theatrical and theatre as didactic helped to conflate the respectively figured “private” and “public” spaces in which women and theatre operated. As performativity and didacticism began inhabiting a common public space, women could begin to interact with plays by turning to drama’s potential for instruction.

²⁰ For examples, refer to my discussion of Elizabeth Cary’s authorship in Chapter 2.

between dramatic forms were more permeable than we conceive of them today.²¹ Janette Dillon, Inga-Stina Ewbank, and Kate Levin, for example, reveal that this was the case not only in the Jacobean and Caroline periods, but during Tudor reigns as well.²² Tudor feasts, jousts, and revels—much like later Stuart masques, pageants, and plays—utilized shared performance vocabularies and dramaturgical practices. Dillon posits that the names of many performance forms, rather than operating as generic markers, were “elements that borrowed from one another’s styles and were commonly mixed and matched to different degrees” (“Revels” 59). Thus there existed a long-standing tradition of performance forms borrowing from each other and breaking down divisions, and of audiences and writers understanding all types of dramatic experiences as related. This being the case, male playwrights in London borrowed from each other as well as from women’s closet drama and masque productions.²³ Therefore, as in masque and closet drama, women affected representations of femininity through their authorship and acting.²⁴ Callaghan is right in asserting that visibility does not equal power, and that the early modern stage requires us to ask what constitutes absence and representation. But considering that female absence was not entire, and that limited visibility or moments of silence do not constitute disempowerment, we must recalibrate our questions about what

²¹ This is simultaneously a cause and symptom of authors writing across forms and acting companies performing both within the city and for the court. In addition, emerging print culture functioned as an equalizer of dramatic forms; once they emerged as texts, they functioned in similar ways for audiences (which they shared). This latter issue will receive discussion later in the chapter.

²² See Dillon, “From Revels to Revelation: Shakespeare and the Mask” (2007); see also Ewbank’s “Those Pretty Devices: A Study of Masques in Plays” (1970) and Levin’s “Dramatic Reactions to the Masque, 1590-1660” (1996).

²³ This became particularly easy when we consider acting companies’ contact with elite homes. After all, the King’s Men frequently performed in court antimasques (Dillon “Revels” 58), which placed members in contact with women’s masquing spaces, women’s texts, and female masquers themselves.

²⁴ Callaghan, for example, asserts that women on masquing stages had a degree of control over representations of figures that were absent or traditionally absent from early modern stages: specifically women and individuals of other racial categories. For more, see page 20.

kind of absence exists; whether speech and language might function as a curative for limited visibility; and how these answers affect representations of women as authors and actors. We cannot ignore the disenfranchisement of female actors on the London stage; however, we can take cues from critical approaches to conduct literature that situate the existence of a female subject position as a step toward creative recognition. In representing women, plays acknowledged women's experience and opened possibilities for their further contributions to the stage.

“If God had made me woman”²⁵: Imagining the Closet as a Feminine Interior

Conduct literature had a close relationship to women's closets. As masculine writers attempted to instruct and control female behaviors, they imagined the “secret” lives of women (and shared their imaginings with their audiences).²⁶ The fantasy of women's closets as private but voyeuristically accessible extended to women's interior lives as well. Indeed, in his physiological treatise *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1624), Thomas Wright imagines that men, as authority figures, “may learn to coniecture the affections of their subjects mindes, by a silent speech pronounced in their very countenance” (29). He considered women particularly transparent, and their “passions may be easily discovered; for as harlots by the light and wanton motions of their eyes and gesture may be quickly marked, so honest matrons, by their grave and chaste lookes, may be soon discerned [...] The Scriptures also teach vs, in the face of a harlot, to reade the impuritie of her heart” (29).²⁷ The conflation of closet and woman provided an illusion

²⁵ *Tamer Tamed* (1.1.21).

²⁶ For more, refer to the opening of Chapter 2.

²⁷ For more on this assumption, see Gail Kern Paster's “Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of Jacobean City Comedy” (1993).

of control to manual writers seeking to make both spaces visible, comprehensible, and controllable; yet it simultaneously engendered an anxiety that other influences²⁸ might penetrate feminine spaces, giving women access to public discourses. In addition, the relationship between conduct literature and closet drama (written, read, and performed by women) revealed that the closet was not hermetically sealed and was, in fact, a public space over which women could exert power. Contrary to Wright's fantasy of feminine transparency, women could act.

Fascinations with women's closets were not limited to conduct literature and closet drama, however; nor was the conflation of closet spaces with female interiority. Throughout the Stuart period, the closet appeared on the London stage as a vexed performative site that was problematically public.²⁹ Representing interior architectural spaces on stage before a large audience, after all, forced those spaces to be undeniably available to a large viewership.³⁰ The very nature of the early modern stage, then, promoted the idea of such "closets" having flexible boundaries that might allow for their transformation into more public spaces. In this sense, theatre audiences excessively

²⁸ Notably male-authored texts, although there also existed the fear that women might instruct or convert each other in private, as Edward Gosynhyll claims in "The Schole House of Women" (1541). See also Kathleen Kalpin, "As if the end they purpos'd was their own': Early Modern Representations of Speech Between Women" (2006); here, Kalpin discusses this anxiety in terms of feminine religious and political conversion.

²⁹ In Chapter 2, I discuss how closet reading, even at its most private, is in fact a public and political action because the reader comes in contact with the author (and with the concept of other readers who share the experience of the text). In this sense, my work coincides with that of Elizabeth Sauer and Andrew Kunin. This kind of exposure quarters, able to catch becomes excessive, however, when we consider the number of audience members present at any given moment when a play is performed on stage or read as a text. No moment, then, is wholly private. This is a point that Mark Hutchings also makes in his article "Middleton's *Women Beware Women*: Rape, Seduction—of Power, Simply?" (1998). For Hutchings, the audience's involvement in "private" stage moments is key in providing corroboration of rape claims.

³⁰ In a sense, representations of closets onstage are related to characters' conversational asides. In the latter, characters reveal "interior" processes and trouble the lines between subjects' abilities to maintain privacy. For the former, however, it is architectural space which is key. Closet representations destabilize the notion that brick-and-mortar divisions can guarantee safety or privacy. This is an issue which will receive further discussion as I turn to *Hamlet*.

embodied the external viewers whose judgment conduct manuals urged women to imagine. These onstage moments dramatize the anxieties and desires of conduct writers; they also suggest that such fears were more broadly culturally ingrained. If women were instructed within their closets to avoid doing privately “that we should be ashamed should it be brought before the face of men,” then staged closet moments made the imaginary “faces of men” material and plural (Horne H1). In the early modern theatre, these representations held an intimate relationship with viewers, who shared a small space and were able to intimately view and participate with actors and each other.³¹ Therefore, audiences were not merely voyeurs peeking in, but could affect and be affected by such scenes. Onstage representations of the closet uncovered that women were influenced by outside sources within their closets and, therefore, that external shows were always suspect; one should not assume their sincerity. Further, such moments revealed that women’s private decisions could have powerful and violent political effects; women’s influence could reach beyond the closet.

Appearing early within the period, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c.1601) ushered in anxieties about women’s permeable closets and the didactic potential of those spaces. Act 3 specifically juxtaposes two scenes of privacy that together highlight the public, performative nature of the closet. In sharing common character entrances and exits, Claudius’s confession scene and Gertrude’s closet scene destabilize notions of privacy by emphasizing the resemblance between intrusions occurring in non-enclosed spaces and in closets. Paired together, the scenes suggest that while women’s closets were more clearly treated as sites of instruction, their “privacy” was sheer illusion. What’s more, the

³¹ See Leggatt (12).

audience's very presence (in the theatre and in print) makes the closet excessively open to view. What does not become accessible in the process, however, is the internal state of the primary closet inhabitant. Thus, in the closet or exposed, women had the ability to perform just as men did; and the successive scenes reveal a disjunction between subject and closet interiors.

Notably, no stage directions or embedded cues tell the reader where Claudius's confession takes place; the term "closet" only appears with specific reference to Gertrude's space. However, the action that occurs is presented as ostensibly "private" although it may occur in a less enclosed space; thus, the moment shares in the anxieties associated with closets. However, it is important that this moment is not in an identifiable closet; Claudius has an expectation of privacy, but this expectation is not rigid and, therefore, Polonius, Hamlet, and the audience's presences are not complete aberrations. At the start of Claudius's "private" retreat, Polonius enters to inform him of Hamlet's whereabouts: "My Lord, he's going to his mother's **closet**./ Behind the arras I'll convey myself/ To hear the process" (3.3.27-29, emphasis mine). Polonius's presence does more than convey plot information to Claudius and the audience; more importantly, he links the current scene with the one that follows by inviting audience comparisons. He can access both spaces, and so the closet may be no more private than Claudius's current location.

After Polonius's exit, Claudius seems to assume a measure of isolation, however; ostensibly alone, he appears to bear forth his most secret thoughts in accordance with conduct prescriptions:

Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when
thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret;

and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
(Matthew 6:6)

I noted in Chapter 2 that though the exhortation implies privacy (“in secret”), it simultaneously constructs that privacy as superficial; the performer of prayer always performs before God. Unlike in the prescriptions, however, Claudius’s scene does not take place behind closed doors, reserving whispers for a deity. Rather, it takes place before judges both material and plural: Hamlet and the audience. While the audience witnesses Hamlet playing both voyeur and judge, scanning his uncle’s confession for sincerity,³² the audience itself (in witnessing Claudius and Hamlet) also participates and judges. For this reason, even after Hamlet exits, Claudius is never truly “alone.” And the audience, in hearing Claudius’s final words—“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below/ Words without thoughts never to heaven go” (3.3.96-97)—realizes what Hamlet does not: that external shows are, at best, ambivalent markers of interior states.³³ For Hamlet, it is as if “private” designates a space of sincerity and non-performativity. Hamlet, then, participates in the same fantasy that Wright expresses in his *Passions*. Yet his very presence undermines the state of that privacy.

³² Hamlet’s role as judge also, in some sense, allows him to play god; he not only tries to probe Claudius for signs of sincerity, but he also uses that reading to decide 1) whether Claudius will die right now and 2) whether Claudius should spend eternity in heaven or hell. Debates with Michael Neill have revealed ambiguity about whether Hamlet actually **hears** his uncle’s confession; even if he does not, however, the earlier work of my project establishes that Claudius’s visual performance is a kind of text that Hamlet may read and judge. Indeed, not only can Claudius’s physical performance say something, but its visual nature operates in accordance with the rubric for judgment that Hamlet will set forth for Gertrude.

³³ Making the internal comprehensible via external behaviors was not only a concern involving women during the period. Indeed, as Eglisam’s *Forerunner of Revenge* (1626) later articulates, murder reveals men’s dangerous tendencies for hiding their murderous intentions. Thus, for Eglisam, the covert and cold-blooded killer or revenger is morally and socially worse than the outwardly violent man precisely because others do not and cannot know how to act in relation to him.

The audience's next encounter is with Gertrude's closet, in a scene that reinforces the site's openness.³⁴ Though in an identifiable closet "enclosure," Gertrude is not alone. Indeed, the same visitors who intrude on Claudius's privacy penetrate Gertrude's space—and they attempt to use her closet as a means for accessing her interior thoughts. In this sense, the closet is different from sites like Claudius's aside; intruders into this space do not simply pass through or listen, but they try to instruct as well. Though viewers enter the scene in the middle of a conversation, they clearly hear Polonius establish Gertrude's closet—a woman's closet—as a space for didacticism. As he did with Ophelia, Polonius employs commands, intending to direct the queen's external behaviors toward Hamlet³⁵:

‘A will come straight. **Look** you lay home to him.
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your Grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll silence me even here;
Pray you **be round** with him. (3.4.1-5, emphases mine)

With the exception of the last line, the instructions are commands rather than requests; much like conduct writers, Polonius attempts to exert control over Gertrude's "being" by narrating her (alleged) internal experience and instructing her on "seeming." However, he emphasizes the **words** she must use—there is less concern about her physical actions. Here, silence is potentially more dangerous because of its ambiguity; Hamlet may read a silent Gertrude howsoever he likes. Though it is unclear whether Polonius coincides with

³⁴ For other approaches to and discussions of Gertrude's closet scene, refer to Dale Churchward's "Hamlet's Editors and Gertrude's Closet: Putting Polonius in his Place" (1997), Lena Cowen Orlin's "Gertrude's Closet" (1998), and Maurice Charney's "The Closet-Scene Access" (2001).

³⁵ Whereas Polonius focuses Gertrude's instruction on her external behaviors, he attempts to control both Ophelia's internal comprehension and external behavior. Indeed, he can access them more easily than she can, he claims: "Marry, I will teach you. Think yourself a baby [...] Do not believe his vows [...] I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth/ Have you [...] talk with the Lord Hamlet" (1.4.105, 127, 132-34).

manual writers like Barnabe Riche or like William Whately,³⁶ he asserts the primacy of the voice in providing outside readers with information on internal thoughts and feelings; thus, acting on Claudius's behalf, Polonius performs the role that Richard Brathwait sets out for a good husband. He releases a wife from silence only by "suppli[ing] her with words" (*Wife* C3r). In this way, Polonius's instruction suggests that words are the most powerful expression of the internal—and that Gertrude cannot be trusted to wield that power without masculine assistance.³⁷ By narrating Gertrude's alleged inner life and instructing her on how to reveal it, Polonius functions much like a conduct author or a playwright describing women's closets; he uses his own narration to attempt to access the feminine internal and, in doing so, reveals that his narration is conjecture. Gertrude may be sincere or she may perform; he may direct, or she may act as though directed. As Claudius's prior scene revealed, words are performative and therefore unreliable markers; and while Gertrude may follow instructions, this does not equal approval of or submission to Polonius's narration.

Whereas Polonius privileges speech and hearing in his closet instruction, Hamlet, Gertrude's next teacher, favors visible behavior and sight.³⁸ Not only does he use the combination to judge Gertrude—and to attempt to sway his mother's self judgment—but

³⁶ Riche, for example, asserted that women must be externally directed by men to *reveal* their internal states. Further, such a position assumes that external performances of "seeming" can strengthen internal states of "being."

On the other hand, Whately asserted women's internal emptiness, arguing women's need for male direction in order to properly create inner life.

³⁷ Ironically, Polonius narrates and tries to direct Gertrude's behaviors so that he and Claudius might, through her actions, gain access to Hamlet's interior. Thus a crack appears in Polonius's instructional practice; he must rely on feminine performance to uncover something about masculine interiority. He and Claudius need Gertrude. Such a moment, then, connects to the closet scene in Middleton's *The Changeling*; both texts create reversals in which women enter (or are expected to enter) masculine interior spaces (both architectural and subjective).

³⁸ In this sense, the scene of Gertrude's instruction mirrors Ophelia's. Not only do both receive direction from the bumbling paternal figure Polonius, but they also receive instruction from the younger, secondary masculine figures of Hamlet and Laertes.

it emerges as his rubric for judging all things. Hamlet's brief lesson to Gertrude insistently references sight and vision. Indeed, her response, like that of a dutiful student, borrows mimetically from his vocabulary: "Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul,/ And there I see such black and grained spots/ As will not leave their tinct" (3.4.89-91). All in all, the selection utilizes the word "look" twice, variants of "see" three times, and the word "eyes" a repetitive five times. However, just as the audience learns from Claudius that words and other shows may not reveal truth, it also cannot assume that Gertrude's apologetic response is genuine. Just as theatrical debates revealed, mimesis is anything but straightforwardly sincere. Hamlet intends to hold up a mirror to Gertrude so that she might see the reflection of her sins; but what he fails to comprehend is that the reflection is not the thing itself. Rather, it is an external show, something separate from what it allegedly represents.³⁹ What's more, as in the scene with Claudius, Hamlet assumes something sacrosanct about private spaces—and, here, about the closet in particular. Yet, as with the prior scene, his very presence destabilizes the "privacy" of the site; he is not only Gertrude's potential instructor, but is also a potential audience for her performance.⁴⁰ In the end, Gertrude remains with Claudius and at court—present for the deaths of all the Denmark royals and cast as the origin of sexual sin and political instability that causes the end. Thus the question lingers as to how effective masculine

³⁹ Certainly this idea is reinforced in Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* (1622), which represents closet permeability through a gender reversal. Indeed, in 4.1, Beatrice-Joanna breaches her Alsemero's closet and discovers *The Book of Experiment Called the Secrets of Nature*—a text which Alsemero intends to use to prove her virginity. Penetrating her husband's closet allows Beatrice-Joanna to discover and prevent his attempt to penetrate her interiority. Thus the closet functions as a space of learning—specifically, Beatrice-Joanna learns to mimic those signs that "prove" her (non-existent) virginity.

