PARADOXICAL PRIVATIZATION; AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF PRIVACY ON THE PERSONHOOD OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC HEROINES

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the inconsistencies in Renaissance women's access to privacy. Renaissance women are continually relegated to the private sphere, but within the private sphere, are denied actual privacy. From this paradox, a theoretical lens of paradoxical privatization emerges and can be utilized to understand the choices, or lack thereof, of Renaissance women. In this thesis, paradoxical privatization is applied in analysis of Juliet, Desdemona, and Ophelia, three fictional women of Shakespeare. Each character is explored in regards to a different realm: Juliet with space, Desdemona with possessions, and Ophelia with words. Ultimately, through paradoxical privatization, these women are not only denied agency, but are seen as possessions by male counterparts. Thus, this thesis utilizes a theoretical lens, paradoxical privatization, to understand the tangible realities of Renaissance women, both fictional and real.

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Introduction

The grave's a fine and private place,

But none, I think, do there embrace.

– Andrew Marvell

On Shakespeare's stage, the three female characters of Juliet, Desdemona, and Ophelia experience a colliding tension of both being confined to the private sphere and of facing barriers to pursuits of personal privacy. This liminal space of experiencing forced privacy and forced penetration of privacy illustrates societal hypocrisy and contradiction in regards to expectations of Renaissance women. Through these three women's reality, it becomes increasingly evident that Renaissance women are expected to primarily occupy the private sphere, but within that sphere, are denied actualized privacy. In this way, Renaissance society seemingly promotes the privacy of women, but truthfully advocates for the possession of women. The possession of women can be most readily identified through the ways in which these women lack control over their spaces, their possessions, their words, and, overarchingly, their bodies as well as the ways in which these realms are constantly attributed to and arbitrated by their male counterparts. Ultimately, in the deaths of these women, reality crystallizes: these women's deaths fall closer to a loss of property and social capital for their possessors rather than a loss of life for themselves. By dying, an insurmountable barrier to these women's spaces, possessions, words, and bodies materializes; grievance, at least to some degree, correlates to grief over the loss of property.

Thus, from this felt loss of property, the term *privatization* will be intentionally utilized to illustrate this emerging paradox. The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines privatization as

"the transfer of a business, industry, service, etc., from public to private ownership and control" (*OED def 1*). This term, first used in 1942, holds an innate modernity which aligns as Renaissance women knew no initial status of being unowned. Rather, privatized from birth, these women only knew "private ownership and control." Further, modern usage primarily correlates to the status and nature of businesses. This correlation underlines the monetary dimension of female privacy, an important emphasis as private ownership not only depleted women of financial freedom, but benefitted male counterparts in terms of reputation, wealth, and social capital. Lastly, this term will be embraced due to the way it passively positions Renaissance women in sentence structuring. Juliet *loses* her privacy reads very differently from Juliet *is* privatized. The former places responsibility upon the subject, Juliet, and holds an active verb while the latter, and chosen route, showcases how puncturing of privacy happens *to* these women; they are not responsible. This *privatization* has been deemed to be *paradoxical* due the inherent inconsistencies occurring. In the process of privatizing women, Renaissance society simultaneously expects women to remain relegated to the private sphere, but also forbids women from drawing any personal boundaries such as maintaining any kind of secrecy or ownership over their lives; from this tension an undeniable paradox emerges.

Privacy as a theory will also ground the term *privatization* as the previous definition holds circularity. What does it mean to move from public to *private* ownership and control? Without a solid theory of privacy, paradoxical privatization loses its meaning. While privacy holds many connotations, for the purposes of this analysis, Sasha Roberts' and the *OED*'s definition of privacy will be layered to create a specific theory of privacy upon which argument and conclusion will be rooted.

Sasha Roberts formulates her definition of privacy in regards to Renaissance women's access to reading. Roberts considers privacy to be a "controlling act – the ability to choose your own companions, or to be alone – enabled by material conditions: the creation of withdrawn, hidden, personal or secure spaces" (Roberts). Ingrained in Roberts' definition lies an inherent tension; one must possess some level of control in order to establish private pockets of space, but those very spaces act as the source of control. The *OED* adds additional insight into the dimensionality of privacy through coining two necessary conditions of privacy in their primary definition. Privacy, according to the *OED*, necessitates the conditions of being "a matter of choice or right" and of being "[free]" from interference or intrusion" (*def. 1*). From these sources, the following condensed theory of privacy will be utilized for subsequent analysis: *privacy consists of the ability to enact a controlling act over one's spatial, social, and physical reality without interference.* With this enumerated theory of privacy in hand, the impact of privacy, or the lack thereof, on the perceived personhood of Desdemona, Juliet, and Ophelia will be explored.

Prior to focused analysis of each unique character, in order to understand the interrelated concepts of privatization and possession, one must understand the distinctions between the classical body and the grotesque body. The classical body consists of an image of a "finished, completed" man whose "opaque surface and…'valleys' acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world" (Bakhtin 320). Conversely, the grotesque body is "unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits," and is "not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries" (Bakhtin 26, 27). Further, the grotesque body focuses on parts of the body "open to the outside world," including "the open mount, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose"

(Bakhtin 26). These binary body forms, and associated virtues and vices, also correlate to occupation of spaces. For instance, due to the language of the classical body being deemed the "tongue of official literature or of the ruling classes," the classical body correlates to spaces wherein this language governs, such as "palaces, churches, institutions, and private homes" (Bakhtin 154). In contrast, the grotesque body favors the marketplace as the marketplace holds "a certain extraterritoriality in a world of official order and official ideology" and interrogates and subverts the privileged places of the classical body (Bakhtin 154, Stallybrass 124).

This distinction gives context as to the prioritization of the privatization of women's bodies and their movement through spaces. To evade the crassness, obscenity, and abuse that comes with the grotesque body, conduct books emerged in which ideals and associated privacy of the classical body became arguably institutionalized. Norbert Elias tangibly captures proper actions in regard to the body and to society in his book, *The Civilising Process, Power, and Civility*. In one example, Elias writes:

> In the sixteenth century, Montcil tells us, in France as everywhere else, the common people blow their noses without a handkerchief, but among the bourgeoisie it is accepted practice to use the sleeve. As for the rich, they carry a handkerchief in their pockets; therefore, to say that a man has wealth, one says that he does not blow his nose on his sleeve (Elias 145).

Elias' argument not only presents a practical claim regarding outward bodily propriety, but underlines this claim and others with an overarching belief that the social imperative is to behave in way that does not offend others (Elias 80). This social imperative led an obsession with the

cleansing of orifices and heightened enclosure of the body. Which, in turn, cultivated an expectation of a closed individuality and a separation of the social elite from the vulgar (Stallybrass 125).[1]

These etiquette norms held ramifications in all spheres of life. As Pierre Bourdieu so eloquently puts, "the concessions of *politeness* always contain *political* concessions" (Bourdieu 95). In essence, while it *is* about handkerchiefs, it isn't *only* about handkerchiefs as these handkerchiefs connote identity, class, and position in society. The same coalescing polite and political concessions occur with respect to gender roles. For women, unlike men, Renaissance society categorized the female body as inherently grotesque and concluded that constant surveillance is needed to prevent the metastasizing of the grotesque body. Thus, Renaissance women experienced persistent surveillance that "concentrated upon three specific areas: mouth, chastity, and threshold of the house" (Stallybrass 126).

This surveillance privatizes women only in a direct manner, as some forms of surveillance can be a public act, but also indirectly; by having such high standards of conduct and such high restrictions, many women responded by quieting their mouths, adhering to chastity, and staying within the threshold of the homes. For example, in Francesco Barbaro's treatise *On Wifely Duties*, he writes, "It is proper… that not only arms but indeed also 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" (Barbaro 205). From the implications of this treatise, and many other treatises, silence and chastity become "homologous to women's enclosure within the house" (Stallybrass 127). This privatization of women can be further seen in Henrie Smith's 1591 metaphor where he writes that Men and women were "two birds… the Cocke flieth abroad to

[1] Note: This point and Elias' instructions are relevant for future discussion of Desdemona's handkerchief in Chapter Two.

bring in, the Dam sitteth upon the nest to keepe al at home. So God hath made the man to travaile abroade, and the woman to keepe home" (Dreher 17)

While the text's explicit command for the woman "to keepe home" seems to simply consist of yet another manner of privatizing women, two combative arguments emerge. The first consists of the claim that by being at home, Renaissance women experience heightened privacy in that their inner lives remain protected from penetration from the public. The second consists of a dual thread of thought occurring in Renaissance era England that expected women, as governors of the household, to engage in the public sphere in order to provide for their home.

To engage with the first claim, dialogue must focus on the quantity and quality of privacy attained inside the home. On the first count, the answer proves to be more complex than modern understandings of indoor privacy. For poorer households, homes often consisted of one large open space shared by the entire family unit and thus, minimal privacy could be actualized (Crane 5). Even for the relatively wealthy, a lack of truly private space presented itself through the fact that "servants were ubiquitous and often slept in the same bedchamber as family members" (Crane 5). In fact, even a closet "[provided] minimal privacy; when you entered, with whom you entered, and audible sounds might all be within a servant's purview" (Crane 5). In her analysis on architectural privacy, Lena Orlin communicates that "early modern houses were riddled with holes[2], both accidentally and intentionally, through which illicit activity was often observed" (Crane 5). Ultimately, for the relatively wealthy, in indoor spaces, Renaissance women still could not readily choose companions nor solitude and did not possess easy access to truly "withdrawn, hidden, secure, and safe" spaces (Roberts). In fact, in practice, outdoor spaces fulfill the definition of privacy to a greater degree than indoor spaces. Outdoor spaces held a casual

[2] Holes, even in an architectural sense, posit the same concerns of the grotesque body. See Bakhtin.

association with discovery, secrecy, "illicit sexual activity, excretory functions, treasonous plotting, and gossip," all of which hold connections to the conditions of privacy (Crane 5). Arguably, these outdoor spaces provide more opportunity to act as a private individual which challenges modern links between privacy and interiority. As exteriority falls in line with the grotesque body and does not seem to be a viable option for women, Renaissance women's access to identity formation and understanding of self faced severe limitations. Lastly, whether or not women find access to being alone, "interferences and intrusions" are not just likely, but deemed a requirement of a dutiful husband[3] (*OED* def. 1).

The second claim regarding women as head of households holds some degree of merit in the sense that women did interact with the public sphere. However, both the means and the purposes of these interactions often revolved around a specific purpose: economics. Erica Longfellow argues that "a woman's economic activity, such as doing the marketing, managing the household accounts, or selling products she had made, was often vital for the survival of the household and conferred on her a degree of autonomy and agency" (Longfellow 327). It logically follows that economic activity would bring wives outside of the home and into the public sphere. While this economic activity proves noteworthy, it in and of itself does not erase the distinction of spheres previously discussed. First, women still faced exclusion from official public functions in the church or state. Secondly, to care for the private sphere of the household does not equate to true public involvement; the setting of selling may be public, but being the manager of a household confines women's responsibilities and duty to the private sphere. In fact, Lena Orlin "prefers the term 'oeconomic' to describe the discourses about the household that sought to implicate it in larger hegemonic structures of order and hierarchy" (Orlin 11, Crane

[3] This duty of a faithful husband is explored in depth in Chapter One. See Alberti.

18). Oeconomics constitutes its own norms as it necessarily straddles the private and public sphere respectively. Lastly, women do not engage publicly from their own interests as their engagement revolves around the service of home. For these reasons, economic activity does not provide an adequate defense against the privatization of women.

In continuation of the gender disparity with respect to the acceptable level of *openness* of bodies and spaces, in his fifth-century treatise *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon stresses the importance of abiding by spatial gender norms by claiming that spaces "literally produce the effect of gender, transforming the mental and physical character of those who occupy the wrong place" (Wigley 334). He states that if a man is "compelled to sit indoors, the body becomes effeminate and mind loses its strength" (Xenophon). Mark Wigley contextualizes Xenophon's perceived threat of spatial confusion as a threat not of the "feminization of the man, but of the feminine" as a whole (Wigley 335). He continues, "If the woman goes outside the house, she becomes more dangerously feminine rather than more masculine. A woman's interest, let alone active role, in the outside calls into question her virtue" (Wigley 328). The fear of a woman moving through space as freely as a man is a fear of a woman no longer controlled by house and husband. Etiquette norms of movement come from and reinforce the private ownership and control of women.

Therefore, women who frequented public space and exhibited linguistic fullness were deemed to be "harlots." To have and to hold the title of woman required a cultivation of Bakhtin's classical body where one is "rigidly finished" and showcases signs of this classical body through an "enclosed body, closed mouth, and locked house" (Stallybrass 127). The development of the ideal of a classical body supports a concurring categorization of women as property. Interestingly, in legal discourse of early modern England, a "woman" was directly

described as property; legislatively, "by marriage the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended" (*The Laws* 65). This legal discourse extends to intersecting relational and economic dialogues as well. In *The Blazon of Jealousie*, Benedetto Varchi theorizes:

> Property or Right is a kinde of lnterest or Clayme, which one challengeth to any thing as his owne, and as peculiar and proper to himselfe, and wherein no other can (truely) Demand any share or part. Yca, so peremptory arc some men in this point (especially if they know that they may lawfully challenge this high pris'd commoditie of love as their owne, and that they have payed for the same) as they have cast off their Wives, and Mistresses, onely upon a meere suspicion… (Varchi 28)

Varchi's words showcase the justification behind the right for men to cast off suspicious women since women, "unlike most property, can bring dishonor to the landlord even as he possesses it" (Stallybrass 127). Varchi goes so far as to even argue that "when this our high-pric'd Commoditie chanceth to light into some other merchants hands, and that our private Inclosure proveth to be a Common for others, we care no more for it" (Varchi 20). Essentially, through commodifying a marital relationship to that of economic exchange, Varchi casts wives as passive possessions and husbands as the active agent or merchant (Stallybrass 128). In "Patriarchal Territories," Peter Stallybrass surmises that when "'covert,' the wife becomes her husband's symbolic symbol," but when "free,' [the wife] becomes the opening through which that capital disappears" (Stallybrass 128). In this way, a woman's openness to on the extreme end, extramarital connection, and on the mundane end, societal connection, holds the potential to transform her from private property to a destroyer or thief of private property. Agency acts as the

crux of this property shift as when a husband realizes he cannot control his wife's relations, he begins to see her not as a possession, but as an active threat to his possession. This logic, albeit riddled with logical fallacies, establishes the foundation upon which the contradicting realities of Renaissance women can simultaneously exist; Renaissance women are both confined to the private sphere and blocked in their pursuit of privacy as their male counterparts seek to maintain possession over the social capital that is "their" covert woman. The fact that this logic holds obvious flaws communicates the frustrating nature of societal expectations and social norms; these rules inherently did not make sense and rather, their purpose merely constitutes a desire for control. Or, in the language of the *OED*, these rules existed to aid "the transfer of a [Renaissance woman] from public to private ownership and control" (*OED def. 1*).

In the interest of understanding the ways in which women of Shakespeare are paradoxically privatized, analysis will focus on three realms, with an overarching fourth, where either possession or agency could be engendered: spaces, possessions, and words will be explored independently and in conversation with each other and with the supplementary realm, bodies. The first chapter will focus on Juliet's navigation of space and the ways in which the penetration of her spatial privacy coalesces with and culminates in her death. In the second chapter, analysis will unpack Desdemona's relation to her possessions, namely that of her handkerchief, and how this possession both deepens and provides metaphor to Othello's possession of Desdemona. In the third chapter, Ophelia's words, and at times silence, will be considered to illustrate the ways in which Ophelia both conforms to and contradicts chastity of the mouth. To begin to untangle paradoxical privatization, let us turn to Juliet.