⁴⁰ During Hamlet's intrusion, the Ghost also becomes a presence in Gertrude's closet. In addition, Polonius remains behind the arras during the conversation.

training is within women's closets, whether education can control women, and whether men's involvement in women's closets causes further damage.⁴¹

While *Hamlet's* concern with interiority brings viewers into limited contact with closets, John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed* intensifies this interest by increasing the amount of time that characters and viewers spend in them or meditating upon them. In fact *Tamer*, Fletcher's sequel to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*,⁴² opens with a group of male characters not only discussing women's interiors, but attempting through thought experiments to gain knowledge of women's private thoughts and behaviors. As the men discuss Maria's unfortunate marriage to Petruchio, Sophocles quickly shifts focus to what Maria must feel during the impending years: "Alas poor wench,/Through what mine of patience must thou worke,/Ere thou know'st good houre more?" (1.1.4-6). While this moment examines women's internal battles, its third-person perspective dissatisfies Tranio. Instead, he inserts himself directly into Maria's interiority, claiming,

If God had made me woman,
And his wife that must be [...]
I would learn to eate Coales with an angry Cat
And spit fire at him. (1.1.21-26)

Moments like this reveal that, rather than exploring "life from a woman's perspective" as some critics claim (Bergeron 146), *Tamer* represents men's **attempts** to access women's perspectives. The comedy dramatizes men's efforts to fill gaps in their knowledge about women's private, subjective, and closet experiences. In this sense, *Tamer* creates a

⁴¹ One could argue, as Karen Britland does of *Sophonisba* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, that the play's end is an attempt to construct the illusion that the dead woman's body "serves as a place upon which the social order can be reestablished, restoring the purity of male-male relations by the effective banishment of sensual excess" ("Circe" 125). However, to do so would deny the disorder that follows Gertrude's death. Her death does not rid of excess but heralds it; in what follows, all the leading men of Denmark die violently and performatively before their court and theatre audiences, respectively. Thus Gertrude's body becomes an instructive public text, shaping the men and their deaths.

⁴² In Fletcher's continued imagining, Kate dies in her marriage to Petruchio. His second wife, Maria, sets out to punish Petruchio for his evil toward women by turning the tables and taming him.

reversal of the closet preoccupations in *Hamlet*; whereas Polonius and Hamlet enter Gertrude's closet in order to access her mind,⁴³ the men of *Tamer* imagine women's minds in order to envision what women do behind closed doors. Within Fletcher's play, after all, Tranio most closely hits the mark in describing Maria's inner life. Sophocles assumes from her prior performances of silence and modesty that she is meek and will require patience to survive her marriage; Tranio, meanwhile, imagines a "masculine" reaction to the situation. In doing this, he channels the words that Maria later uses to describe the rebellious nature that she "never shew'd" but which allows her transformation (1.2.64):

I am no more the gentle tame Maria; mistake me
not; I have a new soule in me
Made of a North-wind, nothing but tempest;
And like a tempest shall it make all ruins
Till I have run my will out. (1.2.71-75)

Maria's revelation suggests that it is a mistake to assume that a woman's silence is an absolute signification of submission and obedience.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Tranio's related thought experiment suggests that women's private thoughts **are** accessible—and that, perhaps, they are not so different from men's.⁴⁵

For Fletcher, what separates men from women is a physical enclosure—the tower or closet space in which Byancha, Maria, and, eventually, Livia sequester themselves. Ironically, Maria's verbal exposure of her interior leads to her self-willed physical enclosure; this suggests that even if women's interior thoughts resemble men's, men still

⁴³ Similarly, in *The Changeling*, Beatrice-Joanna accesses Alsemero's closet to understand his private intentions (and his expectations about hers).

⁴⁴ For more on this equation, see Clark (27).

⁴⁵ This suggestion has a different kind of force when we examine it within the context of early modern performance practice, according to which Maria would actually **be** a man—embodied by a male actor.

fear that women's conversations in private spaces remain secretive and inaccessible.⁴⁶ Thus information about these spaces can only emerge from women's own accounts of them.

Yet the play suggests early on that women's words are untrustworthy. The opening lines of 1.2 establish this before Maria's entrance. As Livia uses her voice to poetically narrate (and thus externalize) her feelings for Rowland, her lover evinces constant doubt:

Rowland: If you'l goe away to night,
If your affections be not made of words—
Livia: I love you, and you know how dearly Rowland,
Is there none neere us? My affections ever
Have been your servants; with what superstition
I have ever Sainted you—
Rowland: Why then take this way.
Livia: Twill be childish and a lesse prosperous course [...]
Rowland: Then you flatter. (1.2.1-10)

Words are ephemeral; as aural significations they remain invisible, intangible, lacking material corroboration. Livia's vowing love and obedience does not *equal* love and obedience; dissatisfied, Rowland demands action as definitive external proof of internal feelings. Specifically, he tells Livia to "take [t]his way" (emphasis mine)—the path **he** sets forth. Like a conduct writer, he tries to direct her. Livia's obedience could, Rowland suggests, make them one—two bodies governed by his mind.⁴⁷ Rowland cannot see into the feminine internal; but by laying claim to it and making Livia his own, he suggests they could share an internal space through which he could verify her positions. He could

⁴⁶ Fletcher reveals the intensity of this anxiety not only by having the women enclose themselves in a closet-like space, but also by representing this space as a tower. Thus the women's "closet" is also a highly defended, strategically closed-off stronghold.

⁴⁷ Edmund Tilney suggests in *The Flower of Friendship* (1568) that this is the state of ideal marriage. According to Tilney, in marriage a man takes claim over his wife's virginity and her will so they become one. A wife becomes subsumed in her husband while a husband's will remains intact (442).

“feel” rather than “heare” her thoughts if they were to become his own (1.2.52-53).

However, Livia not only refuses to perform according to Rowland’s wishes; she further instructs him on the wisdom of **her** choice. Hers is the more prudent and prosperous course. Her verbal assertions reveal that Rowland cannot achieve the success he desires. Fletcher adds to this denial by showing that no men—in the play or in the audience—will get such assured access to feminine interiors. After all, the women sharing their thoughts on stage are, in fact, male actors; what’s more, the “private” closet spaces that Fletcher allows viewers to glimpse are actually publicly exposed stages. Nothing is what it seems, and men have only (indirect) female accounts upon which to rely for information.

Maria’s appearance in the same scene further complicates the issue of words and actions. Her silences prior to the play’s opening masked the potential for rebellion, and this suggests that her vocal rebellion might cover something even more threatening.⁴⁸ Certainly Maria and Byancha highlight the relativity of written and spoken words; while Livia fears that the other women’s outspokenness, their disjunctive performance of “be and seem,” will lead to “a heavy imputation” (1.2.130) by their male readers, Byancha sees other possibilities. She envisions a female audience that will “chronicle” Maria’s daring—a possibility that Maria recognizes and “aime[s] at” (1.2.176-77).⁴⁹ A

⁴⁸ This anxiety links my argument to an external critical debate on the connections between Shakespeare’s Bianca and Fletcher’s Byancha. Molly Easo Smith argues, for example, that Byancha is a reimagining of Shakespeare’s meek Bianca—she provides a proto-feminist perspective. Margaret Maurer argues to the contrary that Bianca is not meek and must be read carefully for nuances that suggest her potential for rebellion; accordingly, Byancha is a direct product of Bianca. Both women are linked through epic allusions to crafty women like Penelope, and both “manage” their men. At the heart of this conversation is a conduct literature-related concern about whether women like Bianca can be educated into Byanchas, or whether seemingly mild women like Bianca performatively cover their rebellious potential.

⁴⁹ In this sense, Maria and Byancha participate in a discourse resembling that of Milton’s Dalila. Whereas Dalila imagined relativity based in culture—the Philistines would laud her—Maria and Byancha assume *women’s* authority to read, rewrite, and counteract masculine narratives. Thus they cast women as a cultural group of its own. Fletcher’s prologue and epilogue poems address and acknowledge this same audience.

chronicling female audience is represented as having a far-reaching voice with considerable instructive power. As Maria, Byancha, and Livia consider potential narratives about their taming of Petruchio, Livia warns, “if ye worke upon him,/ As you have promised, ye may give example,/ Which no doubt will be followed” (1.2.185-87).⁵⁰ Maria’s internal states and the performances that express them, then, have an influence over other women. Fletcher reveals that this is the case not only for the women in closet contact with Maria—specifically Byancha and Livia, who cloister themselves with her—but for women in the audience as well.

As mentioned earlier, Maria and her coterie enter an enclosed space upon publicly revealing their prior performances (that they played meek daughters) and their current intentions (to perform as rebellious wives who tutor their husbands). Thus, while Fletcher represents the play’s men as capable of accessing the processes of women’s minds as Tranio does in Act 1, he represents women’s closet activities as harder to observe. Between 1.1 and 1.2, the audience witnesses Sophocles, Tranio, and the other men imagine feminine interiors, then it eavesdrops on a feminine conversation that corroborates masculine assumptions. Maria will, in fact, learn to spit hot coals at her husband. However, by 1.3, access to the women becomes limited for both the male characters and the audience; Jaques reports that Maria’s door is “barracadoed [...and] she’s victual’d for this moneth” (1.3.46-48).⁵¹ Locked in but prepared, the women are a

⁵⁰ Here, Fletcher’s women directly access the concerns Edward Gosynhyll articulates in “The Scholle House of Women” (1541). Gosynhyll specifically claims that women are “fayre without and foule within” (B3v), and the external fairness emerges as older women instruct younger women on how to take control of men during courtship and marriage (B1v-B2r). Meekness almost certainly covers over a large tongue and loud voice (A3r-v).

⁵¹ The sexual innuendo “barracadoed” makes it clear that Maria’s body, like her room, is closed off to the men. So, too, is her interiority.

transgressive, self-sustaining community independent of men.⁵² The women are inaccessible, “lock’d and guarded too [with] two as desperate tongues planted behind [the door]/ As ere yet batterd” (1.3.53-55). This is symbolic of women’s enclosure. For the men, the women become disembodied voices—they speak but possess no physical presences; thus Fletcher metatheatrically replicates the experience of early modern audiences. Women’s voices receive attention; male actors represent them, and male playwrights borrow from and refer to feminine texts. Yet female bodies are notably and undeniably absent on the stage. In the scenes that follow, the audience is forced to alternately view the women from outside the closet and within the closet. While this division does not separate Maria, Byancha, and Livia wholly from the world of the men, it leads Petruccio and his counterparts to view women’s activities as secret and potentially menacing. From the men’s perspective, then, the women’s seclusion, though it fits within conduct manual expectations that women seldom leave their homes or speak,⁵³ is transgressive. Indeed, at one point the women even maintain silence behind their locked doors, and Sophocles reports to his cohort,

Be beaten off with shame, as I was:
I went up, came to th’ doore, knockd, no body answered;
Knock’d lowder, yet heard nothing. (1.3.82-85)

“No body” and no accompanying voice greets Sophocles. In effect, Maria and her women make themselves absent from the stage and the community; rather than being read as an act of submission, however, this decision is a forceful denial of male authority

⁵² This representation has implications for women’s sexuality as well, implying that a community of women can be sexually self-sustaining in the absence of men as well. For more on the lesbian possibilities of this scene and scenes like it, refer to Fiona McNeill’s “Gynocentric London Spaces: (Re)Locating Masterless Women in Early Stuart Drama” (1997); see also Valerie Traub’s “The (in)Significance of ‘Lesbian’ Desire in Early Modern England” (1994) and *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (2004). For more discussion of such communities in this project, refer to Chapter 5’s treatment of *The Bird in a Cage*.

⁵³ See Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (71).

and militarism.⁵⁴ Sophocles, for all his banging and shouting, cannot force the women to speak; in this way, silent “passivity” becomes an active strategy. The women’s silence gives him nothing concrete to combat. Thus the women take control, turning conduct expectations against the very hegemonic group that wrote them, and making absence, invisibility, and silence signs of rebellion that can beat Sophocles “off with shame.” Secreted away beyond men’s reach, the women reveal that just as visibility does not equal power,⁵⁵ neither does invisibility constitute disempowerment. This exchange reveals that what men don’t know about the closet is worrisome; more problematic, however, is that the women’s confined activities have public repercussions despite being allegedly private and didactic. Unable to access closet activities, the men cannot predict or prevent closet activities’ effects on women’s behaviors.

Indeed, Fletcher represents women as a community with bonds that reach through closet walls to exceed rank and location.⁵⁶ What’s more, women’s use of closet didacticism is more powerful than men’s. While Petruchio and the others command the county’s women to avoid the “domestic” conflict between Petruchio and Maria, their order goes unheeded—in fact, it gets contradicted. By 2.4, the domestic conflict has fully entered the political arena, as “all the women in the kingdom [...] swarm like wasps, and nothing can destroy/ ’Em but stopping of their hive and smothering of ‘em” (2.4.33-36). Courtiers and tanners’ wives alike converge on the tower, using their domestic tools as

⁵⁴ The women’s bodily and vocal absence from the stage metatheatrically recreates the conditions of early modern playing. While women’s “exclusion from the stage was oppressive,” as Callaghan asserts (15), *Tamer* plays with the concepts of exclusion and absence, asking whether physical absence constitutes entire absence, or whether there might be opportunities for women’s advancement despite the restrictions placed upon them socially and dramatically. For more on my argument regarding silence and the refusal to perform subordination, see my discussions of *Mariam* in Chapter 2 and of *Tethys’ Festival* in Chapter 3.

⁵⁵ See Callaghan 4.

⁵⁶ In this sense, the group’s activities replicate the exposure early modern women could gain through closet drama and masque authorship and publication. They could quietly gain access to other women’s closets and households, encourage performances, and alter women’s daily behaviors in public.

weapons and using their skills in cookery to further victual the rebels. Maria and her women may have maintained silence with the men, leaving them to conjecture about the women's nighttime revels and merriment—but this silence has not been entire. News of their actions has traveled and affected other women. Not only have the words of taming and instruction seeped out and led to a kingdom-wide rebellion, but Maria's actions affect the audience as well. Thus her speeches and silences become connected to general fears about feminine vocality, which Kathleen Kalpin says “are represented as posing an immediate threat that is not limited to the speaker and her immediate audience” (758). Byancha, Maria, and Livia have access to women outside the closet even when they are silently enclosed and rely on men's threats to spread the word; what's more, these feminine messages can invite other women in and teach them to participate in rebellion. Meanwhile, the men are closed out, collectively left to wonder what the women do inside their secret space. Specifically, the men wonder whether the women “daunce with their coats tuckt up to their bare breeches” (2.6.34-40).⁵⁷ Do the women plan to take over male roles—political or sexual?

For *Tamer*, as for *Hamlet*, the closet is a vexed space. Like conduct literature, it is allegedly an enclosure that controls women's external and internal motions. Yet the closet is not a site for men's control and women's submissive silence and learning; instead, closets on stage can represent the weakness of men's didacticism and the methods through which women more successfully appropriate and adapt them. Closet events have far-reaching effects, and the closet itself becomes a political and publicly entangled space. Its operation is beyond men's control because the closet offers women

⁵⁷ Such an action would not only masculinize the women, it would replicate some of the costuming from Anna's early masques—notably the *Masque of Queenes*. For more, see Chapter 3.

not only a space of performance but also of authorship. As Petruchio rails against Maria's commission of "knavery" (2.1.30), he constructs her as an author; from within this closeted space, she has rewritten a narrative about gender hierarchy and has affected a large audience. What's more, women from the city to the country come to "bury [their] bones, fames, tongues, [their] triumphs" in Maria's chronicle, asserting her heroism (2.6.88).

"Entertain me With Mine Own Device"⁵⁸: Inset Masques and Appropriation

As London plays represented closets as spaces of didacticism that women might wrest control over and appropriate for their own ends, they also utilized inset masques to heighten the gendered power struggles surrounding the early modern stage. Here, too, a form once dominated by masculinity⁵⁹ began to register as a sight for women's public expression and performance—and as a space for political action and retribution. Insets like those in *Timon* and *'Tis Pity* represent women as speaking subjects whose presence supplements, improves upon, or even detracts from male performances. As women emerged in (inset) masques, they dominated and manipulated stage- and theatre-audiences' attention. As a result, the male characters (who make up the women's onstage audience) desperately attempt to foreclose women's communication and reconstruct a masculine masque space.

Recent work on inset masques has argued for a popular familiarity with the form. This accessibility emerged from household and Inns of Court masque performances as

⁵⁸ *Timon* (1.2.152).

⁵⁹ In his biography of Queen Anna, Leeds Barroll notes that Tudor masks were dominated by male performers and courtiers (*Anna* 76). This is a point upon which Dillon agrees in her work on Tudor masks and their influence on Stuart masques and theatre.

well as from masque publication.⁶⁰ Additionally, national histories and political texts like Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1586⁶¹) and *The Mirror for Magistrates* (c. 1555) provided past accounts of the form's predecessor (the mask) and were sources for Stuart inset masques. For example, Inga-stina Ewbank asserts the wide-ranging popularity of the story in which the deposed Richard II's supporters plotted to assassinate Henry IV during a mask⁶²; and Sarah Sutherland notes the popularity of such masculine assassination and revenge plots in Elizabethan tragedies. Playwrights' use of such sources led to masque's insistent presence on the London stage. Not only were there more than one hundred inset masques during the period (Sutherland 1), but playwrights were comfortable using masque shorthands that assumed viewers' familiarity with the form.⁶³ Masque and theatre frequently worked in conjunction with each other, and inset masques were, as Sutherland puts it, "symbiotically connected to the central dramatic actions of the[ir] surrounding play[s]" (xii). The forms' conjunction resulted in a shared effect: just as theatre could institutionalize daily "city behaviors" such as dressing outside gender or rank expectations,⁶⁴ so too could inset masque on stage institutionalize women's "court behaviors" of acting.

While masque's history positioned it as a largely masculine form, its emerging position in the Jacobean court was redefining it as feminocentric. Queen Anna's

⁶⁰ See, for example, my discussion of printed masques at the end of Chapter 3.

⁶¹ This is the date of Holinshed's posthumously released second edition, which was the major edition used by early modern English playwrights. The original edition was released in 1577.

⁶² The account appears in both Holinshed's *Chronicle* (II., 515) and in *Mirror* (117); for more, see page 438 in Ewbank. The significance of mask/masque's representation as ritualized, masculinized violence on stage will receive discussion later in this chapter, as I turn to the work of Ford, and in Chapter 5 as I discuss Middleton.

⁶³ Consult Sutherland (9), Levin (6, 112), and Ewbank (408).

⁶⁴ On this point, refer to Jean Howard's "Renaissance Antitheatricality and the Politics of Gender and Rank in *Much Ado About Nothing*" (1987).

sponsored masques, which received extensive treatment in Chapter 3, gained attention for their lavish costumes and sets, and their publication allowed a wide readership to gain familiarity with them. Through performance and publication, the queen's masques revealed that women played important roles as court performers and authors, and that silence could assist these endeavors. As the central performers onstage, the female masquers could take control over the masque texts; even when silent, they used their bodies to enliven a literary text and turn it into something overtly active. Indeed, their bodies were important modes of expression that emphasized the contingency of performance—and the performer's control over any text's unfolding. In this sense, Anna and her ladies were both a key part of the masque text as well as important authors of it. The popularity of such masques in publication allowed London theatre audiences and non-courtly readers familiarity with this emerging sense of masque as well.

Timon of Athens picks up on Jacobean concerns about women's roles as actors and authors in masque and theatre.⁶⁵ Indeed, from its opening it allegorizes contemporary debates about where masques' values lay: in performance or in print. The Poet and Painter stand out among the other merchants, and they establish the instructive possibilities (and rivalry) of their arts: "A thousand moral paintings I can show/ That shall demonstrate these quick blows of Fortune's/ More pregnantly than words," the Painter asserts, placing his art above the Poet's (1.1.90-93). I've argued throughout this and other chapters that instructive conduct discourses inevitably engage debates about

⁶⁵ There has been much debate about whether *Timon* was, in fact, performed during the period. Sandra Billington's recent work suggests that the play may have been performed earlier than scholars have assumed—and she draws on references from a popular Marston play performed before 1604. If Billington's argument is correct, then *Timon* may have had several theatrical runs while James sat on the throne. However, whether the play appeared on stage is not the only factor in spreading or institutionalizing women's roles and their effects. *Timon*'s position as a printed text also allows for this proliferation, just as printed closet dramas and masques spread women's written words and represent their performances. For more on *Timon*'s dates, see page 352 of Billington's article.

women and open the door to female literary/dramatic involvements. This moment is no different. The argument between the Painter and the Poet—and the Painter’s assertion regarding visual primacy—links to the masque form. Specifically, it accesses the visual forms of speech that Anna created in her masquing, which allowed women’s authorship via the performance of sign systems that were heavily visual.⁶⁶ Even while women maintained aural “silence” onstage, they used their bodies to control masque texts and employed costumes to convey messages to viewers. By privileging visuality, *Timon* suggests that the **performance** of the masque (and not simply the masque text) has greater possibilities for instructing audiences. Women’s bodies⁶⁷ constitute the visible, performative text of masque; thus *Timon*’s emphasis further suggests that women, whose bodies most closely link to masque’s visual enactment, hold a primary position in such instruction. They partake in masque’s authorship.

Numerous critics have remarked on the dearth of women in *Timon of Athens*. Women’s near absence, however, does not decrease their importance within the play. Rather, as Jean Howard argues about active silences, such absence draws attention to the significance of women when they **are** present. Significantly, the first women to appear in the play are masquers. This suggests that while Timon’s court is a masculine space, masque is a feminine realm beyond men’s jurisdiction; the masquing ladies can enter Timon’s court and leave it at will. Notably, the women masquers are immediately linked to sight. The play establishes that their ability to provide a visual feast supplements

⁶⁶ John Jowett figures this exchange as a dialogue between sight and sound (86). Notably, it also functions as an allegorical commentary on the emerging rivalry between Inigo Jones (and masque performers) and Ben Jonson.

⁶⁷ In the context of London theatre, of course, these were representations of women’s bodies. The female masquers were male actors, and thus Shakespeare again plays with women’s presence and absence as authors and actors.

Timon's banquet in an important way: "Th' ear/ Taste, touch, all, pleased from thy table rise;/ They only now come but to feast thine eyes" (1.2.127-29). Without the women, Timon cannot provide complete decadence for his guests, and he acknowledges that the masquers

Have done our pleasures much grace [...]
Set a fair fashion on our entertainment,
Which was not half so beautiful and kind.
[They] have added worth unto't and luster. (1.2.148-51)

Timon is generous, but he cannot provide all things. Therefore, while David Bevington and David L. Smith are right to assert that Timon's masque is a visual sign of bounty (72), that bounty emerges from the fertile feminine bodies that materialize the performance.⁶⁸ The female masquers and the masque itself, in this scene, are inextricably linked. The masque would not exist without the presence of their bodies and the assertion of their wills, which led them to "be desirous of admittance" (1.2.117). Within a play that denies women's access,⁶⁹ the lady masquers use the masque to create space for themselves. Thus, Shakespeare represents masque as a form that constitutes and is constituted by women.⁷⁰

Women's involvement in masque causes a complex interplay of gender here—particularly because *Timon's* masquers are Amazons. After all, Amazons were always already gender-transgressive figures in the period; and Kathryn Schwarz points out that

⁶⁸ Especially this early in the Jacobean period, the queen's masques represented feminine bodies as fertile because Queen Anna performed while pregnant with England's heir. For more on this and its relationship to feminine literary/dramatic fertility, see my discussion of *The Masque of Blackness* in Chapter 3.

⁶⁹ This denial occurs both in text (Timon's court denies female presence) and in practice (the London stage denies female access as well).

⁷⁰ Shakespeare does this in *The Tempest* as well. Not only does Prospero create a masque to honor Miranda's engagement, but that masque features female goddesses. While those goddesses were embodied by male actors on the London stage, they would have been enacted by female masquers in a court or household performance.

they constituted a visible “synthesis of violence and desire, titillation and horror show” that threatened to operate “only and explicitly at the expense of men” (*Tough* 121, 123). The lady masquers’ appearances, then, reveal that masque allows a powerful interplay among genders. On the surface, the Amazons suggest that the form retains a residue of its former masculinity; this is not only because Anna and her ladies had only just begun to claim the form as their own in 1604, but also because *Timon*’s masque is inset into an all-male play. Beneath their costumes, the female masquers are men.⁷¹ Yet contextualizing this choice with Queen Anna’s masques allows for more nuance when we consider *Timon*’s performance. The masquers’ Amazon⁷² costuming suggests a latent masculinity to its audience (both on stage and off); it hints that women performers can access an unsettling masculine power by virtue of controlling the masque text and commanding audience attention. This was an emerging practice Anna and her women deployed in costuming early masques like *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses* and *The Masque of Queenes*; such masques suggested that, even silent, women constructed not only masques but also the social spaces in which those entertainments occurred. Thus they had the power to maintain or destroy masculine identities and systems.

Despite the masquers’ Amazon presence, Andreas Hoefele posits that the masquers are emblematic of the play’s denial of women’s agency: “When [women] do

⁷¹ Peter Stallybrass, among others, has discussed early modern audiences’ experiences of cross-dressed male performers: were they understood as women, or did the audience constantly remember their masculinity? For my purposes, this approach is less helpful than Dymphna Callaghan’s, which asserts that “it is not the perfect similitude of woman that was the goal of early modern dramatic representations of femininity, but the production of an aesthetic of representation that depicts sexual difference defined as the presence or lack of male genitalia” (51). If this is the case, then there always exists a residue of maleness because all genders are understood in relation to maleness. While Callaghan asserts that this results in women’s bodies being unnecessary on stage, I think that, rather than allaying concerns about gender and dominance, this approach constructs women’s bodies, because of their ties to masculinity, as threatening and always present in maleness.

⁷² For further discussion of Anna’s deployment of Amazons in her masques, refer to Chapter 3.

appear, it is in groups—generically rather than individually, as part of a service industry catering to men, thereby enhancing rather than diminishing the play’s homosocial all-male setting” (228). For Hoefele, the masquers are no different from the only other women to appear in *Timon*: prostitutes. According to him, both groups limit femininity within an oppressive erotic function. While I agree that the masquers are importantly emblematic, I think Hoefele’s conclusion oversimplifies the concept of “whore.” There is, after all, a marked distinction between those named “whore” for engaging in literal erotic exchange (like the prostitutes) and those so named for engaging in artistic production and political expression.⁷³ Outspoken women **called** whores receive the name because their speech destabilizes, as Kim Walker puts it, “an economy which aligns man with mind and logic—with the *Logos*” (399). Thus their threat is not only sexual but, more importantly, gendered; both writing and acting highlight their ability to destabilize hierarchies. After all, even “silent” performances speak as women textualize their bodies and operate within verbal sign-systems; masque is the central space where such performativity takes place. This is the case for the masquers, and the reason why Timon himself seeks to devalue them and link them to economic exchange. Whereas, after a court masque, masquers and viewers alike joined in a grand feast, these masquers are treated like professional actors—as servants who must be compensated but cannot share a table with those who rank above them. Thus Timon sends them elsewhere to “an idle banquet” (1.2.156) rather than allowing their presence at his table. In this sense, Hoefele is

⁷³ It is important to note that conduct literature discursively links outspoken women with prostitutes because vocal expression was understood to be a sign of sexual openness. Writers like Barnabe Riche assert that “woman to be most honest is least knowne” and “least spoken of” (C2r). The idea here is that a man may “know” a woman sexually both through her words or through her body; the words bring her insides out. Yet while this tradition discursively links these categories of femininity, we must keep in mind that being named something and being something are two separate things. An outspoken woman’s being called a whore does not make her one.

right that the masque smacks of service-industry; yet this is something Timon, and not the masque itself, causes. The women are threatening, and not only because Apemantus makes them representatives of the two-faced courtiers in the audience who may someday “stamp upon” him and Timon (1.2.145-46). They are threatening because they operate within a doubled female masculinity. Within the play they are Amazons, on the stage they are cross-dressed men; they enter the all-male court and use a once-masculinized dramatic form; and, as a result, they undermine the very maleness through which Timon’s court has defined itself. The masquers—part feminine, part masculine, all militant Amazon—arrive of their own wills to present a masque that not only supplements the court (and thus points out its lack) but that also “signif[ies] **their** pleasures” (1.2.121, emphasis mine).

Masque has overt links to bodily expression and to the power that emerges from authorship; this leads to a struggle over which gender may rightfully claim it. This subtle conflict manifests itself in Timon and the male courtiers’ reactions to the Amazon masquers. Immediately after Apemantus asserts that he “fear[s] those that dance before [him] now” (1.2.145), stage directions announce that

The Lords rise from the table, with much adoring of Timon, and to show their loves, each single out an Amazon, and all dance, men with women, a lofty strain or two to the hautboys, and cease.
(1.2)

What seems like an innocuous description uncovers an effort to reverse the power structure within the masque—and within the Jacobean court masque model.

Traditionally, after all, it was not audience members who held power at the taking-out; the selection of partners at the taking-out happened in the **reverse** order, with masquers entering the audience to select partners and draw them into the performance. Indeed,

Leeds Barroll claims that this practice gives Jacobean women clear power over the masquing hall.⁷⁴ Here, we see a shift in which the male audience members move of their own volition and usurp the Amazons' agency: "each single out an Amazon" so that the women masquers become passive. What's more, the stage direction reinforces this hierarchy, stating that "all dance, men with women"; while the men dance, the women are **danced with**. Timon's court works to contain the masquers so that, rather than being militant Amazons, their dancing marks them as "milde, timorous, tractable, benigne, of sure remembrance, and shamfast" (Elyot 236).⁷⁵ Such an attempt at containment emerges as the male courtiers use their own bodies as assertive, masculine texts; they work to rewrite the Amazon narrative as one of masculine dominance.

As the courtiers try to reclaim their performative primacy, Timon, too, struggles with the Amazons. Indeed, their appearance in the court suggests his lack—his need for a supplement that can feast the eyes. His assertion of court authorship actually begins prior to the masquers' entrance. Though the women do not ask permission for entry but rather are "desirous for admittance" (1.2.118), Timon twice asserts his authority over them. First he simply says, "I pray **let them** be admitted" (1.2.123, emphasis mine); however, as their herald enters and speaks on their behalf (specifically mentioning the supplement they provide for the court), Timon repeats himself, saying, "They're welcome all; **let 'em** have kind admittance" (1.2.130, emphasis mine). These claims to court authority do not allay all masculine anxieties, however. The women's active presence

⁷⁴ For more, see his biography of Anna, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England*. In addition, refer to my discussion at the beginning of Chapter 3. Here I argue that women's actions in the taking-out give them control over other courtiers' self-representations; thus masque authorship allows women to directly author masque's social context.

⁷⁵ For more on court dancing expectations, specifically as laid out by Sir Thomas Elyot, refer to the beginning of Chapter 3.

has revealed the dramatic and literary generativity of female bodies; the masquers control the masque because they embody it, and their presentation also controls the emotional reactions and the attention of the court. Once the masque and taking-out end, Timon tries to draw attention back toward male authority by asserting not only his position as authority figure over the court (and its inhabitants), but over the women's text as well:

You have done **our** pleasures much grace, fair ladies,
Set a fair fashion on **our** entertainment,
Which was not half so beautiful and kind.
You have added worth unto't and luster,
And entertained me with **mine own device**.

(1.2.148-152, emphases mine)

Timon's repetition of possessives lays claim to the court and everything in it; he may be generous with the courtiers, but he does not recognize the women masquers as part of that group. As mentioned before, he tries to belittle them into professional positions. His possessives signal a separation, then, between the group pleased and the group providing that pleasure; they are inferiors who are present simply because he allowed it. What's more, he claims that the women were not the authors of the masque: the text was **his own device**. Here, Timon echoes the implicit authorship claims Ben Jonson makes in printed masque texts; he emphasizes the primacy of text over performance. He provided the device; meanwhile, the ladies' performance merely added visual interest. Thus Timon taps into (and contradicts) the play's earlier Painter/Poet debate about the importance of the visual over the oral, and over which has greater instructive possibilities. In doing so, he also draws attention to debates about what constitutes a dramatic text—the actors performing it, or those who write it.⁷⁶ Ultimately, Timon tries

⁷⁶ This issue caused tension between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, particularly as Jonson began asserting the everlasting nature of the literary masque text and the ephemeral nature of performance. For more on this debate, see Stephen Orgel's "The Book of the Play" (2006).

to claim authority over it all. Yet he's unable to wholly control the threat of the Amazons; they persistently blend masculine with feminine, and they are perpetually linked to the masque (it does not exist without them). Thus they are perpetually present within the play, even when absent.⁷⁷ The masquers are linked to both the performance and the text. Their connection to the former has garnered attention for revealing that women's acting "threatens the patriarchal economy by publicly displaying [female] bod[ies]" (Walker 392), and it further presents them as emerging speaking subjects. Yet their connection to the latter emphasizes that it is also women's writing that overturns hierarchy, revealing that women were speaking subjects and were present all along. Performance and its possibilities for turning bodies into texts (and vice versa) reveals that what the women do on the masquing stage is not merely relay ideas but signify their own agency.

The women's masquing in *Timon* has clear links to Jacobean masquing in court—and specifically to Queen Anna's masques. Already Bevington and Smith have shown that the play, which has limited resemblance to Plutarch and Lucian at its opening, evinces concern about James's court expenditure—a budget problematized by masque costs. The critics note that, under James, "wardrobe expenditure at court increased exponentially, from £9,535 *per annum* during the last four years of Elizabeth's rein to £36,377 *per annum* during James's first five years" (60-61).⁷⁸ As I've remarked in

⁷⁷ Hoefele, for example, claims that the absence of both women and animals in the play makes them all the more operative from within *Timon*—thus the play suggests that animalistic and feminine behaviors inhabit "the very core of [man's] identity" (228). Along similar lines, Jowett suggests that women have limited roles in *Timon*'s court because *Timon* himself wants to appropriate the maternal into himself (to be the source of nourishment and abundance for his court) and therefore excludes women from his world (83). Either way, femininity is present—and its first appearance with the masquers marks them as the origin (and as a continuing presence).