Chapter One. "Sit Still and Watch Over Things"; Analyzing Juliet's Spatial Navigation in Conversation with the Continued Penetration of her Privacy

> *I agree, for you are, indeed, precisely of the opinion of the ancients. They used to say that men are by nature of a more elevated mind than women... The character of men is stronger than that of women and can bear the attacks of enemies better, can stand strain longer, is more constant under stress. Therefore men have the freedom to travel with honor in foreign lands. Women, on the other hand, are almost all timid by nature, soft, slow, and therefore more useful when they sit still and watch over things. It is as though nature thus provided for our well-being, arranging for men to bring things home and for women to guard them. The woman, as she remains locked up at home, should watch over things by staying at her post, by diligent care and watchfulness. The man should guard the woman, the house, and his family and country, but not by sitting still.*
>
> *– Leon Battista Alberti*

In the third book of *Della Famiglia*, entitled "Liber Tertius Familie: Economicus" (literally, the law [nomos] of the household [oikos]), Leon Battista Alberti carefully defines his moralized spatial and social confinement of women. Alberti's opinion falls in line with implications of the grotesque and classical bodies as his argument collides with protecting the classicality of women's bodies by keeping women from the *openness* of the public sphere. Alberti leaves little room for interpretation as to how women should move through space through his proclamation that women should not move and rather, "sit still and watch over things"

(Alberti). This proclamation inherently spatializes the privatization of women in the sense that women face confinement in both destination and movement. In terms of destination, Alberti relegates women to the private sphere of the home while in terms of movement, Alberti privileges only men. This privatization fulfills the theorized paradoxes of privatization through Alberti's call for men to "guard women"; in essence, the delineated etiquette requires women to remain in the private sphere, but simultaneously denies women the ability to control their own personal boundaries.

In *Romeo and Juliet,* Juliet's pertinent and primary spaces consist of the wall, her window, the imagined cage, her bedchambers, the friar's cell, and her tomb. Juliet's navigation of these spaces, as well as others' penetration of these spaces, prove vital in understanding the ways in which Juliet experiences privatization, resistance, and violation. While Alberti prescribes and describes rigid delineation for women both in terms of destinations and movement, Juliet's own experiences offer nuance to this delineation; the expectations of her family constrain her movements, but her primary spaces yield a semblance of privacy that allows her to explore resistance and simultaneously experience violation. While Juliet tries to use language as a means of enacting control within her private spaces, external pressures override any semblance of control Juliet possesses. Juliet can only utilize language to cultivate privacy when she holds distance from the cultural forces impinging upon her. However, when that distance dramatically reduces and the pressure to marry Paris becomes exigent, rather than hypothetical, her ability to choose her companions and evade interference or intrusion conversely evaporates. This interference and intrusion on her and Romeo's love occurs from a variety of predictable public sources, including that of cultural pressures and parental authority. However, a simultaneous intrusion on Juliet herself occurs from an unlikely source: Romeo himself.

While if it was up to Juliet, she would choose Romeo, Romeo's methods of courtship, language utilized, and continued penetration of her private spaces also constitute interference and draw into question the degree to which Juliet consents to the sharing of her private spaces with Romeo. In this way, as Juliet experiences intersecting, paradoxical forms of privatization from the public, her parents, her public lover, Paris, and her private lover, Romeo, the true barrier to Juliet's choices and rights crystallizes: how can Juliet exercise control over her private spaces, speech, and body to pursue her desire when her desire himself, Romeo, interferes and intrudes upon her control? Upon comprehension of her reality of reduced control, Juliet seeks to withdraw to a secure private place to repossess privacy, namely that of the two *OED* pillars of privacy: choice and lack of interference. In the end, the irreparable penetration of her privacy and continued interference catalyzes Juliet's choice to stab herself. Whether this choice stems from a refusal to be publicly commodified or a surrender to the public commodification she has and will continue to experience, the link between Juliet's paradoxical privatization and forthcoming public commodification plays a heavy role in Juliet's suicide.

While the window consists of the first pertinent space of Juliet, it's equally important to understand the spaces she doesn't inhabit, namely that of the street and the wall during the opening scene. In this scene, masculinity patter opens the play as a brawl brews. The Capulet servant Gregory practices, "To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand," a statement that comfortably drapes over only the male characters (I.1.8) Interestingly, Gregory and his companion Sampson face a dilemma captured in opposing articulations: "take the wall," and "the weakest goes to the wall" (I.1.11-12). In these opposing articulations, it can be seen that, on one hand, these men want to "take up the position that is already waiting for them, the position of [their] own lack; [they want] to stir and occupy it, displacing [their] rivals, abusing their women"

(Appelbaum 252). It can also be seen that these men "want to show [themselves] not stirring toward [the wall], but already standing there in possession of their masculinity. Valiantly standing, [they are] confirmed, at last, in [their] manhood" (Appelbaum 252). These dueling dilemmas of perceived masculinity do more to highlight the immense privileges of Renaissance men than they do to illicit commiseration or compassion. First, in reference back to Alberti, these men have the permission "to move, to stir, to stand, to push, to thrust," all of which lay forbidden to the women called to "sit still" (I.1.8, 16, 15, Alberti). Furthermore, these men possess the ability to choose which action they deem most appropriate; they don't have to move, nor do they have to stand, they have the choice. Thirdly, these men enjoy freedom of conversation in the public sphere. This easy access to outdoor space allows them to partake in gossip, plotting, and secrecy, all of which hold connections to privacy. Lastly, in their deciphering of standards of masculinity, they choose to consider violence over women. Sampson asserts he will "thrust [their] maids to the walls" and even goes so far as to threaten cutting off the "heads of the maids, or their maidenheads" (I.1.16-17, 24-25). These assertions, the first holding sexual connotations and the second holding connotations of a deep violence, communicate that despite these dilemmas of masculinity, men still hold power; no paradoxical force threatens to privatize them. Rather, the paradoxes they face consist of self-inflicted paradoxes as to the best method of navigating their own power.

This same wall reappears within Romeo and Juliet's courtship and intertwines important symbolic and tangible takeaways presented in this opening scene. This reappearance holds reference to the wall, but audience members and Juliet herself are not privy to Romeo's actual flight. According to Romeo, his utilization of "love's light wings" allowed him to "o'er-perch these walls" (II.2.66). He continues, "For stony limits cannot hold love out, / And what love can

do, that dares love attempt. / Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me" (II.2.67-69). Juliet appropriately surmises that "the orchard walls are high and hard to climb" (II.2.63). This dialogue between the two lovers about the wall matters for a variety of reasons. It matters first because it captures the Capulets' determination to keep others, namely the Montagues, out (Atwood 15). It also captures the Capulet's determination to keep Juliet inside, safe and protected. Lastly, it helps characterize Romeo's determination to see Juliet, both because of and in spite of Juliet's desires.

This wall consists of the same wall that provoked the brawl prior, but Juliet's actual location differs. Shakespeare "carefully removes the street from Juliet's immediate reach by flipping the house 180 degrees. Her window overlooks what we are told is an enclosed courtyard, a vestige of an older urban architectural model that aimed to provide privacy and protection" (Atwood 107). Juliet depends upon this architectural model for protection and although she communicates gratitude for Romeo's presence, his presence undermines the protective measures in place and ultimately, undermines Juliet's consent. It's crucial to note who "moves" over the wall and who, effectively, "sits still." This continued thread of thought of Romeo's "stirring" and Juliet's "stillness" illustrates the gendered and relational inequality of not just space, but movement through space as well.

Prior to Romeo's flight, Juliet utilizes her perceived affordance of a "withdrawn, hidden, personal, and secure space" (Roberts). As previously communicated, solitude did not readily present itself to Juliet. From the presence of servants, most often her Nurse, to the looming emotional and physical presence of her parents, to the watchful eyes of the public, this moment of privacy feels fleeting. And so, with choice in hand, she utilizes her speech to claim ownership over this seemingly private space. Not by a wall, but by her window, Juliet experiences an

"indistinguished space" wherein she has the room "to think, to desire, [and] to produce meaning in [her own mind and body]" (Abate 5). Audience members can see Juliet's wrestle with her concept of self as she thinks ("What's in a name?"), as she desires ("gentle Romeo"), and as she produces meaning in her mind ("O, for a falconer's voice…") and meaning in her body ("the mask of night is on my face") (II.2.43, 93, 159, 85).

By being at a window, it's critical to evoke several scholars' conceptions of architectural boundaries as a whole and windows specifically in order to understand the spatial context at hand. Emma Atwood encourages readers to reference:

> Pearson's argument that "gender boundaries and their transgression are enacted through physical, architectural boundaries" (Pearson 163), Lucking's discussion of the window as a "boundary between the house and the garden" (Lucking 12), Zucker's argument that "doors and windows, liminal sites on the still-congealing boundaries between public and private spheres in early modern London, were vexed locations...in both the city and its drama" (Zucker 122), Orendorf's argument that windows are the "weak point in the boundary between public and private spheres" (Orendorf 31), Scolnicov's dramaturgical treatment of the skene as the "boundary between female and male domains" (Scolnicov 25), and Lewis's discussion of windows as the "open boundary between the interior, domestic, and female realm, on the one hand, and the outer, public, male world on the other" (Lewis 482) (Atwood 86).

This liminal space of the window and its open boundary between, as Lewis puts it, the "interior domestic, and female realm" and the "outer, public, and male world" needs to be noted (Lewis

482). Even in conversation with herself, Juliet darts beyond the privatization she continually experiences. Her hopes, her dreams, all combat both axes of privatization; by desiring more than her domesticity, she challenges relegation to the private sphere and by keeping these desires private, she concretely pursues her own privacy. However, as previously alluded to, Juliet is not truly alone.

While stemming from romantic pursuit, and in many ways desired by Juliet, Romeo's interruption constitutes an interference and an intrusion to Juliet's privacy and challenges her ability to enact a controlling act. First, as referenced prior, Romeo physically penetrates the architectural boundary of a wall and linguistically penetrates the architectural boundary of a window. Secondly, Romeo overhears Juliet. This overhearing "renders public that which is intended private" and exposes Juliet's "innermost thoughts and desires" to Romeo without her consent (Prusko 117). He notably does not expose his presence immediately, and invasively listens as Juliet yearns, "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? / Deny thy father and refuse thy name, / Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, / And I'll no longer be a Capulet" (II.2.33-36).

However, upon revealing his presence, Juliet consensually receives and offers linguistic validation. Likely, Juliet's subsequent validations hold a greater degree of affection and boldness than they would have had Romeo not intruded upon her dreaming. James Hirsh theorizes, "Romeo's awareness of the depth of Juliet's feelings at this early stage renders completely moot the wooing procedure of the courtly love tradition… [Juliet's] knowledge that he has heard her speeches and therefore knows of the depth and sincerity of her feelings allows her to dispense entirely with the customary coyness" (Hirsh 126). To at least some degree, Juliet absorbs Romeo's violation of her privacy and fixates upon marriage as a solution to both her desire and

Romeo's perception of her desire. Juliet utilizes language as a means to recapture control by asking for commitment beyond Romeo swearing to the moon, organizing a plan for marriage, and creating a metaphorical space in which she subverts the freedom of destination and movement between her and Romeo.

This metaphorical space of a cage emerges in Juliet's articulated imagination. She conjures:

> 'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone —
> And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
> That lets it hop from its hand,
> Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
> And with a silken thread plucks it back again,
> So loving-jealous of his liberty (II.2.177-182).

She concludes this imagery with insistence that if Romeo were indeed her bird, she would kill him with "much cherishing" (II.2.184). In this metaphor, "Juliet imagines keeping Romeo on a silken thread, perhaps a fellow prisoner confined in her parents' house. Jealous of his male liberty, coming and going as he chooses, she identifies herself here as a 'wanton,' a naughty child. She has captured Romeo; the noble bird of prey is now downsized to a pet bird" (Vogel 4). Unconventionally, Romeo proves agreeable to her fantasy, citing "I would I were thy bird" (II.2.182).

While Juliet likely possesses a vivid imagination, her invocation of bondage provides insight into her own relationship with liberty, or lack thereof. For Juliet, her bondage is top of

mind, an invocation that comes easily because she has felt it so deeply. This metaphorical space illustrates Juliet's attempt to exert control in a world where she possesses little; in this self-created linguistic space she can "to move, to stir, to stand, to push, to thrust," where Romeo must " sit still" (I.1.8, 16, 15, Alberti). The truth of this space is that while Juliet progressively subverts gendered boundaries of space, which Xenophon previously cautions against due to the threat of femininity, this space holds no tangibility beyond Juliet's mind. Romeo feeds into her vision, but from a place of desire and not legitimate consideration. Thus, the subversion holds no real weight; its weight merely lies in the potential empowering of Juliet.

Both the physical space of the window and the metaphorical space of the cage face outside interference from the interruptions of the nurse. Continually, the nurse interjects into their dialogue as she emphatically calls "Madam!" "Madam!" (II.2.149, 152). The nurse's repeated, insistent calls undermine the supposed security of the physical, emotional, and linguistic private space Romeo and Juliet occupy (Prusko 120). A simultaneous interference consists of the physical gulf between Romeo and Juliet. Juliet chides, "what satisfaction canst thou have tonight?" (II.2.126) This chiding reminds audience members of both the "impracticality of their union and the physical spatial division of the stage: Juliet aloft, Romeo below" (Atwood 110).

In his theory first outlined in *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, Robert Weimann "identifies two key locations on the stage, each embodying a specific mode of performance and serving as a particular expression of social authority" (Lin 284). The first key location is the *locus*, which comes in the form of "a scaffold, be it a domus, sedes, or throne" and constitutes the area of the stage furthest from the audience (Weimann *Shakespeare* 74, Lin 284). The other key location, the *platea*, was a "platformlike acting area situated closest to the

audience" (Lin 284). On the *platea* "the play world continue[d] to be frankly treated as a theatrical dimension of the real world"; in essence, the *platea* correlates to reality while the *locus* holds elements of elitism and superiority (Weimann *Shakespeare* 74, 76, 80, Lin 284). Each of these locations held associations with social hierarchy roles as it was the "more highly ranked persons who sat on the scaffolds" (Lin 284).

With Juliet aloft and Romeo below, the respective associations of the playhouse can be applied to the interpersonal relations between the lovers. In her loftiness, Juliet holds a semblance of authority over Romeo, but also lacks an understanding of reality. Her power holds little privilege as it is Romeo who construes reality to her. In the garden[4], Romeo takes the position of the *platea* which theoretically holds less privilege, but in practice allows for greater movement, proximity, and connection to the public sphere.

This physical spatial division serve as a poignant expression of the gulf between Romeo and Juliet, a gulf that widens through the "movements Juliet makes through the window, back into the house and behind the façade when the Nurse calls to her from offstage: "Anon, good Nurse" (2.1.137); "I come, anon" (Atwood 110, II.1.150). In reference to Juliet's retreats and returns, David Lucking argues, "Juliet's physical oscillation between the house interior and the garden, between the promptings of the Nurse's voice and those of Romeo's, is vividly suggestive of the tension between the worlds of public and private identity that have come into collision in this play" (Lucking 11). By merely engaging in this tension between private and public identity, Juliet resists etiquette norms of sitting still; her mere movement constitutes a minor rebellion.

[4] In "Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England," Mary Crane describes how private gardens "represent a space that blurs the distinction between concepts of inside and outside" (8). These gardens "functioned as a kind of outdoor extension of the house, often offering more opportunity for solitude and privacy than the interior" (Crane 8). With this context in mind, the unequal access to privacy between Romeo and Juliet can be seen through the space they inhabit in act two scene two.