⁷⁸ Expenditures on masques and gifts for favorites were a serious contemporary concern. To address and justify them, James I later wrote *The Book of Bounty* (1610).

Chapter 3, a large portion of this expenditure emerged out of the Jacobean practice of creating new costumes for masques—and of its audience members following suit. Such visual opulence gets replicated in Shakespeare’s play. Bevington and Smith claim that the stage directions and embedded descriptions in *Timon* suggest that Shakespeare’s company would’ve had to mine its resources to replicate court spectacle; not only would wardrobe and paraphernalia stocks be reused, but new pieces would have to be commissioned (72). Yet visual bounty alone does not connect this inset masque to those at court. What cements their relationship is the Amazons’ appearance of obeying injunctions of silence and submission (as the Queen and her ladies did) while their very presence and methods of textualizing their bodies gave them authority and allowed them to speak. *Timon*’s representation of male reactions to this phenomenon suggests that as early as 1604, the popular imagination grasped masquing women’s abilities to strain current gender hierarchies.

While *Timon*’s masque, like Anna’s, plays with silence and absence, later inset masques like those in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* turn attention toward women’s public speech in and overt appropriation of masque.⁷⁹ In this sense, inset masques like Ford’s draw on both Anna and Henrietta Maria’s masques. In her work on *Tempe Restored*, Melinda Gough argues that Henrietta Maria’s women masquers’ singing was “an implicit challenge to the exclusion of women from London’s all-male professional stage” (“*Tempe*” 49-50). Ford’s work picks up on this, questioning whether women might not only critique the London stage within masque, but might further use the form for revenge when other avenues to public retribution have been closed off. Certainly earlier

⁷⁹ The masque in *Women Beware Women* represents similar occurrences; it will receive further attention in Chapter 5.

masculinized inset masques, like that in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, have been understood to provide such possibilities for men.⁸⁰ And, as mentioned above, English history was rife with stories of political intrigue in which marginalized groups attempted assassinations via masque. In staging similar attempts by women, *'Tis Pity* suggests that women's claims to authority might not end with masque, but might extend toward other areas of power and control. At this point, there is no question that masque is feminized. What results is a male attempt to re-appropriate the stage and prevent it from providing women with a space to air grievances or infect other women with the contagion of their words and actions. While such intent resembles the latent threats in *Timon*, its results here are far more physically violent.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore's masque ostensibly celebrates Soranzo and Annabella's marriage—a marriage that violates Soranzo's engagement to Hippolita.⁸¹ The banquet guests and theatre audience simultaneously discover that

Certain young maidens
Of Parma, in honour to Madam Annabella's marriage,
Have sent their loves in a masque, for which they
Humbly pray [...] patience and silence. (4.1.30-33)

The masque is thus immediately constructed as feminocentric. It honors Annabella's part in the marriage—indeed, it makes her the primary agent in the union. Further, the entire masque will be performed by ladies alone. Not only are women performing for women here, but the announcement uncovers the women masquers' control over Soranzo's household. They choose whom they honor, they direct the audience's attention toward

⁸⁰ See Sutherland's discussion of Kyd's use of masque and "avenues to public retribution" in *The Spanish Tragedy* (15).

⁸¹ Notably, Hippolita's name has Amazon associations. Thus she and her masque connect to the queen's masques and their Amazon threats.

those figures (all women—Annabella and themselves),⁸² and they use their performative positions to make demands and control the audience by specifically calling for patience and silence. Notably, these are “passive” virtues that conduct writers like Barnabe Riche and Stephen Gosson define as “feminine.” Thus, the masquers use their performance space to claim authority by adopting a tone of instruction; they take on the role of conduct writers and push viewers into passive roles. Into such a situation enter “Hippolita and Ladies in white robes [all masked] with garlands of willows” (4.1).⁸³

As the dancing concludes, Hippolita unmaskes herself and addresses the banquet attendees, further controlling their attention. She turns to Annabella, saying, “Be not amazed; nor blush, young lovely bride./ I come not to **defraud** you of **your** man” (4.1.40-41, emphases mine). In doing this, she both upholds the feminocentricity established in the masque and its prelude, and she extends its reach past the masquing stage and into the political and social concerns of the play.⁸⁴ Annabella is her equal, the figure whose property rights she must respect; she emphasizes this by employing property terms like those Soranzo used to describe his new bride. Unlike Soranzo, however, Hippolita reverses the gendered body to whom they are attached. Annabella is

⁸² These qualities make Ford’s inset masque reminiscent of *Cupid’s Banishment*—the final masque that Queen Anna attended before her death. Not only was the masque specifically held in her honor (a fact highlighted by the masquers dancing her name—the only female name spelled in masque dance up to that time); it was also performed entirely by women from The Ladies Hall at Deptford, England’s first school for girls. For more on *Cupid’s Banishment*, refer to Chapter 3.

⁸³ The limits of the stage directions here make it difficult to ascertain whether a theatre audience would recognize Hippolita at this point, or whether only a reading audience would be privy to this information. If the latter were the case, this would be an example of what Jeffrey Masten calls “print effects.”

⁸⁴ In this sense, Ford’s masque resembles women’s intimate closet discussions. McKewin asserts that the latter aren’t cut off from the external realities of the play, but are intimately tied to them (122); such is the case with this inset masque as well. I will discuss the implications of the similarities between closet moments and masque stages later in this chapter.

no longer subject to Soranzo's possessives⁸⁵; rather, Soranzo is Annabella's man, a piece of property which might get stolen or damaged.

Notably, though Soranzo has attempted to control the masque by speaking and marking its end—saying, “Thanks, lovely virgins” (4.1.36)⁸⁶—Hippolita forces the performance to continue. She remains in costume on the stage, her words dramatic and ritualistic. Hippolita uses the masque stage as a platform from which to voice her authority over Soranzo and the masculine power structures related to him: “’Tis now the time to reckon up the talk/ What Parma long hath rumoured of us” (4.1.42-43). Her words to her former lover combine vocabularies of legality and ritual, but they are merely an aside; she presents herself as the ultimate authority where Soranzo is concerned, and her business is with Annabella. **They** will discuss his position; thus, it is he who gets passed between Hippolita and Annabella, rather than Annabella being passed between her father and Soranzo. This becomes clear as Hippolita returns to Annabella, saying,

Lend's your hand.
Perhaps it hath been said that I would claim
Some interest in Soranzo, now your lord.
What I have right to do, his soul knows best;
But in my duty to your noble worth,
Sweet Annabella, and my care of you,
Here take Soranzo, take this hand from me.
I'll once more join what by the holy Church
[she joins their hands]
Is finished and allowed. (4.1.46-54)

Indeed, Hippolita not only has authority over Soranzo and his right to wed, but she holds an authority higher than the Church that has joined the couple. The marriage cannot exist

⁸⁵ See 4.1.7-14.

⁸⁶ Ironically, Soranzo mislabels the group as a result of its disguise. Hippolita, as a “widow” and former lover, would not qualify as a virgin. In this sense, masque limits Soranzo's knowledge and disables his ability to accurately name others or shape the masque text before him.

until she relinquishes her property claims and re-marries them. Soranzo, then, could be described in the terms Pompa Bannerjee uses to mark Annabella: he is a “silenced object” that circulates in Hippolita and Annabella’s “social and economic transactions” (139).⁸⁷ In the feminized masque space, Hippolita and Annabella threaten to oppress masculinity, foreclosing Soranzo’s agency. Hippolita reinforces this authority as she turns back to Soranzo, adding:

One thing more:
That you may know my single charity,
Freely I here remit all interest
I e’er could claim, and give you back your vows;
And to confirm ’t—reach me a cup of wine—
My lord Soranzo, in this draught I drink
Long rest t’ee! (4.1.55-61)

Hippolita’s dramatic toast functions as the true end of the feminized masque: the restoration of a feminine order. Yet her dominance—not only of Soranzo but of a space that “should” be patriarchal—does not go unquestioned or unpunished. Rather, every public performative moment in the remainder of the play is a male effort to regain audience attention and reclaim the stage.⁸⁸ While those attempts manage to violently end women’s lives, they fail to silence the collective threat that such masquing women pose to masculine systems; rather, the violence draws attention back to feminine bodies and voices because silence is a complex and active mode of expression that is capable of continuing to produce meaning.

Endeavors of reclamation begin almost immediately; Hippolita does not get the last word on the masque stage, and Vasquez overturns Hippolita’s masque plot. What

⁸⁷ Pompa Bannerjee specifically links this experience of exchange to feminine bodies, and she argues that the play represents Annabella as challenging such economies.

⁸⁸ This process, in which both Giovanni and Vasquez are actively involved, will receive discussion in the following chapter.

began as Hippolita's attempt to ritualize female speech as public, legal, and authoritative results in Vasquez's attempt to ritualize the punishment of an outspoken, overbearing woman. Unbeknownst to Hippolita, Vasquez gives her the poisoned cup intended for Soranzo—he takes away her right and ability to author Soranzo's death. "Know now, mistress she-devil," he exclaims, "your own mischievous/ Treachery hath killed you" (4.1.68-69). Becoming the first bombastic theatrical male voice near the masquing stage, he continues to draw attention away from Hippolita, re-writing her narrative so she is merely a stereotype of feminine evil:

Foolish woman, thou art now like a firebrand, that
 Hath kindled others and burnt thyself. *Troppo sperar, inganna.*⁸⁹
 [...] Die in charity, for shame! (4.1.72-77)

In this way, Vasquez tries to usurp control over Hippolita's bodily text as well; he turns her into a literal and figurative firebrand. This interjection into Hippolita's performance increases the ritualized nature of the event—upon the end of Vasquez's speech, the banquet attendees get involved by responding in unison, "Wonderful justice!" (4.1.87). This mass-like incantation and response highlights the masque stage as a ritualized site, a place where women attempt to voice and repair the wrong done to them, and where men attempt to re-subordinate them and reclaim control through violence and misogynistic commonplaces. Indeed, by turning Hippolita into a stereotype, Vasquez attempts to empty out her individuality and make her an example to other "vile" women. A death like this is the fitting punishment for those who undermine gender hierarchies. Yet the level of violence marking Vasquez's attempt at erasure merely highlights the power of

⁸⁹ "Too much hoping deceives."

Hippolita's bodily and vocal communication. The desperate attempt to foreclose Hippolita's expression reveals just how threatening it is; thus it empowers her.

Unlike the masquers in *Timon*, Hippolita does not fade away or exit graciously as the men around her seek dominance. Instead, she turns even her own death into a performance that cannot be contradicted, erased, or overshadowed by anyone present. Though her words confirm the truth of Vasquez's plot, she draws all eyes back to her and to the issue of men's inconstancy toward women—the very issue she had originally intended to right:

O, 'tis true,
I feel my minute coming. Had that slave
Kept promise—O, my torment—though this hour
Hadst died, Soranzo.—Heat above hell-fire!—
Yet ere I pass away—cruel, cruel flames!—
Take here my curse amongst you: may thy bed
Of marriage be a rack unto thy heart—
Burn, blood, and boil in vengeance; O my heart,
My flame's intolerable!—May'st thou live
To father bastards; may her womb bring forth
Monsters, and die together in your sins
Hated, scorned and unpitied! (4.1.89-100)

Hippolita was denied the chance to author Soranzo's death, but she can author and perform her own. While Hippolita's demise is highly performative, it also reclaims the stage by drawing attention back to women's suffering in several key ways. Most obvious is the visual dimension. As she stands writhing and spouting vitriol on stage, no character or audience member could look away.⁹⁰ Thus, within the play, she pulls focus

⁹⁰ An email interview with director Matt Kozusco has revealed that modern stagings of the play emphasize the “spouting” aspect of Hippolita's death. Kozusco's production, for example, represented hers as “fingernail-snapping pain” and made copious use of mouthfuls of stage blood even though no stage directions suggest it. While one could view such staging as decadently violent, the manifestations of pain and blood comment profoundly on Hippolita's position. As she gushes stage blood, her physical body metaphorizes the emotive gushing she will perform; her insides literally come out. In addition, Kozusco's choice to have blood come from the mouth—rather than from another orifice like the nose—draws

back to the female body and its place in masque; metatheatrically, at the same time, she emphasizes the absence of a female body to represent female complaints. The London stage therefore participates in one of the very complaints the play expresses: women are denied public sites for the airing and correction of their grievances.

This spectacular element is important, yet it does not mark the limits of Hippolita's seizure of control. Her words, in fact, are immensely important; her vocalicity possesses what Simon Shepherd calls "textures of sound and occupation of spaces that are seen to produce excitement" (239), and they represent the female voice as having a power that men simply cannot access or control. To begin with, Hippolita presents herself as the only one capable of confirming Vasquez's plot—and she does so immediately, stating, "O, 'tis true." As she affirms her impending death, however, she draws attention to two things. First, she reveals that in addition to being the only one capable of proving Vasquez's claims, she's the only one capable of expressing their results. Her interjections—"O, my torment," "Heat above hell-fire!," "cruel, cruel flames!," and "O my heart,/ My flame's intolerable!"—reveal that she alone can give external proof about her internal physical and emotional states.⁹¹ The men are fully reliant upon the information she gives; and, in this circumstance, her external expressions seem to give direct information about internal agony. Thus she further proves that while men are fully reliant upon women to gain access to internal feminine experiences, all women are capable of performing the exhortation "be and seem" as conjunction or

attention to her words. Thus the spouting blood becomes a literalization of her language. In this way, the limits of live-staging correspond with the play's thematics.

⁹¹ Of course, the intense physiological nature of her pain makes it different from the interiority I've explored in other portions of this chapter. However, Hippolita consistently represents physical grievances as tied to emotional and psychological ones. This circumstance is no different.

disjunction. Certainly Hippolita has done both, and her ability has nothing to do with what “kind” of woman she is.

At the same time that Hippolita’s words draw attention to her internal physical and emotional experiences, the expression of the latter points toward the male treachery that has caused both. After all, it was Soranzo’s broken vow, his assertion of her lack of legal rights, that led Hippolita to seek public retribution in the first place.⁹² Confirming that Vasquez has poisoned her and caused excruciating pain also gives her a second evidentiary example of men’s violence against women and their voices. Soranzo is not an anomaly. In this way, Hippolita claims women’s right to utilize the masquing stage for retribution and public expression.

Finally, Hippolita presents her own words as capable of altering other characters’ fates—while her masque did not end as she’d planned, the play certainly will. Of course, the audience knows that it is not Hippolita who causes Soranzo “to father bastards” or Annabella’s “womb [to] bring forth monsters.” Yet the unknowing masque audience, the people of Parma, haven’t a clue. Therefore, as the plot unfolds according to her curse, Hippolita’s words appear to contaminate those around her. In this way, her language connects to women’s closet language, and to the masculine anxiety that, when women speak, their words have a profound effect that reaches beyond their immediate audience. Her words are contagious.⁹³

⁹² In 2.2, Hippolita approaches Soranzo about the vows he made to marry her if she began an affair with him; she confirms for the audience that she followed through on her end, and she demands that he fulfill his promise (2.2.29-45, 69-73). Soranzo’s first defense is that he disagrees with Hippolita—and therefore that she is irrational. When this charge doesn’t work, he turns legality against her: “The vows I made, if you remember well,/ Were wicked and unlawful; ‘twere more sin/ To keep them than to break them” (2.2.86-88).

⁹³ In this sense, Hippolita finds her literary lineage in women like Queen Margaret, whose prophecies in *Richard III* (c.1591) function as similarly pathological.

Hippolita's dead body is a text reporting on male treachery and female claims to power; as the play continues, another dead female body (in parts) and a slew of male bodies seek to overshadow her performance. In this case, Giovanni is the central performer and, like Hippolita, he chooses one of Soranzo's banquets to stage his revenge. Before his arrival in the final act, he directly informs the audience that he must prepare to "act [his] last and greatest part" (5.5.106). Doing this, Giovanni prepares one of his audiences so that it might link what he does to what Hippolita did, and he does so by narrating his prior actions so the audience might follow along:

[Enter Giovanni with a heart upon his dagger]
Here, here [I am,] Soranzo! Trimmed in reeking blood
That triumphs over death; proud in the spoil
Of love and vengeance! [...]
Be not amazed. If your misgiving hearts
Shrink at an idle sight, what bloodless fear
Of coward passion would have seized your senses,
Had you beheld the rape of life and beauty
Which I have acted? (5.6.10-12, 16-20)

Giovanni acts, and he specifically sets up his performance in terms of revenge. Like Hippolita, his grievances occurred in private—indeed, in his own sister's bed—and up until now he had no space where he might publicly complain against Annabella's marriage to Soranzo. This lack of space for public retribution leads Giovanni to endeavor to reclaim the stage on which Hippolita performed her revenge. His act harkens back to a time when such a stage was utilized by men like Richard II's supporters.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Refer to Ewbank (438). Notably, Shakespeare's Tamora takes a similar route to revenge in *Titus Andronicus* (c.1592) and, thus, faces punishment and silencing as Hippolita does. After all, in *Titus*, Titus and his army publicly, performatively massacre Tamora's sons in a post-battle ritual; lacking legal recourse, Tamora transforms the rest of the play into a tragedy in which she publicly, performatively slays or maims each of Titus's children. By the end of the tragedy, the male Andronici have sought to punish Tamora (who is led to eat her own sons), reclaiming the stage as well as the Ovidian text which she and her sons had used during their revenge plot (while Tamora's sons perform a version of the Philomela story during Lavinia's rape, Titus recreates the end of that same story through familial cannibalism).

Unlike Hippolita's masked entrance, Giovanni walks onto his retributive stage in full view of the stage and theatre audiences⁹⁵—yet, like Hippolita, he attempts to make his insides externally viewable. Specifically, his “insides” belonged to Annabella's body and are pierced on the end of a dagger:

‘Tis a heart,
A heart, my lords, in which mine is entombed.
Look well upon ‘t; d’ee know ‘t?
[...] ‘Tis Annabella’s heart, ‘tis. Why d’ee startle?
I vow ‘tis hers. This dagger’s point plowed up
Her fruitful womb, and left to me the fame
Of a most glorious executioner [...]
I bore my Annabella whilst she lived,
These hands have from her bosom ripped this heart.
(5.6.26-28, 30-33, 58-59)

Such is the “climactic gest” toward which Ford moved his play (Neill “Deciper” 231); and this overwrought stage image exists in connection to every other performative moment before it. In his discussion of *Tis Pity*, Michael Neill asserts that Giovanni takes the heart and literalizes its emblematic qualities (“Decipher” 239).⁹⁶ While I agree, I would push the argument forward and claim that, in literalizing the metaphor of the heart, Giovanni also literalizes the concept of body-as-text—a concern that I have specifically linked to masque. The selection above reveals Giovanni's desire for control over Annabella's body and his desire for a public space to enact retribution. What Giovanni does here is commit a literal, physical blazon upon his sister's body. Instead of poetically listing, splitting, and claiming ownership of her qualities—as he did in 2.5⁹⁷—

⁹⁵ Notably, as Kozusco mentions, some directors choose to mask the presence that accompanies Giovanni—Annabella's heart. Rather than having it immediately viewable on the dagger's tip, some directors cover the dagger with a cloth and instruct Giovanni to uncover it melodramatically for the audience.

⁹⁶ As, for example, a sign of love or a sign of affective connection/possession.

⁹⁷ Giovanni performs his blazon thus: “View well her face, and in that little round/ You may observe a world of variety:/ For colour, lips, for sweet perfumes, her breath;/ For jewels, eyes; for threads of purest

he uses a knife to appropriate those body parts that he asserts, as her lover, belong to him. It is from this rationale that he insists that the audience recognize the heart as Annabella's—and, therefore, as his. In committing a physical blazon upon her, he asserts that her internal parts are also his own; Giovanni functions as proof for Grant Williams's claims that the blazon is "a severely narcissistic fantasy, permitting the poet to acquire self-mastery through mastering desire" (47). In this situation, Giovanni seeks not only to master desire, but also the object of his desire; by dividing up her body as a text, Giovanni claims that he achieves mastery because no other "poet" could ever deconstruct her as he has. Yet Giovanni cannot entirely inscribe Annabella's body as part of his; nor, in responding to Hippolita's performance, can he reinscribes the staged female body within a masculine poetic discourse of ownership and hierarchy.⁹⁸ Just as Vasquez's violence drew attention to the level of women's power, so too does Giovanni's. Indeed, Annabella's body continues to speak despite his dissection; it remains *Annabella's* body, and its presence silently alludes to the very assertion of her will that caused Giovanni's violent response. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, then, presents the masquing stage as a battleground—women and men violently vie for control, and they do so within a contagious, didactic discourse that highlights the absence of actual women's body's by bringing attention to what Neill calls "atrocious physicality" ("Decipher" 237).

gold/ Hair; for delicious choice of flowers, cheeks" (2.5.49-53). Here Giovanni participates in a masculine poetic dialectic by which male poets assert control over female subjects by dividing, commodifying, and claiming women's parts as objects. The problem with such poetic practice, for Giovanni, is that any male poet could perform such a blazon upon Annabella. By literalizing the blazon, Giovanni ensures that no other man may ever cut up her parts and claim them. She can only be killed and mutilated once.

⁹⁸ For more information on the blazon tradition and an account of its relationship to gender hierarchy and mastery in criticism, see chapters 3 and 4 of Heather Dubrow's *Echoes of Desire* (1995). In his article, Williams also briefly touches on this tradition, and he comments, as numerous critics have, on the grotesque nature of the blazon portrait: "The literal portrait of the beauty [...] what a blazoned woman would look like if her figurative attributes were painted, appears unquestionably grotesque" (46). Ford's play proves that its literalization, if performed with a scalpel or some other tool, is equally horrifying.

“Not suffered to fly abroad”⁹⁹: Feminine Voices on the Stage

Women were undoubtedly absent from the London stage; yet, as Sophie Tomlinson points out, “clearly, of its own accord, drama was beginning to register and respond to the topic of female acting in England” (“Threat” 197). Debates about theatrical mimesis and didacticism were partly responsible for drawing attention to gender concerns. After all, such conduct literature vocabularies were frequently aimed at controlling women’s behavior, and anti-theatrical polemicists figured weak individuals susceptible to sin as “feminine.” More than this, however, such vocabularies drew attention to the spaces where women **did** bodily perform: closet drama and masque. As women began authoring and acting in these dramatic forms, London stage plays seeking to create what Ira Clark calls “aesthetically sophisticated representations of their society” (2) began to represent women’s dramatic activities; in doing so, they acknowledged women’s dramatic presences and borrowed from that work.

Closet drama and masque, two forms that became progressively feminocentric, provided commercial theatre with tropes for uncovering emerging anxieties about the publicness of women’s authorship and acting—the publicness of women’s silent and vocal expression. By representing women’s engagement in the closet and in masque, Stuart stage plays increasingly echoed women’s work in closet and masque. This did not function as pure ventriloquism, however. After all, the stage plays appropriate knowledge from women’s texts to explore the limits of female voices; thus, female authors who supplied these texts worked like directors and script producers whose notes

⁹⁹ This comes from one of Margaret Cavendish’s letters, in which she writes that women are “kept like birds in cages to hop up and down in our houses, not suffered to fly abroad” (in Chalmers 26).

and commentary contributed immediately to theatrical production (Ioppolo 55). The separation between women's voices and their male-embodied representations onstage emphasized the exclusion of women from this "public" stage. Yet it simultaneously emphasized their dramatic presences elsewhere. Physically absent but indirectly present through text and voice, women *qua* dramatic representations heavily peopled the London stage. The presence of these figures and their ability to shape play action highlighted women's presence and importance, despite their visual absence; as Fiona McNeill posits, the intensity of female characters and their activity "signifie[d] exponentially to generate a whole imaginary population of [...] women" (McNeill 196).

This imaginary population caused the emergence of new anxieties. Women had already begun to feminize two early modern dramatic forms, and polemicists had suggested the effeminacy of the third: was it possible that women's authorship and acting could directly reach the London stage? Certainly plays like Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Jonson's *The Staple News* suggested that lower-class women might climb upon the stage (Tomlinson "Threat" 193). In the chapter that follows, I examine two case studies in which representations of women's closet and masque performances converged with representations of public stages in London drama. Such convergence, I argue, suggests that lower-class women are not the main threat to the stage; the threat emerges, rather, from women who are already silently involved in "household" dramatic pursuits. What's more, such interrelation exposes that women's dramatic engagements allowed them access to public audiences before they professionally took to the stage during the Restoration.

CHAPTER V

CONVERGING STAGES: JACOBEAN AND CAROLINE CASE STUDIES

“Do not distrust your own performance. I ha’ known men
ha’ been insufficient, but women can play their parts.”

--James Shirley, *The Bird in a Cage* (1633)

While discussion of and allusion to women’s roles in closets and masques grew in London plays, playwrights emphasized gender struggles involving female claims to authority and male attempts to regain power. Addressing the *querelle des femmes* onstage was not limited to broad senses of public and private, however; it more specifically affected the public/private dramatic forms in which women could participate. Thus, London plays began acknowledging the blurred lines between dramatic forms onstage; they began presenting feminized spaces of performance as involved with—and, at times, indistinguishable from—the texts and spaces of the commercial theatre. As a result, though women weren’t physically present as actors in the city’s playhouses, their texts and roles were.¹ Onstage representations of women’s dramatic activities reveal recognition of women’s collaboration in theatre as well as anxiety over the threat they posed to the masculine monopoly over authorship and acting. This concluding chapter asserts that, between the Jacobean and Caroline periods, London commercial plays began commingling the three forms within one space until the audience could no longer readily distinguish closet

¹ Dympna Callaghan’s work on women’s absence is crucial to bringing focus away from cross-dressed representations of women and back toward women’s physical absence from the stage. Such work is crucial to our understanding the play between present representations, absent bodies, and the violence such practices posed upon early modern women. While I want to continue acknowledging women’s physical absence, I also want to draw our attention to ways in which women still managed to affect (and thus create a presence on) the public stage. For more on women’s absence, consult *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (2000).

dramas, masques, and plays from one another. In this sense, genre and gender possess a reflexive relationship during the Stuart periods. While meditations on women's performance and writing uncover the links among the forms, meditations on the forms' relationships uncover women's participation in all three.

In what follows, I examine Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (c.1620) and James Shirley's *The Bird in a Cage* (1633) as case studies for how Jacobean and Caroline dramatists imagined the relations among the forms. I argue that, within Middleton's play, the three dramatic forms are figured as links in a chain, with each successive link bringing women closer to the commercial stage. As women simultaneously perform in their households and closets and experience gender-related grievances, they approach the masque stage as a space for public expression; yet, because these masques occur within London plays, Middleton represents them as leading women onto public stages. Shirley's play, on the other hand, represents the three forms as collapsible; as his female characters perform within their cloister, the audience cannot identify whether their text is a closet drama, a masque, or a play. The women participate in all at once—and their presence on the London stage suggests that women may already have access to public stages when they participate in any dramatic form. Despite the texts' different approaches to the connection among the forms, both represent closet and masque stages as feminine domains; as the more intimate performances of the closet emerge on the more public masque stage, they reveal women's power in both dramatic spaces. Further, these moments also literally exist on a public stage; thus they suggest that female figures can access public audiences over whom they might exert control. Such excessive exposure and its correspondence to moments of "genre-blurring" reveal that none of the spaces are fully private. Even the most privatized and sacrosanct of feminine spaces is exposed as public and transgressive. The

implications of these stage-play moments are far-reaching. The inextricable relationships among the three forms—on stage and in print—allows women authors and performers indirect access to a London stage oft-vaunted for its masculine homosociality. Though women neither wrote nor performed directly in London stage-plays during the period, such dramatic emphasis on representations of women created a “linguistic imaginary”² by which female presence proliferated and revealed itself as an ever-present dramatic and cultural force.

“Draw but one link, all follows”³: Middleton and the Progression of Stages

Within *Women Beware Women*, Middleton contributes to this linguistic imaginary by tracing three different female characters from the household and onto the masque stage; while following this trajectory, he positions the women’s performances on the public stage. Middleton presents the household as a site of feminine authority grounded in bodily self-authorship and instructional performance; at the same time, he also reveals that even the most powerful women face sexual and vocal injunctions that try to violently deny their vocality and subjectivity.⁴ Certainly Bianca, Isabella, and Livia share this experience regardless of their different relationships to household performance.⁵ Yet, as I’ve argued in previous chapters, silence did not provide a totalizing enclosure, and women could utilize the blurring among the dramatic forms to create meaning that reached wide audiences. This is an activity Middleton replicates; in doing so, he suggests that women’s movement across the forms uncovers the inherent

² Fiona McNeill discusses the “linguistic imaginary” in terms of *The Roaring Girl*; though the play features a limited number of female characters, its gendered language (particularly that surrounding and marking Moll’s body) proliferates until within the play (and for the audience) London seems populated by a mass of masterless women. For more, see “Gynocentric London Spaces” (1997). I have discussed other applications of the linguistic imaginary during my readings of *The Tamer Tamed* and *Timon of Athens*, in particular.

³ *Women Beware Women* (1.2.68-69).

⁴ The connections between silence, violence, and empowerment have received extensive discussions in Chapters 3-4.

⁵ The women’s approaches to authorship and drama will receive specific discussion in the pages that follow.

connections among closet drama, masque, and public theatre. Participation in one leads to the availability of the others.

In addition to uncovering a Jacobean cultural understanding of the forms as linked, *Women* meditates on how the dramatic forms provide women with an escape from the social limitations that attempt to oppress them. After all, denials of women's vocalicity affect their household performances. According to *Women*, as women in domestic spaces grow discontent with masculine systems' limitations and failures to acknowledge and avenge these grievances, women can manipulate the forms in order to push closet performances onto the masque stage. There they can access masculinized traditions of revenge⁶ to author and perform their own desired retribution. That Middleton represents such action on the commercial stage further suggests that women's household performances were always already public and existed in proximity to the London stage; women's closet drama and masque participations, then, gave them the ability to shape public playwrights, performances, and audiences. Indeed, like the oppressed and increasingly violent and resistant characters onstage, women authors and actors may also seize control of the forms and utilize them not only to speak but to take revenge. As Bianca, Isabella, and Livia explore the limits and possibilities of women's textualized bodies and the private/public contexts in which they exist, they also use that information to usurp control and enact public vengeance over the individuals who have violently enclosed them. Thus the play reveals that the forms' private/public distinctions break down and allow women not only to

⁶ This is an issue which appears in Chapter 4, where I discuss *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and Hippolita's use of masque. Certainly Elizabethan revenge tragedy positioned masque and dumb shows as methods for masculine revenge; notable examples appear in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Yet this tradition was not merely dramatic; it had roots in historical accounts about actual assassination plots scheduled to occur during masques and court entertainments. For more, consult Chapter 4 or see Inga-Stina Ewbank's "Those Pretty Devices: A Study of Masques in Plays" (1970).

enter onto the stages but to potentially appropriate them to enact a reversal of the denials formerly imposed upon them.

Middleton's play begins by emphasizing the closet, both as a literal confine and as a metaphor for women's interiority. The relationship between these figurations reveals that both exceed masculine power; they are sites where women textualize their bodies and perform in specific ways that manipulate outside readers, including men. In addition to governing closet performances, women also control who may witness activity happening on the household stage. At *Women's* opening, Leantio introduces the audience to these key concepts. At first he presents his new bride Bianca as his commodity; she is a "jewel [he must] case up from all men's eyes" (1.1.14, 41, 170). While he initially claims that his household and its closet spaces are ideal for hiding her, it becomes clear that the closet is not entirely closed, nor is Bianca a containable object. Though he figures their marriage as "the best piece of theft/ that ever was committed," he also reveals that she played an active role in its commission (1.1.43-44); indeed, "from Venice, her consent and [Leantio] have brought her" (1.1.49). To marry Bianca, Leantio had to access her private space in Venice; because household and feminine interiors are linked, she was the one who granted him admission to both.

Based on this admission, Leantio assumes that access to Bianca's household equates access to her interior; he claims that "her face [...reveals] all her dowry,/ Save that which lies locked up in hidden virtues,/ Like jewels kept in cabinets" (1.1.54-56). For Leantio, Bianca is without artifice; he believes her outsides provide evidence of her insides. In assuming this, he fails to register that even if Bianca did reveal her interior to him, this action would still be performative. Even a conjunctive performance of "be and seem"⁷ marks participation in the

⁷ The conduct literature exhortation "be and seem" has been most popularly associated with Elizabeth Cary. While manual writers used the phrase to express conjunction—as in, "seem that which you are"—recent critical work has

“outward” acting that conduct writers like Gervase Markham recommend when they suggest women use “apparrell and dyet” to reveal their sexual and dietary appetites to men (*Huswife* 3-4). In this way, the domestic space that Middleton stages is a metaphorical representation of Bianca’s own interior. Neither is wholly closed nor openly readable, but it is Bianca who can assert authority over who may see behind the curtain and into either space. Even in the smallest closet spaces, women may perform and obtain authority. Though Leantio behaves as if he were the household sovereign, he reveals feminine household authority by relying on an external aid to construct his home and wife as “lock[ed] chests” (1.1.176). This masculine lack of control highlights the household and closet as feminine domains—something further clarified in Leantio’s choice of gate-keeper. Rather than casting another man in this role, he turns to his mother “to look to [the] keys” (1.1.176).