Another pertinent space consists of the friar's cell. When desiring marriage, the nurse advises, "then hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell; / There stays a husband to make you a wife" (II.5.68-69). There, in the Friar's cell, Romeo and Juliet marry, plot, and put forth every effort to be together; as they retreat from the world, under the supervision of the friar, they can "speak freely, lay bare their interior selves… [and] express thoughts they must conceal from their families and friends" (Prusko 123). As the Protestant Reformation had cultivated a new conception of interior spirituality wherein individuals could possess "unmediated access to spiritual writings and a personal relationship with God," the inherently spiritual nature of the Friar's cell affirms Romeo and Juliet's prioritization of their interior selves (Prusko 116).

As their story progresses and Romeo's banishment looms, Romeo and Juliet retreat into this primary space of her bedchambers. As privacy constitutes a "necessary precondition for the development of intimacy," by having access to this private space, Romeo and Juliet can be intimate and consummate their marriage despite the exterior chaos of Tybalt's death (Huebert 14). For a moment, Romeo and Juliet are simply husband and wife; in the safety of this private space, Juliet gets to choose Romeo to be her "love," "lord," "husband," and "friend!" (III.5.43). Notably, this spatial, emotional, and physical connection both depicted in conversation and assumed in reference to sex, likely occur in or by her bed. In Shakespearean drama, "beds represent a *locus* of patriarchal power and female sacrifice" (Weimann "Bifold" 409). As seen in the window scene, Juliet's initial sole occupancy of the *locus* shifts as Romeo and her occupy together the *locus* of her bed. In her bedchambers, no gulf from spatial distance nor contrasting occupancies of *locus* and *platea* exists between the lovers. Juliet arguably possesses a high level of privacy in that she experiences a withdrawn space, with a companion of her choosing, and, for the time being, without interference. However, the moment proves fleeting as the nurse once

again calls “Madam!,” illustrating a greater crack occurring within Juliet’s access to secure private places and an emerging impediment to her ability to choose Romeo as her companion (III.5.37).

In act three scene five, Juliet’s privacy is irreparably punctured when she loses the ability to decide who her ultimate companion will be. Capulet has made the decision to force her to not just marry Paris, but to marry him in three days despite Juliet’s linguistic resistance. He lectures, “Fettle your fine joints ‘gainst Thursday next, / To go with Paris to Saint Peter’s Church / Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither” (III.5.154-156). Interestingly, this stripping of autonomy occurs in the very same space, her bedchambers, wherein she and Romeo had communed moments prior, but Juliet no longer has the same control over her spatial privacy.

Without possession of control over her future and experiencing the loss of privacy within her bedchambers, Juliet retreats back to the Friar’s cell in an attempt to regain control. She paints this retreat under a lie that she leaves “to make confession” which proves true, but not in the spiritual sense her nurse and the Capulet household would presume (III.5.235). Rather the confession Juliet partakes in consists of a “ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement… a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it” (Prusko 123, Foucault). Essentially, by bearing her inner self to the Friar, Juliet can begin to conceive and perceive of herself as an individual (Prusko 124). However, before she can even partake in this pursuit of self-conceptualization, the security of this second private space deteriorates as Paris’s presence prevents both physical and linguistic privacy for Juliet. Juliet in and of herself cannot convince Paris to leave, showcasing a lack of control. Out of kindness, the friar uses his power to communicate to Paris that he and Juliet “must entreat the time alone” (IV.1.40).

There, in that insecure and yet still indistinguished space, Juliet can confess and utilize her ability "to think, desire, and produce meaning in her body and mind" (Abate 5). She cries, "O shut the door! And when thou hast done so, / Come weep with me" (IV.1.44-45). She confesses, "I long to die, / If what thou speak'st speak not of remedy" (IV.166-67). The predicament she wrestles with lies in the fact that she has lost her privacy; she no longer can control who she spends time with and she no longer has the material conditions necessary for that control. The paradox of privatization seems to be insurmountable. Juliet is relegated to the stillness of domesticity and unable to draw a personal boundary to combat this relegation; she cannot evade interference nor utilize choice when faced with her father's command to enter this loveless marriage. The friar plots in hopes of combating this relegation. First, by giving Juliet a potion, the Friar tries to change her material conditions and allow her to withdraw to the hidden space of the "same ancient vault where all the kindred of the Capulets lie" (IV.1.111-112). Secondly, by sending Romeo a letter, the Friar hopes to grant Juliet's wish to be with Romeo.

Juliet's bedchambers shift from undertones of life in consummation to undertones of death in the friar's instructions to drink the potion. Ironically, for Juliet to drink this potion, she must possess some semblance of privacy. She asks, "let me now be left alone," a request granted by the nurse and Lady Capulet (IV.3.9). Powerfully, in this scene, as she laments in her bedchambers, Juliet experiences privacy with no interference or intrusion; no one overhears her nor does anyone interrupt her. But her solitude does not equate to true privacy as Juliet does not enact the controlling act of choosing to be alone. Juliet cannot withdraw from her marriage to Paris and she can only withdraw for the night when her nurse and mother exercise their own controlling acts of granting Juliet solitude. In this way, Juliet's privacy is privy to others' conning and convenience; it's not a matter of true choice and rights.

Additionally, in Juliet's speech prior to taking the potion, she communicates her own internalized fears about being alone. She wonders, "How if, when I am laid into the tomb, / I wake before the time that Romeo / Come to redeem me?... / Shall I not, then, be stifled in the vault?" (IV.3.30-33). This query communicates her understood lack of control; once she takes this potion, she is helpless as to what happens next. Juliet also expresses a fear of a new space; just because she may enter a hidden space, does not necessarily mean she enters a secure space.

Interestingly, Juliet also toys with fears of both being intruded upon and intruding through imagining the ghost of Tybalt. In response to "seeing" Tybalt in ghost form, she entreats, "stay, Tybalt, stay" (IV.3.57). This response captures Juliet's sense of being watched and intruded upon by her family in spite of the solitude she has cultivated. Conversely, Juliet imagines herself "[plucking] the mangled Tybalt from his shroud" (IV.3.52). This vision recasts Juliet as an intruder herself upon the tomb of her family, a subversion that reverses gendered roles and sexual norms of male as intruder and female as intruded upon.

Juliet takes the potion despite, as previously noted, her claustrophobia. Perhaps fear of confinement leads Juliet to fear the emotional confinement of marriage to Paris more than the physical confinement of the tomb. By choosing the tomb, Juliet can no longer be contained by parental authority and public perception, but she will inherently be contained within the tomb; essentially, "she successfully escapes her house but trades it for a tomb" (Atwood 114). The tomb could conceivably be Juliet's most private destination yet, an argument captured in Marvell's poetic line: "The grave's a fine and private place" (Marvell). And yet, under the explicated theory of privacy, the lack of control and lack of chosen companionship challenge this perception of the grave as truly "fine and private."

When Juliet wakes to the disintegrated plot of the friar, the reality of her punctured privacy becomes evident quickly. Romeo has violently entered her tomb, imminent watchmen press in and threaten to do the same, and Death has taken Romeo. Through entering her burial vault, without Juliet's awareness, a new thread of penetration must be pursued. Romeo, as a character has experienced his own violation of privacy, but also, in many ways, has violated Juliet's privacy. Previously, with consent in hand, Romeo's entrance to Juliet's bedchambers reads romantic. However, in the tomb without her consent, the intentions may be romantic, but the means consist of violence. Romeo utilizes a "mattock and wrenching iron," forces open the tomb, and engages in a sword fight wherein Romeo kills Paris. (V.3.22, 48, 70-73). Similar to his earlier intrusion "into the Capulet home and the Capulet family, he now violates another stronghold of the dynasty: their burial vault. Each of these family structures-including Juliet's body-is figured in Romeo's final, frantic violation of the inner room" (Low 4).

In a word, Romeo has "penetrated" the grave of Juliet. In "Bodied Forth," Jennifer Low refers to penetration by the following definition: "to make or find its (or one's) way into the interior of, or right through (something): usually implying force or effort" (Low 6). Low also attaches a figurative meaning to this definition: "to pierce the ear, heart, or feelings of; to affect deeply; to 'touch'" (Low 6). Applying Low's defined "penetration" to Romeo's actions regarding the tomb allows analysis to capture how the "penetration of space serves as a complex representation of the act of gaining access to a character's interior self" (Low 6). By penetrating Juliet's tomb, Romeo also "pierces the ear, heart, and feelings of" Juliet; he punctures not just her spatial privacy, but her linguistic, emotional, and physical privacy as well. Further, penetration holds an obvious sexual connotation. By consummating their marriage, Romeo has also physically penetrated Juliet, although in her bedchambers consent is presumably freely

given. The difference with his penetration of the tomb lies in Juliet's unconsciousness, her inability to exercise choice, and Romeo's undeniable intrusion upon this locus "of family dignity and piety" (Weimann "Bifold" 409).

With Romeo's actions in mind, how "fine and private" is Juliet's grave? First, her choice and rights diminish in her inability to control the situation; she cannot keep Romeo out nor the pressing watchmen nor death itself. These all, in their respective ways, constitute interference. Lastly, the gloom and doom of the situation loom heavily over Juliet as she fears this space with its bones, ghosts, and lack of air. Like the wanton bird she had imagined Romeo to be, she lacks liberty and, in a sense, "much cherishing" kills her just as it killed the imagined bird (II.2.184).

For Juliet, as she awakens and comprehends the corpse of Romeo, she focuses less on Romeo's penetration of space and more on the public's penetration of their interior love. Simply put, Juliet must face the reality that not only that her privacy has been punctured, but also the fact that she has been privatized. The public's and her parents' relegation of Juliet to the stillness of a loveless marriage wherein the private sphere of domesticity will become her domain crashes over her. Simultaneously, Juliet realizes that her desires, and her pursuit of privacy to nurture these desires, face impossible barriers due to lack of control, choice, and rights. Not only was intrusion to be expected, but awareness of intrusion, let alone resistance, proved distasteful.

Romeo lays dead, not because of interiority and secrecy, but because that interiority and secrecy was punctured, stripped, and penetrated; Juliet has lost her privacy, and thus, has lost her Romeo. After experiencing penetration from exterior and interior sources, it's Juliet's turn to act rather than be acted upon. Finally, Juliet can move, stir, stand, push, and thrust" (I.1.8, 16, 15). And so she cries, "O happy dagger! / This is thy sheath; / there rust, and let me die"

(V.3.169-170). As she uses the knife to stab herself, “Juliet symbolically repeats the process of violation” enacted upon her own privacy by cultural forces: she penetrates herself (Low 4).

In essence, paradoxical privatization has commodified Juliet; her purpose lies in heightened perception and decreased mobility. Comprehension of this commodification glides the dagger toward her heart. Whether she dies to evade the impending commodification of Paris possessing her as wife or she dies in surrender to the fact she already has been made into a possession, lies unresolved. Ultimately, the precise *why* of her suicide dies with Juliet, an unknown that feels meaningful as it allows Juliet to retain a shred of privacy in her very public, staged death. As Juliet’s corpse lifelessly rests amidst the treasures and the bones of the Capulet tomb, perhaps Juliet fulfills Alberti’s understanding of and decree for women: *sit still and watch over things.*

Chapter Two. "Most Fully Her Own"; Exploring Desdemona's Access to Possessions as Fodder for Understanding Othello's Possession of his Bride

> *"If a man take a wife, and when he hathe lien with her, hate her, And lay slanderous thing unto her charge, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I toke this wife, and when I came to her I found her not a maid, The shal the father ot he maid and her mother take and bring the signes of the maides virginitie unto the Elders of the citie to the gate. And the maides father shal say unto the Elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her: And lo, he laieth slanderous things unto her charge, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid: lo, these are the tokens of daughters virginity: and they shal spread the vesture before the Elders of the citie"*
>
> *– Deuteronomy 22:13-17*

Under the Geneva Bible, Deuteronomy 22 prescribes a transactional view of virginity wherein not only must a bride be a virgin on her wedding night, but there must be proof of this virginity. Significantly, the Geneva Bible articulates that this proof lies in "tokens of daughters virginity," an articulation that holds two particular points of relevance. First, the framing under the term "daughter" removes self-ownership from the bride. Rather than her virginity being her own, both she and her virginity represent and reflect her relation to men, namely that of her father. Secondly, the necessity of a token heightens the salience of materiality; a woman's word does not constitute enough proof of virtue without an accompanying material object. The paradoxical privatization of Renaissance women can be seen clearly in this demand for proof as women were required to remain *private* by abstaining from sex prior to marriage, but

simultaneously could not draw boundaries concerning their sexuality as, both prior to and upon the wedding night, a bride's virginity became a form of *public* discourse and economic exchange.

Applying these two points of relevance to *Othello* deposits intersecting lines of inquiry involving identity and possessions. This intersectional inquiry consists of exploring how Desdemona's possession, or lack thereof, of objects reflect the parameters of paradoxical privatization. As previously theorized, paradoxical privatization consists of the simultaneous and counterintuitive occurrences of Renaissance women being encouraged to perform domesticity and chastity in the private sphere to the benefit of male counterparts, but lacking the ability to move, speak, or, in the case of Desdemona, control possessions freely without interference of privacy. Despite always being associated with feminine objections in her possession, Desdemona can never truly *own* them. This paradox emphasizes Desdemona's status as property owned and traded among men.

To begin this line of inquiry, the complex relational dynamics between Desdemona, Othello, and Iago must be explored in connection with identity. Perhaps the best summarization of relational dynamics within *Othello* consists of the following account given by Kenneth Burke:

> Add the privacy of Desdemona's treasure, as vicariously owned by Othello in manly miserliness (Iago represents the threat implicit in such cherishing), and you have a tragic trinity of ownership in the profoundest sense of ownership, the property in human affections, as fetishistically localized in the object of possession, while the possessor is himself possessed by his very engrossment... The single mine-own-ness is thus dramatically split into the three principles of possession, possessor and estrangement

> (threat of loss). Hence, trust and distrust, though living in each other, can be shown wrestling with each other... Property fears theft because it is theft" (Burke 167).

In this relational triad, Desdemona fits into the role of "possession," Othello into "possessor," and Iago into "estrangement" or "threat of loss." However, this dynamic did not always exist. At the beginning of the play, Brabantio, Desdemona's father, constitutes the "possessor" and Othello constitutes "estrangement" as, in the eyes of Brabantio, Desdemona was "abused, stol'n from [him], and corrupted" (I.3.73). In a courtroom scene, this dynamic materializes when Brabantio asserts that Othello utilized "mixtures powerful o'er the blood, / Or with some dram conjured to this effect" to convince Desdemona to marry him. Meanwhile, Othello maintains that the only way he won Desdemona was through his "whole course of love" (I.3.122-124, 107). Interestingly, in order to quell this dispute, the solution consists of bringing Desdemona forward to testify to the source of her marriage. Othello initiates this advocacy despite the Duke's initial dismissal of the situation with his relegation: "Be it, as you shall privately determine" (I.3.310). Othello's refusal to embrace private deciphering seems progressive in that Desdemona can publicly give voice to her experience. However, the whole reason she even needs to voice her perspective consists of the fact that a legal battle over possession of herself as social capital is occurring. Desdemona voices:

> My noble father,
> I do perceive here a divided duty.
> To you I am bound for life and education.
> My life and education both do learn me

> How to respect you. You are the lord of duty.
> I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband.
> And so much duty as my mother showed
> To you, preferring you before her father,
> So much I challenge that I may profess
> Due to the Moor my lord (I.3.208-218).

Through this articulation, Desdemona recognizes the ways in which she holds a "divided duty" to both her father and her husband. The question then becomes, what is that duty?

From a Renaissance background, Desdemona's duty consists of obedience. This obedience would traditionally look like Desdemona allowing her father to select her husband and subsequently, upon marriage, transferring her allegiance from her father to her husband (Dreher 16). Further, in marriage, this allegiance would consist of continual patient and silent conforming to the will of her husband by "accepting commands, correction, even physical abuse, with sweetness and humility" (Dreher 16). For Desdemona, in the courtroom, this traditional view of obedience proves impossible as, in order to live out the first pillar of obedience, she would have to abide by her father's spousal selection which would cause her to not conform to the will of Othello and so on and so forth.

However, her divided duty resolves itself as Brabantio yields after hearing her claim of love for Othello. Brabantio states, "Come hither, Moor. / I here do give thee that with all my heart / [Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart] / I would keep from thee" (I.3.222-225). This yielding, however, does not erase the commodification of Desdemona as, in many ways, Brabantio and Othello still see Desdemona as a property item. The resolution occurs because

Brabantio feels as if the societal rules of fairness have been heeded because Othello did not steal Desdemona. Thus, while Brabantio yields, he does not yield because he no longer sees Desdemona as property, but rather because he sees her as property fairly possessed by a new possessor: Othello.

The verbiage utilized within this scene, and throughout the play as a whole, further illustrates and illuminates male perception of Desdemona as a possession. For example, when Brabantio first accuses Othello of stealing Desdemona, he cries, "O thou foul thief, where has thou *stow'd* my daughter?" (I.2.80) In this narration, he compares the movements of Desdemona to that of inanimate cargo (Orlin 177). This description of Desdemona as acted upon rather than acting with agency continues on throughout the play as a multitude of male characters use passive verbs and possession-oriented vocabulary. Roderigo describes Desdemona as having been "*transported*" to the Moor, the Duke commands, "*Fetch* Desdemona hither" , and Cassio asserts that she has been "*Left* in the conduct of the bold Iago" (I.1.139, I.3.141, II.1.83, Orlin 177-178). Othello himself perpetuates this verbiage as he "crave[s] fit *disposition*" for Desdemona, turns her over to Iago: "To his *conveyance* I assign my wife," and abandons her: "My Desdemona must I *leave* to thee" (I.3.269, I.3.324, I.3.337, Orlin 177-178).

This pattern of structurally placing Desdemona as the object and not the subject of a sentence not only shows the ways she has been possessed, but actively further this occurrence. Language shapes reality and by speaking of Desdemona as passive rather than active, this possession extends beyond just the conflict between Othello and Brabantio and into Desdemona's everyday life.

This throughline of possession continues with emphasis on the second point of relevance: tokens. The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines token as "something that serves to

indicate a fact, event, object, feeling, etc." Two components make up a token; "something" and an attached "indication." In an inherent sense, "something" communicates that in order for there to be a token, there first must be a material form, an object, present and possessed. The "indication," in turn, adds meaning to this object in a way that increases the value and understanding of the object.

Harkening back to Deuteronomy 22's "tokens of virginity," the vesture constitutes the object. The compilers of the Geneva Bible define the vesture as "the shete wherein the signs of her virgnitie were." The indication lies in the logic of connecting blood on this sheet to proof of virginity; the object, in this case sheet, points to something beyond itself. In many of his plays, including *The Merchant of Venice, All's Well,* and *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare's used tokens as representations of sexual exchange (Boose 365). Interestingly, almost "as if to underline the disparity between the important symbolic reality of the object and its trivial external appearance," Shakespeare would label such objects under the term "trifle" (Boose 365). For example, in *Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio roughly referred to Portia's token ring as a "trifle" despite the valuable sexual identity Portia feels the token possesses as it is "riveted with faith unto your flesh" (V.1.169). This same simultaneous reduction and emphasis of value embeds itself within *Othello* where the central token of the handkerchief is twice called "a trifle" (Boose 365). However, while called a "trifle," the handkerchief is never truly viewed as something inconsequential. On the surface, one could argue of its inconsequence due the fact it may be sold or given, stolen or misplaced (Boose 366). However, symbolically, the "sexual act it represents is something absolute" and thus, to at least Othello, the handkerchief is of utmost importance (Boose 366).

The handkerchief's material form consists of a "square piece of white linen spotted with strawberry-red fruit" (Boose 362). Frequently found in Renaissance embroidery designs, strawberries held many layered meanings, including a longstanding association with the Virgin Mary and thus, a "connection with the concept of virginity itself" (Boose 362). This connection likely stemmed from botanical analysis as Elizabethan gardeners considered strawberries to be the purest of fruits and the "treble-leafed strawberry plant bore a red fruit from its initially white flower" (Boose 362). Furthermore, strawberries fit into the generic rose family, the flower "most frequently associated with love and desire" (Boose 362). Therefore, Shakespeare's choice to specify that the handkerchief was "spotted with strawberries" does not constitute an arbitrary detail, but rather an important element of materiality that embeds associations of purity and love into the handkerchief itself (III.3.494).

In truth, through the handkerchief and its strawberry spots, Shakespeare was creating a "visually recognizable reduction of Othello and Desdemona's wedding-bed sheets" (Boose 363). Essentially, the sheets itself, after consummation, would hold blood that connotes "ocular proof" of virginity. By having strawberry spots on the handkerchief, the handkerchief assumes that same symbolic value that the sheet itself would hold. In this way, under Deuteronomy's instructions, should there be any dispute, the handkerchief could also be utilized to reach a determination of fidelity. In simple terms, the handkerchief functions as a smaller, more portable form of surveillance and "token of virginity."

Beyond the spotting, both the handkerchief and the wedding sheets share the commonality of both being literally material objects that were presumably "spun, woven, sewn, embroidered, [laundered, and cared for] by female hands" (King 22). The fact that Othello clings to and finds meaning in objects brought to life by female hands counters the prevailing occlusion

of female labor (Callaghan 55-56). Crucially, Dympna Callaghan communicates that the handkerchief and the wedding sheets are "carefully wrought and heavily ornamented objects of 'cultural,' rather than simply productive, labor" (Callaghan 56). Culturally, these objects point to a heightened value of women's ability to create. However, it's worth wondering if that value consists of valuing women in their own right as autonomous creators or in valuing women for the objects and money they create.

Notably, throughout *Othello*, the embroidery on the handkerchief is continually referred to as the "work." This "patterned accretion of significance" adds additional meaning to the handkerchief (Boose 369). In "Shakespeare's Poetic Energy," George Rylands writes, "repetition of a word in diverse contexts throughout the play, with its correlatives and associates, often gives the first clue to the poetic thought, the *dianoia*, which informs the whole" (Rylands). The word "work" exhibits *dianoia* as it is used in a spectrum of contexts. Iago misogynistically construes, "You rise to play, and go to bed to work," placing the word in a sexual context (II.1.128). Emilia literally refers to the embroidery as "work," a usage that is echoed by Othello and Cassio (III.4.84, III.4.204, 217). As Othello experiences powerful visual associations, Iago chants over the prostrate Othello, "Work on / My medicine, work," layering a magical and supernatural element (IV.1.55-56). Bianca returns to the sexual context when she says, "I must take out the work… a likely piece of work, that you should find it in your chamber, and not know who left it there!" (iv.1.171-174). Othello, under the multitude of contexts from *dianoia*, concludes:

> And she did gratify his amorous works,
> With the recognizance and pledge of love,
> Which I first gave her; I saw it in his hand,

It was a handkerchief (V.2.253-256).

This analysis transfers understanding of how the handkerchief has descriptively mutated from merely being beautiful to now being something inherently "amorous"; Othello's last usage of the word "work" clearly communicates that the handkerchief is now the "ancient *recognizance* or recorded evidence of the *pledge of love*[5]" (Boose 369).

Now that Desdemona's dual identity of daughter and wife and the various symbolic and material components of the token handkerchief have been discussed, inquiry shifts to *how Desdemona's possession, or lack thereof, of objects reflect the parameters of paradoxical privatization*. To begin this analysis, focus must be given to the original possessor of the handkerchief: Othello's mother. Othello recounts:

> That handkerchief
> Did an Egyptian to my mother give.
> She was a charmer, and could almost read
> The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,
> 'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father
> Entirely to her love. But if she lost it,
> Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
> Should hold her loathèd, and his spirits should hunt

[5] Shakespeare's choice to make the pledge of a love a handkerchief proves interesting due to its connection to the grotesque body. A handkerchief is the "repository of inner bodily matter, a prophylactic extension of the permeable borders of the body's surface which itself blurs the distinction between inner and outer" (Sofer 376). Thus, the handkerchief itself connotes a blurring of the boundaries and norms of privacy and inherently categorizes its "possessors," who are both women and wives, as aligned with the grotesque body.

After new fancies.

(III.4.65-74)

This reflection enriches not just understanding of the handkerchief, but also of Othello's viewpoints on women, wifehood, and female access to personal property. By defining the handkerchief as "emblematic proof of the marital blood pledge," Othello feeds into the narrative that his "mother's possession of it will guarantee her husband's love and fidelity" (Boose 366). On a surface level, Othello's mother has the ability to possess the handkerchief; she is the keeper of its whereabouts and its "hers." Typically, textiles constituted the "primary form of property owned by women" and, as Martha Howell eloquently summarizes, for a Renaissance woman, textiles were the items that were "most… fully her own[6]" (Callaghan 59, Howell 35). But on a fundamental level, what does Othello's mother *gain* through this possession?

Rather than an additive freedom, the handkerchief constitutes a restriction on the privacy of Othello's mother. She doesn't *get* to keep after the handkerchief, she *has* to keep after it as, "if she lost it," her husband would loathe her and he would turn his attention to "new fancies" (III.4.71-74). Further, she has no true ownership over the item as she cannot give, loan, or sell it to anyone. The ability to choose to keep or to give an object forms a necessary condition of actualized ownership; to not be able to decide how to *use the handkerchief* showcases that the *handkerchief is using her*. Through the handkerchief, Othello's father, as well as society at large, can keep tabs on Othello's mother's devotion to her father, effectively controlling her. That which should be private, a handkerchief, has become political and weaponized in order to

[6] Further, since "textiles could be recycled and refashioned, they were a medium of exchange, almost as fluid as money" (Callaghan 59). Not only could Renaissance women fully own these items, but they could use these items as a way to earn money and pursue financial freedom.

relegate Othello's mother to the private sphere and to deny her the agency to assert control. Through the handkerchief, surveillance, namely surveillance of chastity, is exercised both over Othello's mother and, with time, over Desdemona.

Othello later poses an alternative origin story of the handkerchief. He posits that the handkerchief was "an antique token my father gave my mother" (V.2.256-257). Although it defies logic to both come from an Egyptian *and* his father, critics believe that Othello's second story does not necessarily contradict his first account and can even be framed as amplifying it (Boose 367). The remedy of logic lies in accepting that "in this context it is true that this token originates in antique myth and came to the mother from 'Egypt'" and also accepting that it is also "something that the father gave the mother, that which every husband 'gives' his bride" (Boose 367). Othello finishes his first account by stating:

> She, dying, gave it me,
> And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,
> To give it her. I did so; and take heed on 't,
> Make it a darling like your precious eye.
> To lose 't or give 't away were such perdition
> As nothing else could match.
> (III.4.74-79)

In this account, an ember of resistance on the part of his mother can be seen. Previously forbidden from giving the handkerchief away, Othello's mother chooses to give the handkerchief to her son. Much like Desdemona's divided duty between her father and her husband, Othello's

mother exhibits a divided duty between her husband and her son. Interestingly, both as daughters and mothers, women must navigate a divided duty that usurps agency whereas interwoven relations of family and marriage seem to only exponentially increase men's power in each relationship.

As his mother requested, and as this somewhat faulty logic requires, upon being "wived," Othello gives the handkerchief to his bride (III.4.75). The requirement of the bride is to "make it a darling, like your precious eye," a requirement that holds the double entendre of "eye" (III.4.76). A Renaissance mind would grasp a connotation of female genitalia embedded within the word "eye," and thus, the handkerchief highlights to the audience the complex sexual undertones[7] impacting the actions of characters (Boose 366).

This sexual symbolism holds heightened meaning as the handkerchief appears on stage after reference to the impending consummation of Othello and Desdemona's marriage. Upon arriving in Cyprus, Othello crudely comments, "the purchase made, the fruits are to ensue / the profit's yet to come 'twixt me and you" (II.3.9-10). The intertwined economization of sex and sexualization of Desdemona showcases Othello's continued possession of her; his reference of marriage as a purchase and sex as a means of profiting emphasizes his role of possessor and Desdemona's role of possession. Additionally, the word "fruits" furthers the link between the strawberries on the handkerchief and Desdemona's virginity.

For centuries, scholars have debated whether or not Desdemona and Othello consummate their marriage during the play. Some believe that due to the lack of time alone between the two,

[7] Another component of sexual symbolism can be gleaned from Othello's description of how the handkerchief was made: "the worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk, / and it was dyed in mummy, with the skilful / Conserved of maidens' hearts' (III.4.85-87). This imagery asserts a "phallic allusion to 'worms that breed' and spots dyed from the conserved blood of virgins' hearts, actually repeats the picture of the handkerchief 'spotted with strawberries'" (Boose 367).

there was no opportunity for consummation while others cite Othello's previously referenced crude comment, the cultural expectation of consummation, and the usage of the marital bed in scene five as indicators of a sexual relationship. Regardless, the implication remains that Desdemona was a virgin prior to receiving the handkerchief. *If* one believes that Othello and Desdemona did consummate after the proclamation of their nuptials, deep irony emerges as the purpose of the handkerchief, fidelity, ends up being destroyed by Othello himself and not Desdemona; it is Othello's overthinking of the symbolism that acts as the point of rupture to their union.

Ultimately, this analysis cautiously assumes that consummation did not occur, a reading that also holds irony since Desdemona's perceived promiscuity proves incredibly misaligned. This reading arises from the fact that Iago interrupts Othello and Desdemona's nuptials between act one scene one and act one scene two as well as responds to Othello's comment regarding the looming "fruits" with the following statement: "he hath not yet made wanton the night with her" (II.3.18). Othello's intended night of pleasure is "usurped by Iago's mutiny (II.3), and the action next day is continuous until Desdemona asks Emilia to put the wedding sheets on her bed (IV.2.104), an action which implies their marriage is never consummated (Sofer 380).

Whether or not Desdemona's virginity has been taken, readers should understand the "link between sexual possession and conquest of the will" (Orlin 189). In his 1568 discourse concerning duties in marriage, Edward Tilney writes, "In this long and troublesome journey of matrimony, the wise man may not be contented only with his spouse's virginity, but by little and little must gently procure that he may also steal away her private will and appetite, so that of two bodies there may be made one only heart" (Tilney). John Dod and Robert Cleaver echo this Renaissance sentiment: "The husband ought not to be satisfied that he hath robbed his wife of

her virginity, but in that he hath possession and use of her will" (Dod). These authors further assert that "this advice is essential to marital peace" (Orlin 189). In this way, when Desdemona utilizes her free will, not only does that challenge Othello in a direct sense, but also in a symbolic sense since it deepens his insecurity that he does not sexually possess her. Othello likely holds a keen awareness of Desdemona's violations of domesticity as these violations make him feel like he is losing a valuable possession. Desdemona's "willfulness in half-wooing Othello, in fleeing her father's house, and in electing to accompany Othello to Cyprus" all emphasize this looming loss (Orlin 186). Othello does not even know about some of the more dire violations, including Desdemona's "banter with Iago at the dockside, advice to Emilia not to learn from her husband, vow to make Othello's bed 'a school, his board a shrift' (III.3.24), and her willow-scene speculation about Lodovico" (Orlin 186). Arguably, while completely wrong about Desdemona's fidelity, there is credence to Othello's worry that he does not have "possession and use of [Desdemona's] will" (Dod). Desdemona resists paradoxical privatization as she tries to push herself into the public sphere and asserts personal boundaries to the best of her abilities. In this way, while Desdemona does not ever break the fidelity of her marriage in a physical sense, she does to some degree break Othello's patriarchal, possessive view of marriage and the rules the handkerchief demands her to follow. This is the paradox of privatization that Desdemona faces: when she exercises her right to public space, speech, and legal agency, she is violating her husband's and society's view of her as a possession and thus, faces heightened surveillance and violence as Othello seeks to repossess her.