His mother, in fact, is the play’s gate-keeper; the household is already a stage over which she holds control. Indeed, she reveals its position as a stage in that she literally opens the play to the audience by opening her home to Leantio and Bianca. Their relations to her, respectively as her “chiefest gladness” and the one with “th’name of daughter” (1.1.4, 116), give them access and reveal her primacy in allowing entry. Leantio recognizes his mother’s authority in this space, and it shapes his performance; in fact, her authority creates a notable gender reversal. He not only speaks deferentially, but he verbally acknowledges her role via “outward obeisance” of the kind William Gouge recommends wives give to their husbands at home (*Domesticall* 281); what’s more, he looks to his mother to “keep counsel” and protect Bianca (1.1.44). Recognition of female authority does not equate comfort, however; with his mother holding the key, Leantio perceives a particular danger. This is because the source of the mother’s domestic dominance is

gestured to the recommendation’s disjunction. Thus it can also suggest “be one thing while seeming another.” For more on this injunction and on critical discussions surrounding it, refer to Chapter 2.

also her greatest threat to Leantio's marital authority: she is one of those "old mothers [who] know the world" and may use that experience to either protect or teach Bianca (1.1.175). Thus he cannot trust his mother's outward performance; she may have instructional desires he cannot see. After all, as Edward Gosynhyll suggests in *The Schole House of Women* (1572), the great hazard of domesticity is that when women gather, "they bable fast [...] thus learne the yongers of the elders" (A4r). Older women desire to mold younger ones—and younger women are eager to learn. Such education undermines men's authority; as the younger women "complaineth unto the old" about their husbands, Gosynhyll posits, the elder

Saith doo as I doo,
Be sharp and quick with him again
If that he chide, chide you also
And for one woord giue him twain [...]
Thus euer among they keep such schooles
The yung to drawe after the olde. (B1r-B1v)

For men like Gosynhyll and Leantio, an older woman's knowledge corrupts a younger woman. It positions the elder in a visible role of authority; in witnessing this, the younger woman first realizes the power of mimesis and performance, then is encouraged to embrace it as her own. The mother's teaching Bianca would therefore uncover the home as a domestic stage under female control.⁸ When they disagree with their husbands, women may thus undermine them through shrewish mimicry like Gosynhyll describes, or they may, as Edmund Tilney suggests, perform palatable duties while "otherwise [...] dissembling the matter" (1204-1206). In passing along such knowledge, the mother could appropriate the masculine conduct writer's role,

⁸ While contemporary anti-theatrical polemicists and apologists disagreed intensely about the moral dimensions of theatre, they agreed that drama and education were closely bound together. For Stephen Gosson and members of the former group, this was the danger of drama: it taught individuals to transgress not only gender, because actors must "counterfeit" and "learne to trippe it like a lady in the finest fashion," but it even usurped God's authority (*Playes* dedication). Meanwhile, Thomas Heywood and his fellow apologists asserted this as a positive attribute, as it could even lead corrupt criminals to confess (*Apology* 60). For more on the links between drama and education, see Lynn Enterline's "Rhetoric, Discipline, and the Theatricality of Everyday Life in Elizabethan Grammar Schools" (2006).

revealing the distinction between “being” and “seeming” and schooling Bianca to manipulate that gap to control her husband through performance. In authoring her own interior/exterior, Bianca could become “fayre without and foule within” or, worse, simply foul (Gosynhyll B1v). Leantio, meanwhile, as the audience and not the author of this behavior, would be at Bianca’s mercy.

Accessing this commonplace fear, Leantio addresses his mother:

I pray you do not teach her to rebel
When she’s in a good way to obedience;
To rise with other women in commotion
Against their husbands [...]
Good mother, make not you things worse than they are,
Out of your too much openness—pray take heed on’t.
(1.1.73-76, 101-102)

Throughout his speech, Leantio performs deference even while echoing Gosynhyll’s concerns. He “prays” that his mother avoids certain behaviors, but he never commands. Rather, he bargains with her; if she considers him her “chiefest gladness,” she should desire that he have an obedient “wife that loves her husband” (1.1.4, 90). In exchange, Leantio promises, “I’ll prove an excellent husband, here’s my hand;/ Lay in provision, follow my business roundly,/ And make you a grandmother in forty weeks” (1.1.107-109).⁹ Leantio’s negotiation reveals that, just as is the case with conduct writers like Gosynhyll, the masculine acknowledgement of female power does not provide a path for its foreclosure. In this way, women’s authority extends out of themselves, out of the closet, and into the home more generally.

⁹ In their respective articles on early modern allusions to Danae, A. A. Bromham and Julie Sanders have gestured to the avaricious connections between Danae’s maid and Bianca’s mother in law. Numerous critics have commented on the mother’s concern for money—not only when she fears the repercussions of taking Bianca away from a fine home, but also in being motivated to go to Livia’s house or attend the Duke’s dinner (with the intent of bringing home sweet meats).

By providing a site for intimate exchange and performance, the household allows women to explore and rewrite the limits of their own roles.¹⁰ Women like the mother and Bianca have more control than Leantio over the potentially “too much open” feminine interior—they can conceal or expose themselves and their stages to view. Indeed, the mother and Bianca’s mutual decision to raise the curtain on their domestic scene—by sitting at the window during the Duke’s progress and by leaving their household to enter Livia’s—initiates the play’s action. Yet we should note that while these women expand the audience to their closet stage in a way that exposes and textualizes them, they do not maintain complete control over how they are read. Sitting at the window not only opens up the household and Bianca to public view; her placement at the casement also textualizes her as an open and knowing woman. According to Lena Orlin, early modern court reports are rife with testimony that women “overheard” from their doorsteps; while men would admit to hearing or seeing affrays from the window, women would not (51). Orlin argues that this suggests a propriety linked to “accidentally” seeing/overhearing something from the doorstep, where a woman might be involved in domestic work. On the converse, reports suggest an impropriety associated with the window—an idleness and an attempt to surreptitiously seek knowledge. Drama from the period supports this contrast. While *A Warning to Fair Women*’s Anne sits at her husband’s doorstep and maintains her respectability, *Women Beware Women*’s Bianca witnesses activity from her window and loses her good name (53).¹¹ In this sense, visual exposure functions like verbal exposure by allowing women to be misread or misinterpreted by masculine readers; performative exposure is not only empowering, then, but also constitutes a relinquishment of some authority. It can invite social recasting; after all, it makes a woman visible, and writers like Barnabe Riche construct this as a sign of immodesty.

¹⁰ For more, see McKewin 121.

¹¹ For more, see Orlin’s “Women on the Threshold” (1997).

The woman of modesty “is least knowne,” and is further “least spoken of” (Riche Cr2). Where Bianca is concerned, this dilution of power affects who may access and control her body—thus, her exposure and subsequent rape allow men to violently recast her as “whore” and “strumpet” (4.1.62,194).¹²

The mother and Bianca’s dramatic control in the household, and the Duke and Cardinal’s usurpation of their authority, draws attention to Isabella’s domestic struggle. Immediately after Leantio’s fears about feminine education unveil the closet/household is a dramatic space under women’s control, the audience sees Isabella grappling with her performative identity in a masculine-dominated household. More aggressive than Leantio, Fabritio claims to direct his household and daughter entirely; Isabella, he asserts, is no daughter if “she prefer reason before [his] pleasure” (1.2.26). In this sense, Fabritio limits Isabella’s household authority by appropriating what Gosynhyll deems feminine prerogative: the promotion of passion over reason. In claiming that women control their husbands via illogic, Gosynhyll describes:

Reason they wil not attend [...]
For let a man to them repleye
In resoning of matter small
These women be so sensuall
That be their reason not worthe a torde
Yet wil women haue the last woord. (A2v)

Like Gosynhyll’s women, Fabritio positions his passion as “the last woord” in his home. In doing so, he undermines Isabella’s ability to argue or to define a role of her own. Through this usurpation, the household becomes a stage under his control; as his lead actor, Isabella must force herself to externally conform to her Fabritio’s dramatic expectations. Thus he directs her as she meets her fiance:

See what you mean to like; nay, I charge you,

¹²For more on this idea, refer to my discussion of Graphina’s silence in Chapter 2.

Like what you see. Do you hear me? There's no dallying.
[...] Like him or like him not, wench, you shall have him,
And **you shall love him**. (1.2.76-77, 128-29, emphasis mine)

Fabritio attempts to forcibly shape Isabella's role by narrating it for her—indeed, he scripts her into an oppressive closet text. According to his closet drama, Isabella is an erotic commodity; she should be “a-breeding” to create heirs so that he may profit (1.2.79). Yet, like Bianca, Isabella possesses an interior and an exterior; while her father may “force [outward] consent” (2.1.88), he cannot control the interior site where she keeps her griefs “locked up in modest silence” (2.1.77).¹³ In this sense, she notes her ability to disjunctively perform “be and seem” within a domestic space—and her continued performance reveals that dramatic context shapes how she constructs this “seeming.” Though Fabritio assumes his complete control over Isabella, she shows the audience that silent respect occurs only in his presence. Apart from him, she uses her domestic space to vocally construct a position counter to Fabritio's commands; this role becomes public as she expresses it on the stage:

Oh, the heart-breakings
Of miserable maids, where love's enforced!
The best condition is but bad enough:
When women have their choices, commonly
They do but buy their thralldoms, and bring great portions
To men to keep 'em in subjection [...]
By'r Lady, no misery surmounts a woman's:
Men buy their slaves, but women buy their masters.
(1.3.164-69, 173-74)

Away from her father, Isabella uses the household as a stage to voice her grievances and decry the violent denials to which she is subject; doing this on a “private” stage gives her some authorial and performative control, but doing it simultaneously on a commercial stage allows the

¹³ In this moment, Isabella figures herself as a closet; notably, Leantio describes Bianca in a similar way in 1.1.54-56. Such metaphors are not limited to this play. Middleton also figures women as closets in *The Changeling*, saying of Beatrice-Joanna's friends, “These women are the ladies' cabinets,/ Things of most precious trust are locked into 'em” (2.2.6-7).

broad exposure of feminine grievances. The household may be highly feminized, but Fabritio has usurped it, constructing it around her as a place of masculine dominance and control. Indeed, his denials are so totalizing that while Isabella decries injustice, recognizing an internal desire for self-authorship, she cannot understand her external role outside paternal control. She cannot conceive of overt disobedience when she believes she has been “born with that obedience/ That must submit unto a father’s will”; thus, “if he command, I must of force consent” (2.1.86-88). At this point, Isabella reveals that women’s use of the dramatic forms is learned—perhaps most effectively by witnessing other women’s appropriations. Lacking recognition of the self-authorship available in the household, Isabella hands over dramatic domestic authority. On her father’s demand she will dance and sing for the Ward, exhibiting her skills and “prostituting her wares” (Potter 373), even if she will not respect “a fool [who] is but the image of a man” (1.2.163).

Isabella’s struggle heavily contrasts against her aunt Livia’s position of dramatic authority. Middleton represents Livia, like Leantio’s mother, as one who can instruct; unlike the mother, Livia recognizes this ability and uses it. What’s more, unlike Isabella, Livia recognizes women’s abilities to covertly control even masculine-authored domestic performances. Immediately upon her entry, she undermines Fabritio’s masculine authorship and privileges herself as the dominant household author. As Fabritio publicly characterizes her as “witty,” she rewrites the position, asserting, “A witty! Oh the bud of commendation/ Fit for a girl of sixteen; I am blown, man/ I should be wise by this time [...] I think I am more than witty” (1.2.46-49, 54). Unlike Isabella, who limits her self-authored performance to the most solitary household stages, Livia expands the boundaries of the household to perform publicly and compete with men over closet authorship. The blurred lines of private and public—which I’ve argued possess an

intimate relationship to the blurred distinctions among dramatic forms—allow Livia to travel across and link domestic stages.

When we follow her movements, we can see that once she has revised the role in which Fabritio attempts to contain her, she then commandeers the erotic drama he has staged around Isabella. In Fabritio's household, she appropriates his paternal authority, creating a story that casts Isabella as a bastard who may "call [her] father's command nothing" (2.1.119). Firmly entrenched in notions of a paternally-controlled house and body, Isabella only violates Fabritio's text when a new author arrives, rewriting his paternal position and placing her in a new role. Only after Livia lies does Isabella alter her performance, but this new role is not free. Rather, it continues to control Isabella, and Livia even provides rebellious lines for her, asking "How weak his commands now, whom you call father?/ How vain all his enforcements, your obedience?" (2.1.158-59). Like the women in Gosynhyll's text, Livia instructs her niece on feminine household power, lecturing that "Nothing o'erthrows our sex but indiscretion [...] keep your thoughts to yourself, from all the world" (2.1.164, 169). Yet, though Livia functions as a household author and actor, using intimate feminine spaces to broadly usurp masculine power, she also manipulates those around her to foreclose their ability to act as competing playwrights. Within *Women*, she creates a real-life closet drama, manipulating other characters' views of themselves in order to promote a plot of her own creation. While teaching Isabella lessons of discretion and performativity, leading her to believe she never before "had the means to know [her]self" (2.1.182), Livia urges Isabella to continue operating under masculine constraints; Isabella's behavior relies on the existence of a patriarch, whether Fabritio or the Marquise of Coria fills that role. Therefore, Livia covertly but violently denies Isabella the ability to compete with her as an author and lead actor; she ensures that her niece is not self-authored but performs

an assigned role. What's more, the blurred lines between private and public allow her to travel among households. Thus she can affect Bianca's too, and Livia mirrors the Duke's ability to penetrate Bianca's household with his gaze by issuing an invitation that brings the girl into her own domain; there, Livia can control both the Duke and Bianca, authoring a salacious closet drama in which she "can place a man well" and undo other women's chastity (2.2.294).

Notably, it is in Livia's household that Bianca and Isabella eventually recognize and chafe beneath the constraints around them. Livia's authorial control, after all, replicates and highlights the controlling masculine systems it seeks to undermine; it denies Bianca and Isabella control over their bodies and voices, even on the feminized, closeted stage. For Bianca, partaking in drama outside her own household uncovered that allowing others to control her performance was dangerously limiting; thus she begins to raise her voice and textualize herself. Tired of being the "concealed comforts of a man" (3.1.85), she rewrites her marital position; "wives do not give themselves away to husbands/ To the end to be quite cast away," she claims, and she fights Leantio's desire to "mew [her] up not to be seen" (3.1.47-48, 219). As Leantio seeks to place Bianca in increasingly confined spaces,¹⁴ she responds by expanding the boundaries of her "private" stage. Thus she travels to a new household for the Duke's banquet, where she can try to rewrite "rape" and "strumpet" by being active, vocal, and becoming "wiser of [her]self" (3.2.132). Similarly, Isabella realizes Livia's authorship over her, and she seeks to repay her aunt; she will teach Livia a lesson by reclaiming the household stage as her own. Once Livia admits to controlling Isabella with "a false tale" (4.2.74), Isabella casts the experience as schooling; she plans to enact "the like cruel cunning/ Upon [Livia's] life" and, like her aunt,

¹⁴ As Bianca rebels, Leantio wants to lock her away in a secret closet behind the parlor where his father once hid from manslaughter accusations; "no search could ever find it [...] there will I lock my life's best treasure," he asserts (3.1.244-48). Bianca, meanwhile, asserts her power in the household by taking over the role of knowing teacher; "Come, mother, come, follow his humor no longer," she commands, succeeding in controlling the woman's behavior (3.1.264).

she'll "act without pity" (4.2.144-46). She simply needs a new, more public stage on which to expand and practice her authority. Like Bianca, she moves into a new form of household drama: masque.

As the household stage becomes increasingly public, Bianca and Isabella come to recognize what Livia has known all along: only by controlling the texts of their bodies, the social texts within which they exist, can the women maintain power. Yet each has been denied a measure of that power within her own household space. Bianca was denied control over her body both when Leantio tried to closet it and when the Duke violated it; that latter violation resulted in her recasting as "strumpet" at the Cardinal's hands (4.1.194). Like Bianca, Isabella was twice denied control; first Fabritio denied her right to choose a lover, then Livia denied her right to self-knowledge, which affected her decision about Hippolito. Even Livia cannot have complete control; despite her consistent work throughout the play to avoid marriage and masculine control, her brother Hippolito limits her body, denying her the right to be with Leantio. However, while such masculine figures disrupt women's control over the most intimate stages, masque performance manifests new possibilities. There, the women can regain control over their texts and bodies by moving to a new stage, claiming a more public form steeped in retributive traditions. Certainly all three women desire public reprisal and the recognition of their authorial rights. As the possibilities of the closet have been exhausted or foreclosed, all three women utilize the blurred distinctions among the forms to move their performances to masquing stage.

From the outside, *Women's* masque is a masculine text intending to honor the exchange of women. Livia informs the audience that its text originated "to have honoured the first marriage of the Duke/ With an invention of his own," and that it now will honor the Duke's

marriage to Bianca (4.2.199-200). In this sense, then, like conduct literature, the masque provides a social cover for the reemergence of women's expression. It seems to appropriately direct female energies toward celebrating masculine systems of enclosure; on the surface it urges women to follow Riche's recommendation of being curbed by the bridle that "they willingly put vpon them selves" (B2r). Yet masque's position as a female-dominated stage quickly becomes visible. Almost immediately, Livia asserts that while the Duke intended to fund the original masque, this time "the cost shall all be mine" (4.2.206). In subsidizing the performance, Livia follows women like Queen Anna, who could not only determine their own parts, but could have a role in casting, costuming, and otherwise governing the audience's experience. Just as she was a major closet author, she will be a major author of the masque; thus, as she travels one dramatic form to the next, her role carries over. Like courtly masquers, both Livia and Isabella take parts reflectant of their "real-life" roles: Livia will be an "incensed" Juno (4.2.220) who "rul'st o'er coupled bodies" (5.2.74) while Isabella will play the "nymph that offers sacrifice to appease [Juno's] wrath" (4.2.214-15). In this way they appropriate the Duke's invention to fit their desired dramatic ends.