The same rules regarding the handkerchief that govern Othello's mother, govern Desdemona. Like Othello's mother, Desdemona possesses little ownership over the handkerchief. She cannot lose it nor can she give it away nor can she even effectively use the

napkin for good. When Othello complains of a "pain upon [his] forehead," Desdemona offers to use her handkerchief to "bind it hard" (III.3.326, 328). Othello cruelly retorts, "your napkin is too little," a retort that illustrates both lack of value for Desdemona's devotion and lack of appreciation for the actual handkerchief (III.3.330). Othello has no use for the object in its intended use; when Desdemona has the handkerchief in hand, he does not care for its presence. His only use for the object comes later, once he can assume malintent through the absence of the "little napkin."

How exactly the handkerchief dropped remains to at least some degree a mystery. While Emilia definitively picks the handkerchief up, three possibilities emerge concerning the context of its initial dropping. Andrew Sofer writes, "Ql indicates that Desdemona leaves with Othello, possibly leaving the handkerchief on the ground for Emilia to pick up; F indicates that Othello storms out first, so perhaps Desdemona must choose between retrieving her handkerchief and following her husband. Yet a third possibility is that Emilia takes advantage of the lovers' quarrel to filch the handkerchief directly" (Sofer 373).

It's worth noting that the reason Desdemona loses the handkerchief is because her attention is focused on Othello and the pain he feels. As a result of her care for her husband, she becomes "careless of a mere token," an occurrence that should demonstrate fidelity rather than the infidelity Othello unfairly casts upon her (Hodgson 313). While the context absolutely matters in discerning the negligence, or lack thereof, of Desdemona, this context does not matter to Othello. To Othello, the mere fact Desdemona no longer possesses the handkerchief constitutes an unforgivable indiscretion and "he takes such an action as a betrayal of their love" (Lake 331). While Othello refuses to consider the intention behind the loss, readers should ponder this inquiry thoughtfully as the answer could dramatically change the attached symbolism

and meaning of the handkerchief. Further, Emilia's own account offers even more context to Desdemona's devotion to the handkerchief and to Othello. Upon finding the handkerchief, Emilia recounts:

> I am glad I have found this napkin:
> This was her first remembrance from the Moor.
> My wayward husband hath a hundred times
> Wooed me to steal it; but she so loves the token,
> For he conjured her she should ever keep it,
> That she reserves it evermore about her
> To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work tane out
> And give't lago.
> What he will do with it, heaven knows, not I:
> I nothing but to please his fantasy.
> (III.3.334-343)

Here Emilia refers directly to the handkerchief as a token, invoking a collective understanding that the value of the handkerchief lies beyond its material form. As a token, the handkerchief is more than just a misplaced object, it's also indicative of deeper relational turmoil. Interestingly, Emilia describes Desdemona's relationship to this token as childlike: "she reserves it evermore about her / to kiss and talk to" (III.3.339-340). This description "marks a peculiar emotional

regression from [Desdemona's] apparent maturity and self-possession earlier in the text and invites a psychoanalytical interpretation" (Sofer 375)[8].

For all the ways the handkerchief can be interpreted metaphorically, a tangible element exists in Desdemona's connection to the piece of linen. Notably, Desdemona's mother lack of presence in the story constitutes a "felt absence"; not only could Desdemona find comfort in having a possession from which she could turn to for security and happiness, but through the origin of this particular possession it stands to reason that the handkerchief could "stand for confidence in the union of [Desdemona] and Othello's mother" (Sofer 376). By holding an object made by a woman, for women, and a gift from another woman, Desdemona abstractly links herself to the maternal warmth of her own mother and Othello's mother.

While not physically a child, Desdemona still possesses unavoidable dependency upon male counterparts similar to that of a child's dependency upon parental figures. To recall, in marrying Othello, "Desdemona is utterly at the mercy of a husband whose military life she has elected to share in a military outpost far out at sea, 1,300 miles from Venice (Sofer 376). Further, in a legal sense, she is now her husband's property" (Sofer 376). With this understanding in mind, Andrew Sofer theorizes that Desdemona "imbues her handkerchief with the sympathetic qualities of her dead mother and treats it as a confidante, a feminized ally in a masculine stronghold" (376). While semiotically, the handkerchief ties Desdemona to the "prediscursive

[8] In "Felt Absences," Andrew Sofer interprets, "On the manifest level, the handkerchief is Desdemona's stand-in for Othello: a 'token' that can substitute for kissing and stroking the true object of her affections, Othello's felt absence. But at an unconscious level, Desdemona treats her gift precisely as a child treats what psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott calls a 'transitional object.' In Winnicott's scheme, a child adopts a bit of cloth, blanket, or hair-ribbon as a way of holding onto the absent mother at a crucial stage in its development when its own boundaries are still inchoate. 'It is a first symbol, and it stands for confidence in the union of baby and mother based on the experience of the mother's reliability and capacity to know what the baby needs through identification with the baby.' Transitional objects become essential to the child's security and happiness - objects 'created' by the baby even if they existed, as it were, before their creation. They are themselves felt absences, neither purely objective nor purely subjective but liminal, existing both 'inside' and 'outside' the baby" (375-376).

maternal body," symbolically, the handkerchief also serves as a "token of heterosexual desire and commitment," thus providing Desdemona with a material means of emotionally connecting with several of her loved ones (Sofer 376).[9]

With this emotional background determined, understandably, upon discovering the loss, Desdemona turns to panic. In one breath, she denies the handkerchief's absence and wonders of the consequences: "It is not lost, but what an if it were?" (III.4.96). Upon losing the handkerchief, Desdemona begins to "lose her self-possession along with her last link to her mother, and becomes herself possessed by a feeling of dread": "I had rather lose my purse / full of crusadoes… it were enough / to put him to ill thinking" (Sofer 376, III.4.21-25). No longer semiotic, the handkerchief has crossed over to the symbolic and "has changed from token of female companionship to fetish of male jealousy and murderous revenge" (Sofer 376)

Upon the loss of this handkerchief, Desdemona faces more than just the loss of a physical object; the economic value matters far less to Othello than his twisted conception of the loss of Desdemona. Othello laments:

> O, now, forever
> Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!
> Farewell the plumèd troops and the big wars
> That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!
> Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,

[9] Sofer deepens his claim: "The handkerchief, given to Desdemona by Othello and symbolizing his ownership of both, thus partakes of male and female economies simultaneously. It looks at once forward to Desdemona's sexual maturity and husband, and backward to her childhood and mother. It signals both Desdemona's readiness to enter into the patriarchal order of wifehood and motherhood and her unconscious resistance to adopting those subject positions" (376).

> The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
> And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
> Th' immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit,
> Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!
> (III.3.399-409)

Othello's lament captures his convoluted perception that his exclusive possession of Desdemona correlates to his possession of his personal values: "ambition, virtue, quality, pride, pomp, glory, and zest in his dangerous occupation" (Burke 195). This condensed and oversimplified perception showcases that, to Othello, these are the things that Desdemona stands for. This perception proves unfair to Desdemona twice over. She not only may not support these values, but the status of her relationship to Othello does not determine Othello's access to his own values. Othello himself should be responsible for developing and pursuing these traits; to expect proximity to Desdemona to develop these traits in him lacks logic outside his desire to possess Desdemona and to usurp all "value" from her while she remains his wife.

To at least some degree, Desdemona comprehends the implications of the loss of the handkerchief. She confides to Emilia "Sure, there's some wonder in this handkerchief. / I am most unhappy in the loss of it" (III.4.118-119). Desdemona should be unhappy as this loss will become the "ocular proof" Othello has been craving and will, without her consent, deposit the private affairs of Desdemona into public view (Burke 197).[10]

[10] In "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," Kenneth Burke expands upon this transition from private affairs to public perception. He argues: "If [Desdemona] is enigmatic, emblematic, the gracious fetish not only of Othello, but

Essentially, the possession of the handkerchief holds the same paradoxes of privatization that Desdemona holds. An object's loss should just be that: a loss. Instead, it has become a "public surrogate of secrecy" wherein something that should be private, a relationship between husband and wife, has now been publicized through the whispering of secrets (Burke 197). Desdemona's fidelity has been brought into the public sphere, but she has no platform to defend herself. Against her will, her private life no longer remains private, but she herself is forbidden from hearing the rumors firsthand and defending herself.

Henry Smith links female relegation to the private sphere with silence in the public sphere. He advises, "As it becometh her to keep home so it becometh her to keep silence" (Smith). The vastness of this expectation of stillness and silence can be seen in Desdemona's compatriots, Bianca and Emilia. Cassio struggles with how Bianca "haunts [him] in every place (IV.1.152) and does not stay within her *proper place at home*. Cassio follows after Bianca because "I must, she'll rail i'the street else" (IV.1.183). In essence, Cassio feels put off by the way she is "not only an unsilent person but, more, by railing publicly rather than privately, in the street rather than behind the closed doors of her house" (Orlin 179). Emilia also struggles with interference of speech and is continually remanded to her *proper place*. Iago first commands her to "speak within doors" and then to "charm your tongue," and lastly to "get you home"(IV.2.170, V.2.219, V.2.231). Here presents an explicit example of the intersection of interferences with space and speech. Emilia initially counters, "I will not charm my tongue," "I am bound to speak," "let me have leave to speak," "I'll be in speaking, liberal as the north," and "yet I'll

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of all who abide by these principles of spiritual ownership, then her capital as a woman is similarly representative, the emblem of her as emblem. Hence, this handkerchief that bridges realms, being the public surrogate of secrecy, it is an emblem's emblem-and in his belief that she had made a free gift of it to another, Othello feels a torrential sense of universal loss. Since it stands for Desdemona's privacy, and since this privacy in turn had stood magically for his entire sense of worldly and cosmological order, we can readily see why, for Othello, its loss becomes the ultimate obscenity (197).

speak" (V.2.220, 232, 261, 263). She truly tries to resist as she attests, "Tis *proper* I obey him, but not now: / Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home," and responds to his repeated "be wise, and get you home" with a firm "I will not" (V.2.233-234, 265). This resistance cannot be maintained as when her "articulation of insurrection escalates, so does Iago's determination to control her, until he finally silences her tongue and sends her to her last home": the grave (Orlin 180).

Desdemona faces these same intersecting interferences with speech and space. Speech wise, Othello never gives her an opportunity to hear his allegations let alone defend herself; Iago's words serve as persistent surveillance over Desdemona while her own words lay discarded and unheard by Othello. Spatially, in Othello's eyes, she commits an early crime of "[travelling to Cyprus with no maidservant of her own" (Orlin 182). This, with time, is gradually resolved as Emilia offers allegiance to Desdemona, an allegiance that proves faithful with the exception of Emilia taking Desdemona's handkerchief. In the roles of maidservant and wife, the two women are able bond over "intensely private preparations for bed, idle chatter about Lodovico, intimate memories of her childhood maid, the willow song, and a philosophy of marital fidelity" (Orlin 182). Interestingly, Emilia aids Desdemona's navigation of space and speech, but actively hinders her navigation over her possessions.

While the bedroom itself is a space, its momentousness comes from the "aggregation of domestic props" within it (Orlin 182). These props, including the bed, its curtains, the wedding sheets, and the candle serve to communicate the establishment of a proper household (Orlin 182). The heartbreaking fact of these props is that Othello chooses to only see these possessions as evidence of what *sexual* acts Desdemona has done rather than what *household*, *social*, and *advancing* acts she has done on his behalf. He doesn't see a well-run household; he sees only the sheets in relation to the handkerchief. And thus, Othello chooses to believe that Cassio's

ownership of the handkerchief can only mean that Cassio possesses the "virginal Desdemona it symbolizes" (Boose 372).

In his 1624 text, *The Praise of Cleane Linnen*, John Taylor captures how linen acts as a "fulcrum of the private and public worlds" (Callaghan 74). He shares:

> By Linnen in your beds, you are embrac'd
> Then, twixt the sheetes refreshing rest you take,
> And turne from side to side, and sleepe, and wake:
> And sure the sheetes in every Christian Nation
> Are walles and limites of our generation etc (Taylor).

Callaghan succinctly synthesizes Taylor's premise. She writes, "Taylor's verse further conveys the contradiction inherent in the ultimately arbitrary division between the public world and the private one, the world of women's linen and the world of walls, citadels, a world of men" (Callaghan 76). In essence, linens do not solely "represent the flimsy and permeable nature" of private boundaries, but "crucially also those public structures that the material culture of women precariously underpins. Sheets, both clean and dirty, demonstrate, then, the effectively public character of even the most private spaces" (Callaghan 76).

Ultimately, "it is into these sheets that the image of the handkerchief finally [metamorphosizes]. In actuality, they are as clean as Desdemona is chaste; much more truly and properly than the handkerchief, they are the unsullied emblem of her fidelity" (Hodgson 319). However, to Othello, the sheets "seem soiled by her lust and therefore are to be spotted with her

blood" (Hodgson 319). Both from and with these sheets, Othello feels justified in his surmisal of Desdemona and enacts his distorted justice upon her.

Further, Desdemona "herself becomes an object –a sheet– when she's literally positioned as a text: 'Was this fair paper, this most goodly book / Made to write 'whore' upon?' (IV.2.82-83). Desdemona is the 'fair paper,' the sheet that had been blotted with inscription analogous to the culturally commonplace "fowling of fair linnen" (Callaghan 72).

In act five scene two, Desdemona faces violence within what should be the epitome of a "fine and private place": her bedroom (Marvell). Even before the murder, Othello, armed with the conviction of her infidelity, actively intrudes upon her privacy from all four realms of paradoxical privatization. Spatially, he joins her in bed. Possessions wise, he pinpoints his reasoning behind his conviction in the fact that Cassio possesses the "handkerchief / Which I so loved, and gave thee" (V.2.58-59). Vocally, he denies her the ability to advocate for herself by refusing to accept her innocence, even when she swears on her "life and soul" (V.2.61). With cemented interferences to her space, possessions, and words, the final interference consists of Desdemona's body, an interference Othello conducts through taking advantage of space, possessions, and words once again.

DESDEMONA: Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight.

OTHELLO: Nay, if you strive—

DESDEMONA: But half an hour!

OTHELLO: Being done, there is no pause.

DESDEMONA: But while I say one prayer!

OTHELLO: It is too late.

[He smothers her.] (V.2.100-105).

The secluded nature of the bedroom allows Othello to kill Desdemona without the contextually warranted and wanted interference of the public. Callaghan captures:

> The public realm depends upon a domestic sphere that far from being protected and secluded from the outside world (i.e. "private") is ever subject to the punitive pressures of surveillance and voyeurism. Placed in this sphere, which allows patriarchal intrusion more often than female escape, women are effectively barred from crossing the threshold into the fully political world of men (76).

As Callaghan surmises, the bedroom allows patriarchal intrusion to override female escape. By being relegated to the private sphere, Desdemona has no chance to outrun her husband's violence over her body. It is in this private space that her private boundaries evaporate paradoxically.

Strikingly, with her words, Desdemona chooses to defend her husband to Emilia. As she dies, she responds to Emilia's question of "who hath done this deed?" by taking the blame herself (V.2.151). Desdemona asserts, "Nobody. I myself. Farewell. / Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell" (V.2.152-154). Through choosing suffocation as the murder method, Othello attempts to implement a permanent intrusion upon Desdemona's voice. This ultimately does not come to fruition as she still retains her ability to speak, but nevertheless, the permanence of her duty to him, or perhaps simply her love for him, compels her to protect him even in death. With the concept of the grotesque body in mind, the decision to shut off an orifice of Desdemona showcases Othello's desire to force a classical body over his bride; as corpse the *perceived openness* of her body must collapse in a way that Othello not only desires, but has convinced himself is necessary.

Powerfully, Othello likely smothers Desdemona with the wedding sheets themselves. There, the desired blood could arrive. However, rather than showcase virginity as outlined in Deuteronomy 22, blood would solely come from violence wrought by Othello's own hands, conceptually in regards to suffocating Desdemona and literally in regards to stabbing himself.

Desdemona's body has been irreversibly intruded upon. Smothered, silenced, and sentenced to death by unwarranted surveillance, she dies. Othello's reasoning behind the uxoricide can be boiled down to a struggle over and with possessions. However, while the handkerchief absolutely contributes to this struggle, its true resonance lies in the metaphor it creates to the crux of this struggle: Othello's inability to fully possess Desdemona.

Throughout the play, from the initial trial to Iago's persistent whisperings, Othello's whole being reverberates with the anxiety of possession over Desdemona. He laments:

> O curse of marriage,
> That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
> And not their appetites!
> (III.3.309-311).

Lena Cowen Orlin captures how "here Othello elucidates a key problematic of the patriarchal system as a text; it both asserts possession and finds possession always uncertain" (Orlin 185). Othello cannot accept a reality wherein Desdemona is not fully his; his to have, his to hold, his to watch. And simultaneously, the uncertainty of this possession drives him to murder her.

While Othello alone commits the death blow, this act "is made possible by the collusion of a number of others who act on the assumption that husband-wife relations are governed by

norms different from those that govern other human relations" (Vanita 342). As it pertains to privacy, over and over women experience intrusions. And yet when they need an intrusion most, when it would actually benefit them to be protected from their husbands, society deems the matter to be too private to warrant an intrusion. Society's "failure to intervene and prevent what they deplore is the crucial cause of Desdemona's and Emilia's deaths, insofar as an intervention to save these lives is dramatically presented as viable and possible" (Vanita 342)

With Desdemona and Emilia's corpses the new domestic props, Lynda Boose returns to the repetition of the word "work" to capture the tragedy of this ending. She pens:

> The final use of the word brings with it the tragic potential always inherent within this handkerchief and its work. Lodovico says to Iago, "Look on the tragic loading of this bed. / This is thy work. –The object poisons sight. / Let it be hid" (V.2.427-428). The "work" on the now blood-stained bed echoes back the handkerchief and the "work" woven into it. By the power of the reverberations that have collected around the term, Shakespeare has brought to tragic conclusion the central paradox of the play, the potent disequilibrium latent in the most loving act of humankind (Boose 370).

Ultimately, while textiles should have been the very thing "most fully her own," Desdemona's handkerchief allows Othello to drape constant, inaccurate surveillance over her (Howell). In this way, she faces both interference to her ability to possess an object and interference of her overarching privacy due to a possession. The handkerchief functions as the primary means of privatizing Desdemona as she cannot freely engage in the public sphere due to its implications and due to the way handkerchief adds "ocular proof" to Iago's whisperings, which usurps her

ability to resist interference. The handkerchief was never fully Desdemona's, which both reflects and contributes to Othello's logically flawed belief that Desdemona was never "fully his own."

By highlighting the flaws of Othello's logic, Shakespeare introduces a conversation on the shortcomings of Venetian, and Elizabethan, society's expectations of women. *Othello* as a play provokes the audience to consider how this could have all been avoided; had Othello taken Desdemona at her word, had Desdemona been able to wield control over her own belongings, had Othello abandoned pursuing ownership over Desdemona and instead embraced equality within marriage, then perhaps the tragic ending could be erased. However, paradoxical privatization's very existence feeds these confines and thus, while Shakespeare creates conversation on direct hypocrisy, the underlying hypocrisy of paradoxical privatization lies undissected. Ultimately, through continued exhibition of Desdemona's inability to control her own possessions and her refusal to be owned by Othello, it becomes increasingly clear that the true pitfall stems from the fact that Desdemona never possessed the ability to be "fully her own" person.

Chapter Three. "Think Yourself a Baby"; Hearing Ophelia's Silence in Conjunction with Seeing Impact of Male Preconceptions on Speech

> *If thou talk little in company folks think thou canst but little good; if thou speak much, they reckon thee light. If thou speak uncunningly, they count thee dull witted; if thou speak cunningly thou shalt be counted but a shrew. If thou answer not quickly thou shalt be called proud or ill brought up; if thou answer readily they shall say thou wilt be soon overcome. If thou sit with demure countenance thou art called a dissembler...*
>
> *– Juan-Luis Vives*

In his 1523 treatise *Instruction of a Christian Woman,* Juan-Luis Vives captures the predicament young Renaissance women face in regards to speech. Vives' depiction showcases how when a young woman becomes "completely deprived of words, for, faced with such a hostile reaction… her safest course would be to remain silent and even her silence could be interpreted as dissembling" (Horwitz 104). A true disjunction emerges between a woman's subjective intention in her speech and the public's subsequent reception of her words which significantly hinders freedom of speech and action (Horwitz 104). Further, embedded implicitly within Vives' predicament lies the source of this curtailed female behavior: male preconceptions of virtue attached to dissection of the ways in which women speak. Male preconceptions shape Renaissance women's speech by encouraging women to speak in anticipation of the prejudices and presumptions of impropriety they might encounter rather than speaking freely; if an individual knows that either content of speech or volume of speech could cast them as lacking

virtue, it logically follows that both content and volume of speech would adjust to prevent that occurrence. Ultimately, Vives' words equate ideals of virtue, chastity, and obedience with silence and withdrawal. Vives continues on to advise husbands that a wife should "in company [hold] her tonge demurely. And let few see[e] her and none at al here her."

As Shakespeare is thought to have written *Hamlet* between 1599 and 1601, the popularity of Vives' treatise ensures that it was still in circulation during both Shakespeare's creation of *Hamlet* and initial audience reception to the play (Worsley 529). Therefore, analysis of Ophelia cannot exist without consideration of the value system of Vives, in which it is assumed that the "virtuous woman is self-effacing, obedient, silent, and chaste" (Horwitz 107). For example, Ophelia's words, "I think nothing, my Lord," hold an added dimension of meaning when one considers that by submitting, Ophelia fits into expected social order, which "rests as much on the passive acceptance of the governed as on the exercise of authority by the ruler" (III.2.124 Horwitz 107).

Thus, when faced with Ophelia's obedience, submission, and silence, the impact of male preconceptions on virtue must be taken into account. From Laertes to Polonius to Hamlet to even Gertrude, Ophelia's speech continually faces interference and, as speaker, she lacks the ability to enact controlling acts. Even when Ophelia strays from silence, a gentleman asserts that "her speech is nothing" and Laertes reduces that "this nothing's more than matter" (IV.5.9, 198). Through holistic analysis, it becomes evident that Ophelia faces paradoxical privatization as despite the fact that she is continually commanded to speak, she is unable to express her real feelings or exercise real agency through speech. Further, she faces continual relegation to either the private or public sphere depending on who is using her; she does not have the agency to choose her interactions and instead has both her location and role determined for her based on

other's need. Even when Ophelia asserts herself, her words themselves are not enough to cut through male preconceptions; over and over, male counterparts manipulate, distort, or ignore her words and the wisdom attached. Just as Desdemona's possessions were never "most fully her own," Ophelia lacks control over the reception of her words and cannot fully operate in the public square due to persistent interference in the form of distortion.

Distortion, primarily with respect to intention, occurs when a woman's speech is interpreted not by what she actually says, but rather by the preconceptions of her listener (Horwitz 105). This leaves the woman "no linguistic space in which to operate and no individual power of utterance" as no matter what she says, meaning will be found elsewhere (Horwitz 105). For Ophelia, male preconceptions extend beyond that of her male compatriots to that of male critics as well. A.C. Bradley describes her as "childlike" and "sweet and lovable" while Jacques Lacan barely even mentions Ophelia in his article about her except to reduce her to "that piece of bait named Ophelia" (Bradley 130, 132 Horwitz 106, Lacan 11). In this way, male critics echo and reinforce the ways in which male characters of *Hamlet* fail to hear Ophelia's voice. Conversely, even feminist critics have struggled to make sense of Ophelia, often oscillating between undiluted championing and misunderstood madness (Showalter 77).

Therefore, as readers, it proves vital to notice the stereotyped judgment of women in *Hamlet* as others and to take Ophelia just as seriously as other characters (Fischer 2). Like Hamlet, Ophelia grapples with her identity, pursues outlets for internal and external conflicts, and attempts to articulate her thoughts and desires even when she is denied "full voice, the voice of soliloquy especially, but also the voice of communication" (Fischer 2). Arguably, the play of *Hamlet* could be reduced to simply Hamlet talking to himself, as, inherently the story depends upon issues concerning communication and self-identity. And yet, readers must resist the

temptation to allow Hamlet's deafening vocal posturing to drown out the quieter and less powerful voices, including that of Ophelia (Fischer 2). As Adrienne Rich conveys, it is vital to "[listen and watch] art… for the silences, the absences, the unspoke, the encoded [are essential] - for there we will find the true knowledge of Women" (Rich 245).

For the large majority of the play, Ophelia's utterances leave only the trace of impression to both fellow characters and untrained readers alike. The play follows Ophelia as she continually "echoes a statement put to her by rephrasing it into a question; expresses acquiescence, uncertainty, and obeisance; utters half-lines; mirrors her male interlocutors by naming their qualities; and degenerates finally to the mad speech of Act IV" (Fischer 2). Throughout it all, Ophelia's "utterances are never allowed free, natural flow; her truncated responses, her uncertain assertions, her conflicting loyalties irrevocably tied to a self-image that tries to accommodate her closest males' expectations - all are determined by external pressures" (Fischer 3). This external pressure, shaped by male preconceptions, acts as the agent of paradoxical privatization. By being pressured to speak in a certain way and about certain topics, Ophelia cannot act as a free agent in the public sphere nor assert personal boundaries; both her social positioning and her ability to speak freely face constant interference.

To find Ophelia in the story requires a heightened level of scrutiny compared to her male counterparts as her silence lends itself to lack of textual presence. Presumably, in the first court scene, Ophelia is present as Q2 includes her in the stage directions (Fischer 3). However, in this court scene, she is completely silent, likely because she feels the pressure to abide by etiquette norms. Interestingly, in this scene, Hamlet expresses frustration with perimeters of speeches as his "first soliloquy ends with the moving, but self-indulgent 'But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue'" (Fischer 4, I.2.164). This hints at a deep irony that will continue to emerge: Hamlet

is given ample opportunities for self-expression, a privilege not accessible to Ophelia, and yet Hamlet continues to feel "profoundly [other] and a thwarted sense of candor" (Fischer 4).

Meanwhile, Ophelia's tangible "[otherness] and thwarted sense of candor" possess no outlet for relief (Fischer 4). Even after her silence within the first court scene, as she dialogues with her brother, her otherness and inability to candidly speak emerges. In her debut with Laertes, as he bids her farewell, his initial offering, "but let me hear from you," quickly wanes as mere lines later, he commands her to commune with Hamlet "no more" (I.3.4, 11). Laertes' tirade on Ophelia's relationship to Hamlet may stem from a well-intentioned desire to protect her, but results in him encouraging her to not trust her desires and to remain concealed. He entreats, "Fear it, Ophelia; fear it, my dear sister, / And keep you in the rear of your affection / Out of the shot and danger of desire. / The chariest maid is prodigal enough / If she unmask her beauty to the moon" (I.3.37-42). Here, it can be seen that Laertes would rather Ophelia be safe than identify, let alone express, her desires and correlates virtue with the masking of self.

As Laertes tirades, despite being his familiar, Ophelia is only "allowed mostly half-lines and questions that are codes of acquiescence without the gesture of assent (Fischer 4). In fact, her words elicit further commands: 'Do you doubt that?... No more but so?'" (I.3.5, 12). Ultimately, Ophelia responds with an acceptance that furthers the agenda of male preconceptions: "I shall the effect of this good lesson keep as a watchman to my heart" (I.3.49-50). It remains unclear whether this acceptance occurs because Ophelia has internalized male preconceptions or because her awareness of male preconceptions has led her to understand that she cannot speak freely defending her desires. The concept of a "watchmen to [her] heart" directly illustrates and fulfills paradoxical privatization; by having her heart watched by the preconceptions of men generally and her brother specifically, Ophelia possesses no ability to draw up personal boundaries around

her desires and also is prohibited from “unmasking [herself]” to the world. She cannot use language to protect her private desires, but she is simultaneously expected to exist privately, a paradox that seeks to disconnect her from her desires.

Thus, from Ophelia’s paradoxically privatized reality, Laertes sees his sister as chaste and pure, effectively placing her on a pedestal and connecting her social value to these practiced values (Dane 407). By casting himself as legislator over Ophelia’s virtue, Laertes utilizes Ophelia as a means of feeling in control; through siblingship with Ophelia, Laertes feels the catharsis of enacting the controlling act of monitoring Ophelia’s chastity, which makes him feel like he has a chance to prove his manhood (Dane 410). Interestingly, surveillance leads Laertes to conventional manhood and Ophelia to conventional womanhood, but only the former holds agency and options as the ladder encapsulates confinement.

Similar to Laertes, her father Polonius communicates with Ophelia in a way that treats her “like a child who lacks self-knowledge and apprehension about the ways of the world” (Fischer 4). As Polonius quizzes Ophelia, her promise of secrecy to Laertes breaks after a mere course of thirteen lines as she shares the gist of their conversation with her father (Fischer 4). The breaking of her promise does not in and of itself correlate to a lack of agency. One could argue that through breaking a promise, Ophelia utilizes speech to her advantage. However, Polonius’ tone showcases his expectation that he should possess full knowledge of all dialogues Ophelia has partaken in, despite the fact that she expressed she would like to keep the conversation private. Thus, Polonius does not respect her previous boundary of “tis in my memory locked” and uses his own speech to privatize Ophelia through asking when her desire of privacy has already been communicated (I.3.92).

While “Ophelia is angel to Laertes, she is asset to Polonius, a commodity to be disposed

of, ideally at the greatest profit to himself" (Dane 407). Confining her to a perpetual childhood, "Polonius educates his 'green girl'(1.3.110) to be an obedient automaton willing to acquiesce to his every command. Warning her that should she act for herself she will "'tender [him] a fool,' Polonius forbids Ophelia autonomy of desire, choice, action, even thought" (1.3.118, Dane 407). He lectures, "You do not understand yourself so clearly / As it behoves my daughter and your honour…[But] I will teach you" (1.3.105-106, 114). Ultimately, Polonius advises Ophelia to "think yourself a baby" (1.3.114).

This infantilization stirs up doubt in Ophelia, who previously had vocalized confidence in her relationship with Hamlet: "He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders / Of his affection to me" (1.3.108-109). Rather than attempt to convince her through logic of the impracticality of Hamlet and her relationship, Polonius' words tear down Ophelia's confidence in her intuition and grasp over the situation. Not only does Polonius not undermine Ophelia's words expressing excitement, but his words seek to confine her to cyclical self-doubt that hampers her ability to communicate effectively.