While Livia and Isabella seek to claim new authorial space on the masque stage—participating in textual creation by physically embodying the masque—Bianca takes a different approach to expanding her household authority. On one level, as the "honoree," she claims a role like that of the attending monarch; she moves beyond the violently limiting figuration of "strumpet" to claim one of respect. On another level, Bianca shapes her role by accessing the literary qualities of masque and creating an antimasque; in doing so, she interrupts the course of the main entertainment, confounding the male audience around her while setting forth a plan to seize control over the Cardinal, who has rewritten her as a bawd. Before the performers take the

stage, she assures the audience and herself that the “Cardinal [will] die this night, the plot’s laid surely” (5.2.21). Indeed, she herself has written the plot, which disrupts the officially printed “model of what’s presented” (5.2.30-31).

As the performance begins, the Duke and other audience members turn to this model to learn about the masque plot. Yet the text proves inaccurate, and only Bianca can provide an interpretation that clarifies the audience’s experience. According to the text, the masque only contains the story of “a nymph that haunts the woods and springs,/ In love with two at once, and they with her./ Equal it runs; but to decide these things,/ The cause they refer to mighty Juno” (5.2.33-36). Yet, as the music initiates the performance, Hymen, Ganymede, and Hebe take the stage and trouble the audience; “But soft!” the Duke exclaims, “Here’s no such persons in the argument” (5.2.65). This is, in fact, because Bianca has requisitioned the antimasque¹⁵; in doing so, she gains the authority to speak in public and instruct the Duke and the other viewers. Here she gets to participate as an actor and author. As the three mythical figures approach and “enter [as] all [Bianca’s] wishes,” they address her first and directly: “To thee, fair bride, Hymen offers up/ Of nuptial joys this celestial cup” (5.2.50, 51-52). Rather than being a passive viewer, Bianca participates in the action, responding to Hymen: “We’ll taste you, sure, ‘twere pity to disgrace/ So pretty a beginning” (5.2.55-56). In authoring this dialogue and instructing Hymen to address her first, she emphasizes her public position as a bride; she has authored a new honor for herself that overwrites the Cardinal’s accusation of “strumpet.” What’s more, however, she will not be the same kind of wife or woman that she was with Leantio; instead, she is a subject who will speak for herself **and** for others. After all, beyond marking her own drinking, “we’ll taste

¹⁵ It is important to keep in mind that the antimasque had come to represent chaos and reversal—an implicit challenge to the order of the court and its ruler. In Stuart performances, the masque allegedly corrected the antimasque chaos by supplying grace and order. Yet in Middleton’s inset (as in so many queen’s masques), the masque itself adds to the chaos.

you” cues the Cardinal and the Duke’s drinking. Additionally, Bianca encourages the smooth performance of her text—she will not allow others to disrupt it, and her participation encourages the completion of a pretty beginning. Performing as herself, Bianca emphasizes her own performative position beyond the antimasque; she highlights her emerging authorship and authority. What began as covert in the closet, then, becomes increasingly assertive in masque. While the men are confused about this seemingly unscripted performance, she has the power to name it—“this is some antemasque belike, my lord”; as its author and identifier, she can command the men as the actors do: “Hark you, you hear from ‘em!” (5.2.72). As she does this, Bianca also writes and performs a plot outside the masque: she attempts to poison the Cardinal who slanders her. Achieving this plot would not only rewrite the linguistic sign with which the Cardinal has marked her; it would also allow her to mark the Cardinal’s body permanently through death.

Bianca’s dialogue returns focus to the masquing stage; in doing so, she highlights the male-authored masque and the female bodies who voice, embody, and make it their own. Notably, Isabella is the first to speak; in this new performance space, she gains an opportunity to recast Livia; rather than a Juno who governs marriage, Livia’s Juno becomes a panderer “who ru’lst o’er coupled bodies” (5.2.74). Isabella blends her on and off stage roles, as she does her aunt’s—and she clues the theatre audience into this dual performance. At the same time that she offers “precious incense” to Juno, she reveals in an aside that “twill try [Juno/Livia’s] immortality” with its poison (5.2.101, 103). Thus Isabella uses the combined tropes of mass and masque that Inga-Stina Ewbank notes so that “revenge [...] becomes ritual” (443). Not only does she create the ritual as a means for controlling both her own and Livia’s bodies, but she does it in a way that is publicly violent.

Livia's seizure of the masque, however, is even more violent and complex. After all, she has not only performed in and out of her own household; she has further used her authorship to violently control and textualize others as well. Yet at this point, both positions have been destabilized—through Isabella and Bianca's emerging challenges to her, and through Hippolito's denial of her sexual autonomy. Because she is not the only female figure who gains power by traveling across dramatic lines, she must take extreme measures to reclaim her authoritative position. Thus Livia textualizes herself dually on the masque stage. Not only does she perform as the capricious goddess-queen Juno but, in alluding to the myth of Danae, she uses allusion to claim Jove's position as well.¹⁶ In the moment that Isabella's incense arises, Livia takes control:

[As Juno] Now for a sign of wealth and golden days,
Bright-eyed prosperity which all couples love,
Ay, and makes love, take that—
[Throws flaming gold upon Isabella, who dies]
Our brother Jove
Never denies us of his burning treasure,
T'express bounty. (5.2.113-11)

While Middleton's playtext continues marking Livia as Juno, her speech places her in unmistakable proximity to Jove. Indeed, she mentions his name at the moment that she enacts his role, casting gold into the lap of a young, seduced woman. Just like Jove's, Livia's gold provides her with her desired end: she rewrites a masculine, Ovidian narrative of female victimization, and through it she gains preeminence by killing the female usurper who has attempted to structure the masque, control Livia's body, and whose body is connected to her enemy Hippolito's. This is the ultimate performance of authorial control; in textualizing Isabella as a corpse, she forecloses any challenging performance from her niece as well as any rewriting from other sources. No one can kill Isabella again, thus Livia's creation is final.

¹⁶ For additional approaches to the Danae myth in this play, see A. A. Bromham's "*Women Beware Women*, Danae, and Iconographic Tradition" (2003) and Julie Sanders's "'Powdered with Golden Rain': The Myth of Danae in Early Modern Drama" (2002).

As the female masque authors/actors claim the stage, they perplex the masque audience. Whereas Middleton's theatre audience has been privy to the women's movements from one stage to the next, the masque viewers have continued relying on the outdated and inaccurate masculine masque model. Unlike Leantio, they have failed to recognize women's ability to travel across and claim numerous stages and dramatic forms. For this reason, as bodies begin to drop, the Duke cries out in confusion, "She falls down upon't, What's the conceit of that?" while Fabritio tries to fill the explanatory gap by saying, "As overjoyed, belike./ Too much prosperity overjoys us all,/ And she has her lapful it seems" (5.2.120-23). As the men cannot understand why the performance "swerves a little from the argument," concerned that perhaps the "plot's drawn false," Middleton reveals the women masquers as the true authors and the male viewers as bad readers out of step in their interpretation (5.2.125, 133). Middleton's women do not allow the text to unfold as it was written; rather, they use their bodies and voices¹⁷ to create a new text that usurps control not only from male characters, but from Middleton himself. Kate Levin, for example, has suggested that Middleton eventually loses control over his inset masque—this is why critics have difficulty classifying or interpreting it. While I agree that he seems to lose control, I argue that this is an intentional dramatic/literary effect. As Middleton's authorship disappears, the women's emerges as the origin and end of the masque, as well as of the play itself.

As Sutherland's work shows, *Women Beware Women's* "fatal nuptial masque [...] is not in any of Middleton's known sources or analogues" (89); this suggests that its inclusion aims at highlighting a phenomenon unique to Middleton's time and place. Some critics have argued that

¹⁷ Though Jacobean masque texts pre-1617 do not mark female masquers as speaking during performance, Middleton has both Isabella and Livia recite their own lines (which, incidentally, are their own rather than the Duke's). The first Jacobean masque to textually recognize a female speaker is *Cupid's Banishment* (1617); however, viewers at the 1606 Entertainment at Theobalds reported that several female masquers spoke. For more, refer to Chapter 3.

the inset masque is Middleton's commentary on the "pretense of rational form and civilized pastime" in the court (Potter 369), while others have claimed that it comments on the social debasement of marriage (Spivack 49). While such positions are valuable in moving beyond conceptions of the masque as flattery, they fail to take into consideration how Middleton's inset participates with the other dramatic forms represented on stage. After all, *Women* is a stage play, and it represents not only masque but also closet activity. In focusing too intently on the masque alone, we risk overlooking what it can tell us about dramatic forms and their relationships to women deconstructing the enclosures that surround them and limit their expression.

Middleton's play represents women's closet performances and concerns as related to vocal and bodily expression; and it represents women as household authorities constantly battling men and each other to maintain dominant positions. As women are limited and their spaces violated, they lack the ability to seek the public retribution available to men. Thus, in *Women*, the women seek out a masquing stage that fits within the household, gives them greater public access, and provides them with the opportunity to more formally present themselves as authors and actors capable of retributive expression. Meanwhile, all of this action (which links the first two forms) takes place on London's stage; thus the three forms link together, one after the other. While Bianca, Isabella, and Livia stand and speak on this commercial stage, they are embodied by male actors. This masculine ventriloquization gestures significantly to women's bodily absence on the stage. Dympna Callaghan's work has argued that women's physical, and therefore vocal, absence from the English stage leads public theatre to its "breaking point," revealing that men cannot fully or effectively usurp women's positions (52). Middleton's play suggests that while this may be the case, women are not entirely absent. Indeed, as closet, masque, and commercial theatre performances lead women one to the next, they allow women to

move into increasingly public spaces, usurping male positions and create a space for their own expression.

“Women can play their parts”¹⁸: Overlapping Stages in Shirley

While Middleton’s play represents the dramatic forms as a chain, each linked to the next, Shirley’s later *The Bird in a Cage* (1633) reveals the forms’ collapsibility; this layering-effect causes audiences to ask whether women’s dramatic products can ever be labeled as closet dramas, masques, or plays. Thus the play was not only a direct response to contemporary debates on women’s performance via its preface,¹⁹ but, further, a presentation of closet, masque, and London stages as one and the same. All three possess a public nature that only theoretically keeps women hidden—and all three allow women’s performances and texts to reach a large and varied audience. Within Shirley’s play, women’s roles as actors and authors are always already public—as is the masculine attempt to cover this over. Shirley’s text expresses ambivalence about what women’s entrance onto the London stage might mean for their male counterparts.

Shirley’s dedication openly entered the *querelles des femmes* by acknowledging recent events surrounding Queen Henrietta Maria’s performance of *The Shepherd’s Paradise* and William Prynne’s vitriolic attack in *Histrionastix*.²⁰ Taking up the women’s cause, Shirley satirizes Prynne, claiming admiration for Prynne’s “candour and innocent love to learning, especially to that musical part of human knowledge, poetry, and in particular that which concerns

¹⁸ *The Bird in a Cage* (3.3.37).

¹⁹ In his preface, Shirley specifically comments upon women’s acting and the current debate surrounding *Histrionastix*. This will receive further attention in the following pages.

²⁰ While Henrietta Maria’s pastoral masque was not the first in which women spoke, its all-female cast’s use of cross-dressing in addition to speech caught public attention. Thus, when Prynne’s text arrived in print and called “women actors, notorious whores” and disclaimed the practice of women’s dancing “a badge of lewde lascivious woemen and strumpettes” (216), he caught the attention of the court. Following *Histrionastix*’s publication, Charles I had Prynne arrested and held in the Tower; soon after, Prynne was found guilty and was forced to have his ears docked while an executioner axed copies of the polemic. At the time of *Bird*’s arrival in print, Prynne was being held in the Tower.

the stage” and asserting that his own play should find favor because it presents “a play or interlude personated by ladies” (178-180).²¹ Regardless of whether Shirley was genuinely a proponent of women’s acting,²² the fact remains that his play purposefully inserts itself within the debate and, as a result, gives women’s authorship and performance a space on stage that allows for the appreciation of both its mimetic strengths and dangers.²³

At its opening, the play unveils the contradictions inherent to early modern masculine portrayals of women and their closets: it juxtaposes the idea that women are simultaneously in need of protection and pose dangers to those around them with the notion that closets are isolating and safe as well as transgressive and in need of male monitoring. As the Duke and his daughter Eugenia enter the first scene, they debate about women’s obedience in relation to the closet, with the Duke positing that retirement “will [not] seem restraint to [his] loved daughter,” and that “loving duty teaches [her] to more/ Than command” (1.1.45, 75-76). Such a position echoes that of conduct writers like Barnabe Riche and Stephen Gosson, who assert control over female readers by constructing disagreement as evidence of such women’s disobedience and need for guidance. Riche, for example, opens his manual by asserting that “all virtuous women” will agree to and apply his conduct ideals, while those who disagree are “vnworthy to be pleased” (A2v). Thus he sets up a circular system by which all disagreement offers proof of

²¹ The political motivations behind Shirley’s dedication must be acknowledged. Upon defending Henrietta Maria and her practices, Shirley received a position in her court and began receiving an income from her as well. For more, see Hero Chalmers et. al.’s introduction in *Three Seventeenth Century Plays on Women and Performance* (2006). See also Ira Clark’s section on Shirley in *Professional Playwrights* (1992). For more on Henrietta Maria’s influence over Shirley’s work, see Julie Sanders, “‘Powdered With Golden Rain’: The Myth of Danae in Early Modern Drama” (2002).

²² Critics have engaged in a considerable debate on this point. Sanders, for example, argues that the play reveals Shirley as “inherently sympathetic” to women’s agency and performance (“Danae” 19). Chalmers and her co-writers take a more moderate approach, claiming that *Bird* ambivalently contrasts male and female performance. Meanwhile, Walker asserts that Shirley presents female acting so that it might be recuperated for patriarchy (399). Pastoor goes to the opposite extreme of Sanders in arguing that Shirley presents female acting as dangerous and productive of sinful behavior (6).

²³ While Shirley’s preface exists only in print, his staging occurred close to the firestorm surrounding *Histriomastix* and thus drew attention in performance as well.

transgression. Similarly, Gosson claims that any woman who defies his recommendations is a fool, and “it’s praise to be dispraised of fooles” (B3v). The Duke continues such circularity, arguing that his command keeps Eugenia’s honor “safe from the robber,” so that he might “keep off violence and soliciting/ Which may disturb [her] pleasures” until a suitable husband emerges (1.1.60, 62-63); he positions resistance as proof of immodesty, a desire for such unsuitable contact. In doing this, however, the Duke makes it increasingly clear that he fears her immodesty. Eugenia has appropriately interpreted his motivation in terms of trust: “I shall think Time has lost his wings/ When I am thus caged up [...] Do you suspect I shall break prison?” (1.1.50-51, 61). She is not the only one receiving protection here; after all, her doors will be locked and guarded from the **outside**, suggesting that she poses a threat to something or someone as well.

The discussions preceding Eugenia’s enclosure clarify what, precisely, Eugenia threatens—and it becomes increasingly clear that she destabilizes a system rather than merely an individual. Indeed, her considerable vocality in the play’s opening links Eugenia to outspoken and knowing women who possess sexual knowledge. Certainly this was a commonplace during the period. Riche, for example, warns men to be wary of “the woman who is smooth of tongue” and may seduce (E2r); meanwhile, Gosson claims that women use “love and lip” to rhetorically conceal their “filth” (A3v); Edmund Tilney instructs that a woman should “refrain her tongue” lest she reveal too much openness (659); and Toste writes that “Maides must be seene, not heard [...] A Maide that hath a lewd Tongue in her head,/ Worse than if she were found with a Man in bed” (in *Stallybrass* 126).²⁴ A connection such as this not only troubles the Duke’s (and, therefore, patriarchy’s) ability to define Eugenia as an obedient daughter. It more importantly

²⁴ For more critical discussion on the links among knowledge, speech, and sexuality, consult Lisa Jardine’s *Still Harping on Daughters* (1983) and Peter Stallybrass’s “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed” (1986).

excavates the truth at the base of patriarchy and the conduct literature it produces: in order for gender hierarchies to work, women must acquiesce and perform as they're told.²⁵ Women's wills are necessary to patriarchal operations, and thus women are recognizable agents with considerable power. Eugenia's vocality prods at this anxiety—and it reveals further contradictions in the system because it is through her obedience, her honest external performance of her internal concerns, that she causes such irritation. Eugenia's conjunctive performance of “be and seem” reveals that what she desires might run opposite to what the Duke desires. This becomes clear as others note the Duke's motivation for locking Eugenia in a tower: “she [has] affected Signior Philenzo,” an unsuitable marriage candidate, both attracting his desires and externally revealing her own (1.1.165). Indeed, she functions as the active pursuer in the sentence's grammar, suggesting that her behaviors are more dangerous than Philenzo's. Perenotto additionally comments that by locking the women away, the Duke “has prepared to stay all looseness in [their] bodies” (1.1.151). Eugenia is not alone to blame, then; as a woman, she is feared to be active and loose.²⁶

The Duke turns to the tower in the same fashion that conduct writers turn to the closet; he presents it as a sacrosanct space where Eugenia will be isolated and he can monitor what comes and goes. Even before Eugenia and her ladies enter their enclosure, however, the Duke (like a conduct writer, again) reveals anxieties about its penetrability:

So, my fears are over. In her restraint I bury all my jealousies [...]
 We have a daughter thus locked up [...]
 Make it appear with all the art thou canst
 Get but access to her. (1.1.217, 317-25)

²⁵ See Schwarz, “Chastity, Militant and Married” (2003).