Moreover, both during and after Polonius' own tirade against Ophelia's naivety, her speech contains self-effacing obeisance: "So please you," "my lord," "I do not know, my lord, what I should think," "I shall obey, my lord" (I.3.96, 108, 113, 145). This self-effacing attitude illustrates the ways that Polonius has annihilated her individual personality (Horwitz 109). From the implicit transience in her comment "no more but so?" to Laertes to her passivity with Polonius: "I do not know what to think", Ophelia has stopped acting from and speaking with her individual will, leaving explicit only total obedience (Horwitz 109). Interestingly, Ophelia's unquestioning obedience to her father stands in stark contrast to the decisions of her contemporaries, Juliet and Desdemona. Eve Horwitz contextualizes this variance:

> Although there is no direct suggestion that unquestioning loyalty is wrong in itself, it is clear that it is all too readily turned to corruption. Ophelia's first entrance links her firmly with her family and with their values. Polonius' advice to Laertes reinforces our awareness of the family context as one of sententious correctness underpinned by an awareness of moral corruption. The precepts of cautious mistrust and of a careful presentation of the facade of appearance are correct in the courtly context and are a conventional version of traditional paternal advice (Horwitz 109-110).

Horwitz's analysis showcases the impact of "sententious correctness underpinned by an awareness of moral corruption" on decision-making (110). By being a part of a family unit that so deeply values, converses, and goes so far as to even prescribe reading on proper morality has shaped Ophelia profoundly. Arguably, rather than Ophelia's acquiescence illustrating solely a weakened ability to communicate, it also profoundly communicates the strengthened ability of Polonius, and subsequently Laertes, to persuade, indoctrinate, and inject "the precepts of cautious mistrust and of a careful presentation" in Ophelia (Horwitz 110). How much of Ophelia's silence stems from her individual personality and how much stems from the pressing paternal presence of Polonius? Polonius has nurtured this communication in Laertes, but notably has not in Ophelia, until an opportunity presents itself for Ophelia's speech to benefit their social reputation and Polonius himself.

After having restricted Ophelia's free access to Hamlet for "many a day," Polonius abruptly changes his approach and "eagerly delivers his dutiful daughter up to the Prince, in his publicly acknowledged 'turbulent and dangerous lunacy,' in order to prove his loyalty to

Claudis, and perhaps to elevate his social status via a royal union" (III.1.91, III.1.4, Dane 407). This not only contradicts Polonius' previous parameters of Ophelia "[scantering her] maiden presence" with Hamlet and "[setting her] entreatments at a higher rate," but also cruelly shifts mere moments after Ophelia has confided in her father concerning a verbal, and very likely physical, altercation with Hamlet (I.3.130-131). In act two scene one, Ophelia, while sewing alone in a closet, experiences Hamlet in a state of "turbulent and dangerous lunacy." She recounts:

> My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
> Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,
> No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
> Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle,
> Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
> And with a look so piteous in purport
> As if he had been loosèd out of hell
> To speak of horrors—he comes before me…
> He took me by the wrist and held me hard.
> Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
> And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
> He falls to such perusal of my face
> As he would draw it. Long stayed he so.
> At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
> And thrice his head thus waving up and down,

> He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
> As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
> And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
> And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
> He seemed to find his way without his eyes,
> For out o' doors he went without their helps
> And to the last bended their light on me (II.1.87-112).

The very fact that this interaction occurs while Ophelia sews alone highlights the dangers of paradoxical privatization. By being confined to private spaces with docile tasks, no one witnesses this assault and thus, no one can step in to intervene. Further, paradoxical privatization impacts the degree of control Ophelia possesses as she navigates speech both as a tool to both interact with Hamlet and narrate to her father. Notably, Ophelia does not speak at all to Hamlet, highlighting the fact that she does not feel comfortable utilizing speech to enact a personal boundary with Hamlet as he emotionally, and arguably physically, assaults her. Conversely, she does use speech to relay the entirety of this interaction to Polonius, positing some degree of agency. This inconsistency likely transpires because both silence with Hamlet and speech with Polonius constitute acceptable and necessary forms of speech under male preconceptions of virtue. A virtuous woman would not lash out to a potential suitor however aggressive the situation may be; to do so, would be to risk reputation, although it's worth noting a virtuous woman would certainly not commit sexual immorality. A virtuous woman would, however, relay all pivotal information to her father, overriding her own privacy for a father to feel in control. By telling either a partial or full account to Polonius, it can be seen that Ophelia lacks the confidence

in herself to process and autonomously decide what to share and what to keep private. Likely, she would possess increased confidence in herself if Polonius matched her level of divulgence and in turn, shared with Ophelia his own insight into *why* Hamlet may be descending into madness beyond Ophelia's own actions. These intertwined absences stem from the fact that her male counterparts never confide in her, but confine her to continual confiding in them. As she relays this scene to Polonius, it becomes evident that Ophelia struggles to trust her own perception of the encounter and needs reassurance and reasoning from her father to make sense of Hamlet's wild appearance. Joan Byles communicates, "Ophelia nearly always allows the other/s to force their perception of the same event on her; this then becomes her image of the event, or at any rate it causes her internal confusion about what is false and what is true" (Byles 44).

Polonius' perception of this scene is that Hamlet acts from the "very ecstasy of love" and asks Ophelia if she had "given him any hard words of late?" (II.1.114, 119). While he does express sadness over this situation, Polonius essentially blames Hamlet's madness on either Ophelia as object or Ophelia as orator. In turn, Ophelia, who "always allows the other to force their perception of the same event on her," begins to see herself as a hindrance to Hamlet's sanity and misses the fact that she may have very well just been assaulted (Byles 44). Ophelia had just recounted that an "ungartered" Hamlet "[held her] hard" (II.1.90, 99). This language, albeit unprecise, holds sexual undertones. These undertones hold even greater weight when considering the context of oration: a frightened girl is telling her father, who has encouraged her to stay away from Hamlet, what she has experienced. In what scenario would Ophelia have the words to not only perceive the situation as exploitative, but vocalize the exploitation explicitly?

Regardless of whether Hamlet does violate Ophelia, clearly Ophelia feels uncomfortable

and disturbed by Hamlet's appearance and actions. When speaking of Hamlet's presence, she asserts, "But truly I fear it" (II.1.97). Further, Ophelia grammatically structures herself as the passive object of Hamlet's actions. Hamlet holds her wrist, stares at her face, shakes her arm, nods, sighs, leaves all while staring at her (Fischer 4). She is the object of Hamlet's desire and her sentence structure while Hamlet is the subject of both. And yet, in spite of her fear and this overt objectification, Polonius does not protect her, but pawns her. He hears of the exploitation of Ophelia and exponentially adds to this expectation of obedience and exercise of objectification as he uses his daughter as a political instrument of oration.

Polonius does so by orchestrating a set up wherein he and Claudius can observe a staged conversation between Ophelia and Hamlet. This serves Polonius in a myriad of ways. By aiding Claudius, he gains political power in a tangible sense, but also, by listening in on the conversation, he receives vital insight as it pertains to the rationality of Hamlet, an intangible source of power. What does Ophelia gain through this set up? Arguably, this staged conversation illustrates paradoxical privatization in its rawest form: Ophelia cannot enact personal boundaries, cannot possess privacy over speech as Polonius and Claudius observe, and simultaneously remains relegated to docile spaces and docile tasks, such as reading. Polonius commands, "Ophelia, walk you here… / Read on this book / that show of such an exercise may color / you <loneliness>" (III.1.48-52). Here, it emerges that Polonius seeks to manipulate Ophelia's spatial movement, her usage of possessions, and her relationship with diction, as books hold an inherent literary component. Further, by reading, Ophelia represents values of prayer and devotion as the image Hamlet will happen upon "[reflects] the image of the Virgin reading at the time of the Annunciation (Stone 61, Horwitz 113). In fact, Eve Sanders argues that "Ophelia's resemblance to well-known images from the conduct book traditions, transforms her into an image, reducing

her capacity for thought in the process" (57). For Polonius, Claudius, and Hamlet, by fitting the image of a chaste woman reading devotional texts, Ophelia not only signifies, but rather is, "Devotion itself" (Worsley 529).

This Devotion sharply contorts upon Hamlet's entrance. While the image of a woman reading simulates devotion, the actual act implies agency to a degree Hamlet cannot digest. The book Ophelia reads remains unnamed by Shakespeare. However, Hamlet's frustrated verbal attack of "get thee to a nunnery" could logically follow if she were reading one of his books, likely a secular text (III.1.131, Worsley 533). From this lens, Hamlet not only feels frustrated with Ophelia's sexuality, but also with the act of rebellion that her act of reading constitutes (Worsley 533). By telling Ophelia to get herself to a nunnery, Hamlet's chastising could relate to either Ophelia's lack of orisons or her supposed hypocrisy in reciting them; it's unclear why Hamlet is finding Ophelia lacking virtue (Worsley 533). Additionally, by silently reading, "Ophelia is more radically detached from the people around her than if she were to read aloud, not only because she cannot engage in the discourse around her onstage, but also because her offstage audience can't understand her by means of language" (Worsley 535). Her silence does not seamlessly convey to Hamlet what knowledge she gleans and thus, his lack of easy analysis of Ophelia could be contributing to his verbal ambush.

Once again, the impossibilities of paradoxical privatization present themselves clearly. Ophelia is expected to be reading to fulfill her role of daughter and subject. The image of reading demonstrates devotion in alignment with the parameters of privacy; she looks like a docile wife in a docile space. But the implications of the act of reading push the boundaries of entering the public realm too far and hold the dangers of empowering Ophelia to exercise vocality over her personal boundaries. Thus, despite fitting the image of a chaste woman, Ophelia is publicly

chastised.

In contrast to Hamlet, Ophelia's weakened speech stands out starkly. Famously, Hamlet continually asserts a loneliness, lostness, and melancholy in soliloquy and line alike. In fact, the "folio edition of *Hamlet* contains Shakespeare's first recorded use of the word 'loneliness,' which is also one of the earliest references to the concept in all of English literature" (Worsley 521). However, while the play *Hamlet* undeniably centers upon solitude and introspection, the silent Ophelia presents the true paradigm for loneliness rather than the soliloquizing Hamlet. Amelia Worsley wonders, "Perhaps Ophelia's reticence is part of the reason that her loneliness has so often been overlooked" (521). By being quiet in her loneliness, which aligns more closely with the inherent definition of loneliness, Ophelia's solitude has been obscured and lost in Hamlet's sea of soliloquies. Worsley draws out this comparison:

> And yet, "loneliness" is more apt to describe Ophelia than Hamlet because she remains silent. Because Hamlet speaks aloud, he summons an audience (even if that audience is an imagined one), whereas Ophelia does not. By keeping quiet in the background of Hamlet's soliloquy, having just been associated with "loneliness," Ophelia [nudges readers to] consider the assumptions that frame their usual privileged relationship to solitary (and supposedly solitary) characters. Soliloquists take for granted at their purported solitariness onstage signals an opportunity to reveal their thoughts by means of speech; this tradition serves to create an exclusive relationship between the speaker and the audience (524-525).

In this analysis, the privilege of soliloquizing can be seen. By being able to lament his

"loneliness," Hamlet possesses the privilege of having the time, space, and empowerment to speak freely on his feelings. Meanwhile, Ophelia truly must hold her tongue as her limited words encapsulate primarily obedience, her most compelling route to avoiding chastisement and harassment. Where Ophelia is perpetually told to doubt herself, Hamlet has many chances to speak his thoughts aloud and be heard, whether that listening be in the form of a fellow character or the audience. Thus, in continuous conversation with characters and audience, can Hamlet truly be lonely?

Ophelia lacks that continuous conversation even in scenes with Hamlet. Over and over, Hamlet does not clearly communicate with Ophelia, even when she tries her "usual speech forms, half-lines, questions, and cautious and polite assertions of a changed reality" (Fischer 5). Ophelia rhetorically reflects: "I think nothing, my lord… What is, my lord?... You are merry, my lord… What means this, my lord?… Will a tell us what this show meant?…You are naught, you are naught… You are as good as a chorus, my lord… You are keen, my lord, you are keen" (III.2.125, 127, 129, 158, 164, 168, 269, 272). Despite this reflection and desire for Hamlet to share his perspective with her, Hamlet accordingly does not even grant her credence of conversing and speaks in a manner that dominates and overtakes even the most acquiescing of comments.

Sandra Fischer shares that "the closest Ophelia comes to soliloquy is her comment after the nunnery scene on the changed nature of Hamlet's mind, as manifested in his language" (6). However, Fischer continues, "two ironies subtract from the effect of this opportunity: that Claudius and Polonius are still observing her, and that she bemoans a false loss, voicing an opinion based on Hamlet's feigned madness. Her lone 'soliloquy' in effect becomes an umbrella speech about Hamlet" (6):

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown! . . .

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,

That suck'd the honey of his music vows,

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason . . .

Blasted with ecstasy. O woe is me

Thave seen what I have seen, see what I see. (III.1.163, 169-171, 175)

Within these lines, an "audience-like passivity" and a tone of "sympathy for Hamlet rather than concern for herself" can be seen (Novy 84). While Ophelia's speech follows the same rhetorical pattern of Hamlet's early soliloquies and moves from exclamation to observation of changed reality to a feeling of powerlessness ('But break, my heart'; 'O woe is me'), their speeches do not progress in the same way (Fischer 6). Likely because Hamlet has so many soliloquies, he demonstrates hermeneutic progress, arguably self-deluded, but progress nonetheless (Fischer 6). This contrast begs the question that if Ophelia had the same opportunities for both private and public articulation, would she ask similar questions and find her own conclusions? By not being given opportunity for private and public articulation, Ophelia experiences a barrier to self-expression that then prevents her from finding meaning and purpose.

Ophelia's loneliness both shows and shapes her weakened speech. Because she faces continual restriction to speech, her loneliness increases and because she is lonely, she doesn't have outlets and the confidence to speak, even to herself. Speech is a form of unburdening oneself from swirling thoughts and to not have this outlet, could, as the play follows, lead to unbalancing of self. Lack of ability to personally reflect creates the lack of a "sense of an identity

discovering itself, judging and shaping itself" (Bamber 8).

Arguably, Ophelia's silence could be an act of defiance. By not soliloquizing, "Ophelia makes the relationship between her outward appearance and interiority difficult to read" (Worsley 525). The audience does not get to know her private thoughts; they do not have the privilege of knowing what Ophelia is thinking. However, the trajectory of her story makes this angle a bit far-fetched as previously Ophelia opened up when pried and pawned by Polonius, demonstrating that when prompted she will tell of her feelings; true defiance would come by saying no to Polonius's, Laertes', and Hamlet's respective inquiries. Additionally, as the play continues, Ophelia begins speaking more, thus justifying the proposal that her silence reflected her oppression from male counterparts and once she no longer cares about abiding by oppression's rules, her voice increases.