²⁶ Notably, Morello's cross-dressing subplot comments upon the looseness and fluidity of male cross-dressing bodies as well. Thus, even embodied by a male actor, Eugenia poses a threat to gender systems.

The Duke's desire to test his daughter and his tower contradicts his assertion of contentment; he cannot trust either as a barrier because he cannot access the internal spaces of either without violating his own rules. What results is an inability to attain positive proof; as long as either remains unviolated, there always exists the unfulfilled potential for violation. The only thing he can prove is violation. Thus he invites Eugenia's disguised lover Philenzo to test his two feminine enclosures. Yet what the Duke fails to recognize is that threats to a pure, isolated concept of femininity do not only lurk without the closet; as the women enter their private space, they carry public practices and discourses with them.

Isolation in this circumstance leads the women to almost immediately look inside themselves and locate public modes of performance and entertainment. Not only do the women decide to perform an Ovidian scene,²⁷ but they do so by using the linked vocabularies of conduct manual didacticism and public theatre. In selecting the story of Danae, they grasp a plot that has instructive possibilities because it "comes near [their] own" and in which they "are all perfect in the plot" (4.2.2-3). At the same time, the issue of homosocial performance incites a need for cross-voiced performance. In planning for the entertainment, Donella specifically references practices of cross-dressing that were closely tied to the English stage—and she reveals that masculine stage practices have serious implications for performances on and off stage: "Do not distrust your own performance," she urges the women, "I ha' known men/ Ha' been insufficient, but women can play their parts" (3.3.36-37).²⁸ Not only should women be able to play their own

²⁷ Lynn Enterline has noted in her work on men's education that Ovid was considered the more erotic and transgressive choice of Latin reading. Indeed, manual writers like urge fathers and husbands to keep their daughters and wives from Ovidian texts, lest they learn to desire and then pursue those desires. In addition, the women's knowledge of a Latin text (or their purported access to it via Arthur Golding's early modern translation) suggests an education. For more on educated early modern heroines, see Heather James, "Shakespeare's Learned Heroines in Ovid's Schoolroom" (2004).

²⁸ Such a moment supports Callaghan's claims that stage vocality offered a breaking point for early modern performance. After all, the inability to produce a female voice could break the stage illusion; however, a too-

parts on stage—they may be better at men’s parts as well. Just as men can use women’s absences to create spaces of masculine dominance, so too can women utilize men’s absences to create a space for literary/dramatic self-sufficiency, to challenge men’s primacy in performing gender, and to suggest that enforced seclusion also offers women sexual self-sufficiency.²⁹ Donella’s assertion of masculine insufficiency is a double entendre to be sure; but it importantly gestures to masculine insufficiency in performing and writing. In the simultaneously private/public cloister, the women appropriate and rewrite Ovid. Calling their production *The New Prison*, they create a text that emphasizes feminine experiences; they suggest that *The Metamorphoses* does not contain a sufficient representation, but that their female authored and performed version can supplement it. What’s more, men’s representations and behaviors outside the cloister may fall short as well; thus women should, perhaps, desire to maintain their seclusion and create their own commonwealth. These possibilities have complicated effects when we consider that the “isolation” they promote supports and confounds patriarchal ends. If we take the last possibility as an example, we can see that, like the other options, it both supports patriarchal ends by containing female chastity³⁰ and also undermines them by prohibiting marital procreation and allowing feminine textual creation.

Despite speaking about performance in terms of City practice, the ladies excuse their performance by constructing it in terms of privacy:

We can receive no disparagement;
our spectators cannot jeer us, for we’ll speak but to the people in
the hangings and they have as much judgement as some men that

convincing female voice (as produced by castrati, for example), could unsettle audiences by creating a too-realistic representation.

²⁹ Refer to my discussion of *Tamer* in Chapter 4. See also Theodora Jankowski’s *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama* (2000) and Valerie Traub’s *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (2002).

³⁰ The violation of which is defined in phallic terms. For more, see Walker’s argument that celibacy and homoeroticism in these scenes risk the continuation of the patriarchal state (398).

are but clothes, at most but walking pictures. (3.3.43-47)³¹

Such attempts to excuse (and, therefore, allow) women's dramatic participation are not unique to Shirley's play. They actually access an apologetic tradition used for both closet drama and masque.³² Within the criticism surrounding *Bird*, writers indeed tend to take the women at their word. Kim Walker's work specifically claims that Shirley shows "sensitivity" toward female acting and excuses it because it is "a strictly private affair" within his play (395). Similarly, Hero Chalmers, Julie Sanders, and Sophie Tomlinson assert that Shirley purposefully stresses "the fact that this is a private performance, with no audience other than the people depicted in the tapestries that hang on the walls of the apartment" (28); they further argue that *Bird* must be a private household affair because the women "do not have enough performers to mount a full blown play" (29). Claims like these are highly problematic. Great stress does not necessitate fact; and the assumption that a limited number of players signals informality fails to take into account public theatre practices of double-casting.³³ The women, in fact, borrow heavily from London theatre in this sense. What's more, the very necessity of the women's making an excuse suggests an awareness of an audience—and thus of their performance's ability **to be read** as public in nature. Thus Shirley presents several layers of audienceship within his play. The first is one that Charles Pastoor indirectly names in his work on *Bird*'s dangerous didacticism: the women players, who "will be instructed in virtue as **the audience to their own dramatic production**" ("Puritan" 6, emphasis mine). The second exists in the "mixed audience of silk and

³¹ Such a moment not only speaks to issues of privacy and openness, but also to women's attempts to command and control their audiences in masque. After all, Donella narrates the audience's *inability* to jeer them—she speaks for them. She also defines their rank and education, placing herself above them.

³² For example, Chalmers, Raber, and Tomlinson all address this kind of apology in their work—they take women's assertions of privacy as literal, and Chalmers and Tomlinson both read this scene as being private. For more, see my discussions in Chapters 2-3.

³³ Specifically, refer to Bradley's work on dramatic doubling (casting one actor in two roles) and in asking audience members to take small roles in the absence of actors.

cruel gentlemen in the hangings” (4.2.31), representing the outside world and “faces of men” (Horne H1); meanwhile, the third is the silk-clothed men and women of the theatre audience, whose presence is mirrored in and therefore highlighted by the wall-hangings.³⁴ *The Bird in a Cage*, rather than representing the closet as “a sacrosanct and private female space [...] secure from prying eyes” (McNeill 207), represents it as excessively public and performative. Its links to masque and theatre extend public access to these forms as well. All three forms become simultaneously implicated in exposing women and allowing women to participate in and utilize that exposure.

The difficulty in demarcating the forms becomes increasingly noticeable when we ask ourselves what, precisely, these women perform. Shirley calls the inset “a play or interlude” during his dedication; Donella calls the performance a “play.” At other times the inset gets figured as a scene or a poetry recitation. On the one hand, it resembles closet drama in that the performance takes place in an enclosed space and in the absence of props or costumes; in addition, it allows women to take multi-gendered roles and it blurs the distinction between performers and audience.³⁵ Yet one could also say that Eugenia and her ladies perform a masque—and that the inhabitants of their enclosure create a feminine commonwealth or court similar to that of Anna of Denmark and of the current queen consort Henrietta Maria.³⁶ Defining dramatic form becomes anything but a straightforward process in *Bird*. The significance of this difficulty begins to manifest itself more clearly when we consider recent discussions, like those promoted by Sarah Sutherland, that encourage early modern critics to relinquish their own

³⁴ Dillon notes that “courtiers and gentlemen went to the theatre alongside professionals and apprentices” (*Theatre* 38). Thus Eugenia’s and her ladies’ references to a specific class of viewer also draws attention to the existence of viewers outside that rank—and to the expanded public that London theatre affords.

³⁵ This is an issue that I discuss at length in Chapter 2, and which I will discuss further momentarily.

³⁶ On this point, refer to my Chapter 3 or to Leeds Barroll’s biography of Anna. For more on the relationship between the queen consorts’ courts, performances, and authorship, see Chapter 3.

categorizations and define dramatic inset performances “by reference to the **play’s** understanding of what constitutes [them]” (Sutherland xi). Sutherland, Dillon, and Levin have all participated in this trend with great success. So what does it reveal when we consider that Shirley has presented the inset as both closet drama and masque—and as a piece of a play-text representing the gender-reversal of male homosocial theatre practice as well? I argue that the act of reading this convergence uncovers the permeability of the forms. What’s more, this permeability was contemporary with the play; therefore it should encourage us to rewrite our assumptions about the enclosures women faced by helping us to recognize that early modern audiences perceived women as involved in theatre representations.

Though Shirley represents women’s authorship and acting as always already present in public, and while he acknowledges, as a result, that women affect London theatre in material ways, this does not mean that *Bird* sees female dramatic participation as safe or wholly acceptable. Pastoor stands out as a notable example in Shirley criticism in regard to this issue, as he voices concern that Shirley and Prynne might actually share a position on the dangers of women’s performances. According to Pastoor, the playwright and the antitheatrical polemicist emerge as similar because both present women’s acting as leading to sexual sin. Pastoor specifically turns to conduct literature and education models to defend this point, claiming that “if the theory holds true—and it should in this instance, given the classical nature of the subject—the **young women will be instructed in virtue as the audience to their own dramatic production**” (“Puritan” 6, emphasis mine). This, he asserts, is not the case; indeed, the women’s cross-dressing variously unveils a preexisting same-sex desire and creates same-sex desire, as well as providing space for its practice (6-7).³⁷ While I disagree with Pastoor about

³⁷ The argument is actually troubling in this sense, as Pastoor argues that the play does both—but he moves between asserting one or the other, creating no distinctions or explanatory connections about whether the play causes or

this moment representing a failure in education, his claim actually begins to articulate how and why I think Shirley evinces his own anxieties about women's dramatic work. Indeed, Pastoor's assertion unwittingly positions women in a position of three-fold power: they are simultaneously the authors of the lesson, the instructors who deliver it, and the students who learn from and utilize it. Regardless of the form in which it occurs, women's acting and authorship provides lessons that have effects on and off the stage.

The play's end emphasizes that just as women bring cultural performance practices into their closets, so too can their "private" performance practices escape the closet and alter their daily behaviors. The resulting feminine performances can manipulate husbands, fathers, and their controlling systems in troubling ways; thus, the end of Shirley's *The Bird in a Cage* is unstable and suggests a new beginning in which Eugenia gains covert power through the disjunctive performance of "be and seem." Prior to her entrance into the tower/closet, Eugenia was represented as conjunctively performing "be and seem." Her emergence from the tower reveals the practice of an entirely new kind of performance, however—one that specifically inverts her approach to "being and seeming." The performance interlude in the tower has indeed provided knowledge; in addition to teaching about homoerotic possibilities and improvisation, it taught her the disjunctive possibilities of the exhortation. Her external behaviors do not have to correspond with her internal drives and can actually mask them. Whereas she formerly argued with her father, Eugenia now becomes secretive and begins to possess a private internal life that leads her to formulate a plan by which to attain her desires³⁸; indeed, she borrows again from the stage, alluding to *Romeo and Juliet* by having Philenzo drink a "poison" that merely puts him to

releases such desires. His point of origin for sin (the performance or the women themselves) becomes impossible to determine.

³⁸ Walker asserts that Eugenia's desire for a husband (with whom she'd presumptively continue the patriarchal line) causes her performance to be recuperated and utilized by patriarchy. Thus she isn't a transgressive figure (399).

sleep, convincing viewers that he has died. As the plot resolves itself, Philenzo informs those around him that Eugenia orchestrated a way for them to be together, “ma[king] some promise sure to such a purpose” (5.1.395). Women’s private experiences and exchanges, then, can teach women to manipulate as Gosynhyll’s *Schole House* suggests; that Eugenia manipulates her father the Duke is doubly troubling, as he is an over-determined symbol of patriarchy. Ultimately, Eugenia’s ability to script and direct her performance and Philenzo’s is dangerously effective. Moved by her appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet*, the Duke responds with emotion and regret:

Eugenia shall not marry Florence now,
Nor any other, since Philenzo’s dead:
[...] That minute took him hence
Wherein I first resolved to ha’ given thee to him. [...]
May heaven never forgive me then! But what
Avails too late compunction?
Noble gentleman,
Thou shalt have a princely funeral, and carry
On they cold marble the inscription of
Our son in death, and my Eugenia’s husband. (5.1.358-69)

Eugenia and Philenzo may perform their fear of death and separation, but the Duke’s “sorrow for [Philenzo’s] loss is real” (5.1.370). His relief and wonder at discovering Philenzo’s survival follow suit; rather than registering anger, he keeps his word and endorses the match.

The Duke’s approval also seeks to cover the emerging cracks in his power: “Take her,” he tells Philenzo, “a gift from me” (5.1.401). Yet, while his words seek to represent both Eugenia and the decision as his own, the Duke’s verbal assertion cannot reinscribe his daughter within his power. His words cannot erase the execution of her will in marrying Philenzo secretly, or in planning his fake “death by poison.” Eugenia’s will and her performance are undeniable. And their potential to teach behavior to women in the audience is troubling to traditional forms of patriarchal male authority. Appearing on an allegedly masculine governed stage, Eugenia’s actions shout out “doo as I doo,” much like the women Gosynhyll fears (B1v). Thus they unveil

women's ability to appropriate masculine stages, and, further, to appropriate their ends. Eugenia reveals that the blurring among forms allows women to more than appropriate theatrical spaces; it also allows them to take control of social conceptions of femininity and expression. Thus women authors and actors participating in any and all dramatic forms can use their performances to proliferate transgressive behaviors.

As in Middleton's play, Shirley's female characters learn from so-called private performances; in perceiving the disjunctive possibilities within "be and seem," they can practice performance out in the world, manipulating outside readers to gain their desired ends. In this way, while Shirley represents women's acting as potentially powerful and realistic, he also proposes that how women use that power offstage may function in reaction to masculine behavior. He suggests that rather than taking an approach to constraining women as the Duke does, viewers might instead recognize that women "are not curbed in with any other bridle then what they willingly put vpon them selves" (Riche B2r); if their wills go unrecognized and their desires (be they dramatic or erotic) are overtly restrained, women might use their knowledge to covertly overturn masculine authority through performance.

"The plot's surely laid"³⁹: Conclusion

Women Beware Women and *The Bird in a Cage* present varying approaches to how female authorship connects the dramatic forms; yet both versions express a feminine threat to usurp masculine space and to override masculine systems. Within Middleton's text, conduct constraints placed on female performances in the household lead to violence against women; denied a forum for complaint, the women use methods of authorship and acting to seize control

³⁹ *Women Beware Women* (5.2.21).

and create a space where performance and authorship can help them gain public retribution. Indeed, critics have noted that Middleton “loses artistic control of the masque” and the dramatic plot that follows (Levin 169); this is the case, I assert, because he creates female characters who take over. Thus they even usurp control from the playwright.⁴⁰ Shirley’s play, on the other hand, presents women’s public dramatic engagement as emerging from conduct literature demands for public performance within the household; women’s dramatic “play,” however, teaches them skills that seep into their daily lives and affect their abilities to manipulate men and their governing structures.

Through their texts and performances, women thus significantly shaped London commercial theatre throughout the Jacobean and Caroline periods. Not only did their contributions affect dramatic plots but, more importantly, their work shaped the period’s representations of women’s voices, bodies, and relationships to texts within all three dramatic forms. In their physical absence, their vocal and textual presences peopled the London stage, creating a linguistic imaginary within which women spoke, acted, and influenced the stage and its viewers. In examining conduct literature as an enabling force in women’s dramatic, instructional endeavors, we can begin to recover how drama offered women a space for expression before the Restoration—and how women’s expression both caused and was allowed by the intermingling of conduct literature didacticism with closet drama, masque, and theatre.

⁴⁰ At least, Middleton represents them as doing so.

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