In act four, after shockingly losing her father and experiencing Hamlet's coarse rejection of her, Ophelia descends into perceived madness. The term "perceived madness" will be utilized as the level of agency and performativity Ophelia may or may not possess still remains heavily debated. Some scholars believe that by *acting mad*, Ophelia finally has the opportunity to say what she has been wanting to say all along. Others believe that these words emerge because Ophelia *is indeed mad*. Regardless, a shift occurs wherein Ophelia's silence melts into muddled reflection and a deeper insight into the character of Ophelia can be gleaned. Now, Ophelia "becomes a text to be deciphered in new ways [as] she yields her words with unseemly 'winks and nods and gestures' that mystify her audience" (Fischer 6). Madness can be difficult to interpret, for both character and reader, as in the act of reading madness, "one dissociates oneself from it or associates oneself with it, and in either case becomes disqualified as an interpreter" (Neely 316). Carol Thomas Neely surmises, "to read madness sanely is to miss the point; to read

madness madly is to have one's point be missed" (Neely 316). Thus, readers must not confine Ophelia's madness solely to reality or solely to hysteria, but rather to the intersections therein. In this way, Ophelia, "who desperately wants to be heard, yet who has not been able to locate or to forge a communicable mode," can be at least heard by modern readers, a luxury not granted to her by the court (Fischer 6). Despite being "moved, motivated to interpret, and sure of her unhappiness, all [the court finds] in her speech is 'in doubt… half sense… nothing… unshaped… there might be thought, / Though nothing sure'"(Fischer, 6-7, IV.5.8-10, 15-17).

Perhaps Ophelia has descended into madness because of her lack of opportunities to speak and be heard. Throughout the play, not only does Ophelia want real listeners, but she requires them (Dane 420). By continually not being heard, Ophelia has little anchor to reality beside herself. And, by being continually told to "think [herself] a baby," the subsequent intentional or unintentional unanchoring to reality logically follows (1.3.114).

Further specification into the sourcing of Ophelia's madness can be found through circling back to the initial outline of Renaissance women's norms of speech wherein male preconceptions impact speech by reinterpreting what women say, restricting what women feel safe saying, and confining women's access to certain knowledge, diction, and thought. From persistent male preconceptions from her brother, father, lover, and king, Ophelia falls into a trap of needing "other/s to force their perception of the same event on her" (Byles 44). Thus, from this understanding, perhaps her madness is the culmination of constantly receiving insight from her male counterparts; voices she once received through conversation she now has inside her head at all times.[11]

[11] In regards to Ophelia's final appearance, David Leverenz argues that Ophelia is experiencing something similar to schizophrenia. He writes: "…contemporary work with schizophrenics reveals the tragic variety of people whose voices are only amalgams of other people's voices, with caustic self-observation or a still more terrifying vacuum as their incessant inward reality. This is Hamlet to a degree, as it is Ophelia completely…[T]here are many voices in

All of the voices she has heard, as contrasted with the fact that none of these people have truly heard her, have overtaken her; she has gone mad both from not being heard, but also from always listening. And in turn has absorbed the voices of many. This is not to say that none of these voices constitute Ophelia's voice. Rather, analysis asserts that Ophelia's voice has intersected with the opinions and expectations of others. The expected one-way communication that paradoxical privatization demands, wherein Renaissance women stay in the private sphere and hear from public agents without the agency to express and enact their own boundaries, holds a logical correlation to madness due to the impossibilities and paradoxes that simply cannot be evaded.

In spite of this perceived madness, or as evidence of performativity of madness, Ophelia demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the personal and political dynamics at play. Through incoherent speech, "Ophelia reveals the hypocrisies which lurk beneath the surface of the ostensibly placid family unit, condemns the falseness of sexual love, decries the arbitrariness of political power, and provides her critique in an overdetermined, cryptic patter, which defies exegesis" (Dane 418-419). In response to Claudius' neat interpretation of her remarks, she counters, stating, "Pray let's have no words of this, but when they ask you what it means, say you this" (Dane 419, IV.5.51-52). In this way, Ophelia resists the distortion and manipulation of her words and powerfully demands to speak on her own behalf (Dane 419). Conceivably, "through her madness, Ophelia finally establishes a real dialogue with herself but the listeners, who really listen to her for the first time, are no longer necessary. She needs no reply. She has

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Ophelia's madness speaking through her, all making sense, and none of them her own. She becomes the mirror for a madness-inducing world. Through her impossible attempt to obey contradictory voices, Ophelia mirrors in her madness the tensions that Hamlet perceives Her history is another
instance of how someone can be driven mad by having her inner feelings misrepresented, not responded to, or acknowledged only through chastisement and repression (Leverenz 112, 117).

discovered her own voice, her inner self' (Byles 48).

Profoundly, through both ballad and metaphor, Ophelia continues to display a depth of knowledge far beyond both character and reader expectation. Ophelia sings:

> Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
> All in the morning betime,
> And I a maid at your window
> To be your Valentine.
> Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,
> And dupped the chamber door,
> Let in the maid that out a maid
> Never departed more…
> By Gis and by Saint Charity,
> Alack and fie for shame,
> Young men will do't if they come to't;
> By Cock, they are to blame.
> Quoth she, ''Before you tumbled me,
> You promis'd me to wed."…
> "So would I 'a done, by yonder sun,
> And thou hadst not come to my bed." (IV.5.53-69).

This song holds "veiled references to medieval Catholic forms of belief" in which the "sacred could be made immediately and materially present" (Chapman 1). By alluding to St. Valentine,

Ophelia emphasizes religiosity and piety, which in turn "reinforce impressions of purity created elsewhere in the play" (Hunt 645). However, at the same time, the actual content of this song connotes a "tawdry story of sexual betrayal," which begs the question of whether "Hamlet and Ophelia [had] a secret handfast like the nuptial promise of the ballad, a betrothal that allowed Ophelia to rationalize the loss of her virginity in the Prince's promise of marriage?" (Hunt 646). This simultaneous painted perception of herself as pure and possibly deviant stresses rhetorical genius, or genuine madness, of Ophelia. The depths upon which rhetoricians and scholars could analyze this ballad, and several of her other songs, communicate a nuance far beyond that of those around her.

Additionally, within this ballad, the "perfidious lover swears 'by yonder sun' that he would have wed the maiden, had she not come to his bed" (Hunt 647, IV.5.70-71. This harkens back to Hamlet's first words in the play where he states, "I am too much in the sun" (I.2.67). Later, Polonius happens upon Hamlet reading and it appears that Hamlet's book centers upon the helio generation, the "ancient notion that the sun's radiance by itself can engender life in the elements of earth" (Hunt 647). While musing on the sun "[breeding] maggots," Hamlet suddenly exclaims, "Have you a daughter?" to Polonius, who replies affirmatively (II.2.197-199). Hamlet then responds, "Let her not walk i'th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive friend, look to't'' (II.2.201-203). From this cryptic response, Hamlet ostensibly "warns Polonius not to let Ophelia walk alone in public places, where she might be subject to temptation and seduction," aligning with previous analysis of the spatial implications of paradoxical privatization (Hunt 647). However, a simpler meaning can also be deduced due to Hamlet's caution against Ophelia conceiving: Hamlet potentially utilizes euphemistic phrasing to obscurely warn Polonius of Hamlet's and Ophelia's sexual intercourse.

Theorized by many due to the assault in act two scene two, the weightiness of Ophelia and Hamlet's connection, and the unraveling of Ophelia, Ophelia's reference to the sun in this ballad serves to foster this reading that intercourse has occurred. By ending her ballad with the quote "'Before you tumbled me, / You promis'd me to wed' 'So would I a done, by yonder sun, / And thou hadst not come to my bed''' serves to identify Hamlet as the imagined speaker of the concluding two verses, the treacherous young man who has seduced the maiden on the promise of marriage, a promise cancelled when he blames the young woman for being the sexual aggressor (Hunt 648, IV.5.68-71). Regardless of the actuality of sexual interaction the two took part in, Ophelia's ability to embed this possibility seamlessly and inconspicuously demonstrates heightened intellectual capabilities.

Upon re-entrance, after her ballad stanzas, Ophelia turns to signification by handing out flowers. She sings out:

> There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.
> Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies,
> that's for thoughts…
> There's fennel for you, and columbines.
> There's rue for you, and here's some for me; we
> may call it herb of grace o' Sundays. You ⟨must⟩ wear
> your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would
> give you some violets, but they withered all when
> my father died. They say he made a good end (IV.5.199-209).

Even though we cannot conclusively determine which character receives which flower, there are some logical assumptions that can be made based on the Renaissance understanding of the meaning of these herbs and flowers. Harold Jenkins asserts that ‘‘rosemary and pansies are presented to Laertes; fennel and columbines, signifying marital infidelity, to the Queen; rue or herb o’ grace, for repentance, to the King. The daisy is the flower of (unhappy) love, violets of faithfulness” (Jenkins 361). Interestingly, while all these plants have meaning in signification, fennel and rue hold additional tangible meaning as medication. It was common knowledge of the time that fennel and rue were the “most powerful abortifacients available, with rue most effective of all; and almost as frequently cited is white willow (‘salix alba’), the tree from which Ophelia falls into the brook and drowns” (Painter 42-43). These plant choices, in regards to meaning that fits each character and meaning in regards to medicine, once again posit that the meek, weak rhetorician of the first half of the play does not represent the capacity to which Ophelia can orate; she possesses deep knowledge in content and delivery that allows her to make controversial statements in way that protects her from ramifications. Much of this is dismissed by her contemporaries as they “botch [her] words up to fit their own thoughts” (IV.5.10) and “diffuse them by interpreting her meaning into terms which will serve their own emotional and political ends” (Dane 419). Ultimately, Claudius dilutes her words of protest into merely grief that “springs /All from her father's death” and Laertes concludes that her words are merely the “prettiness” of her passion (Dane 420, IV.5.75-76, 172, 186). Although Ophelia has at last broken beyond silence, submission, and obedience, “she continues to be infantilized, then ignored” (Dane 420).

Just as debate exists on the performativity of madness, debate also emerges in regards to the degree of liberation, or lack thereof, madness offers Ophelia. Charney claims that “madness

enables her to assert her being: she is no longer enforced to keep silent" and that through madness she can "suddenly make a forceful assertion of… being (359) Arguably, through lyrics, broken syntax, and free flowing imagination, Ophelia can now break through suffocating social restraints (Charney 359). However, while Ophelia's mad speeches do garner attention, her words seem to communicate a "loss rather than an assertion of self: a theme of the songs is the inability to choose among a socially-circumscribed series of insufficient options" (Fischer 7). Just because the voice of madness may ring louder than her previous words, does not mean that through madness Ophelia successfully fully breaks through and fundamentally changes these social constraints (Fischer 7). Rather, the voice of madness merely allows Ophelia to subversively articulate these constraints, and even so, she can only do so in an indirect manner and "her meaning remains unheard" (Fischer 7). It's not surprising that in her madness, Ophelia continually refrains "Pray you mark" (IV.5.33). Despite the attention, she still is not truly heard and she knows that, even with the reminder, her words will not be "marked." Notice also that the ghost of Hamlet's father employs similar language as he begs Hamlet to "mark [him]" (I.5.4). The fact that women have to beg to be heard in the same way a dead person begs highlights the lack of personhood women are perceived as possessing.

In the end, Ophelia's own death is not "marked," at least not through her words. Rather, Shakespeare utilizes the character of Gertrude to narrate and "mark" Ophelia's death, an interesting choice as in the scene prior, Ophelia's refrain of "pray you mark!" was directed to the interrupting Queen (IV.5.33). By not being given the opportunity to voice her motives, readers do not know if Ophelia committed suicide or if this truly was an accident, in opposition to the other two women of Shakespeare analyzed, whose deaths explicitly occur on stage. Therefore, the subjective translation of Gertrude muffles even the active possibility of a "subintentioned"

suicide; with only Gertrude's depiction of the event, it becomes impossible to separate reality with Gertrude's perception of or desired reality (Faber 106). Gertrude chooses to "[aestheticize] Ophelia's death, lyrically poeticizing what becomes the clearly non-intentional act of an eroticized child (Dane 420-421). In detail, Gertrude depicts the floral Ophelia supposedly wears, which includes "long purples, / That liberal shepherds give a grosser name, /But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them" (IV.7.193-196). Charlotte Otten contextualizes these euphemisms, sharing that, by being strewn in floral genitalia, Ophelia is associated with "shamelessly immoderate copulation," "exudes animal sexuality," and "incites men to lechery" (398). Thus, reading Gertrude's account in light of sexual euphemisms of the time leads to a crude understand that a "phallically-arrayed, lechery-inducing, distracted Ophelia falls quite unintentionally into 'the weeping brook,' and 'as one incapable of her own distress' (that is, of autonomous action) is sucked 'from her melodious lay / To muddy death'" (Dane 421-422, IV.7.200, 207-208).

Further, Gertrude's packaging of Ophelia as a beautiful, desired object, even in death works to continue to silence her. Leslie Dunn writes, "Gertrude's description of Ophelia's drowning aestheticizes her madness, makes it 'pretty,' and in so doing makes it safe for the easier, distancing responses of pity and compassion" (*Embodied* 63). Ophelia's beauty in death allows readers to merely feel compassion without having to reckon with the tragedy, violence, and misogyny that has led her to this brook. Through beauty, Ophelia's dead body can be seen as something sexual, something pretty, and something safe for contemplation and not a representation of the culmination of male preconceptions (Hadlock 125).

The problem here lies three-fold. First, this account purely stems from Gertrude. Was Ophelia even actually wearing long purples? Was this Gertrude's way of adding in her own

signification, similar to Ophelia's usage of flowers, in order to make social commentary? Did she *really* look beautiful in death? I imagine Ophelia to be wearing some form of flower, although the sexual layers of Gertrude's choice feel out of character to me. I imagine Ophelia's beauty continues in death, but that the inherently grief-inducing nature of the scene would not posit a responder to notice and describe her beauty as they recount. Second, even *if* Ophelia is beautiful in death, to focus solely on the aesthetics of her body allows characters and readers alike to not have to wrestle with her personhood, motivations, and perhaps, Ophelia's own social commentary. Lastly, even *if* Gertrude's account constitutes exactly what happened, we still don't know Ophelia's thoughts. Where Juliet states, "let me die" and Desdemona begs "but kill me not," Getrude's account affords readers no knowledge of if Ophelia seeks or runs from death (*Romeo* V.3.175, *Othello* V.2.98).

The unknown of Ophelia's death correlates directly with Ophelia's lack of knowingness of herself. In act four scene five, with respect to womanhood as a whole, Ophelia wonders, "We know what we are, but not what we may be" (IV.5.48-49). This wonderance captures how the confines of speech and privacy holds deep impact on Renaissance women's ability to dream, imagine, and understand oneself. Ophelia struggles to see beyond the confines of Elsinore and pursue her desires as she struggles to even know what she desires. Thus, paradoxical privatization has not only relegated Ophelia to the private sphere and thwarted her ability to speak freely, but by being privatized, Ophelia has lost the freedom of self-introspection necessary for her to dream of all that she may be.

Conclusion

I went not out of the house nor out of my chamber today.

– Anne Clifford

Through the characters of Juliet, Desdemona, and Ophelia, the application of paradoxical privatization allows us to see how a lack of actualized privacy results in a reduction of personhood. By being relegated to the private sphere and paradoxically denied agency over their spaces, possessions, words, and ultimately bodies, these women are often acting upon rather than agents of action. In this way, wives are not only just seen as passive possessions, but actively controlled by possessors. Thus, in a sense, Renaissance women not only face barriers to ownership of possessions or property, but are reduced to being a possession and piece of property as they continually experience "private ownership and control" (*OED def. 1*).

Juliet, Desdemona, and Ophelia are fictional women. But their stories and parameters reflect the lived experience of real women. Anne Clifford, a potential heir to a prominent family in Elizabethan England, experienced the struggles of paradoxical privatization as she navigated a marital property dispute. In this dispute, she "refused to acquiesce to what she considered her father's alienation of her rightful inheritance to Francis Clifford, his brother and uncle" (Suzuki 195). Even when tempted with a cash settlement and pressured by her husband, Anne continued to refuse and as a result, was disinherited from the family property. Ultimately, in 1643 after thirty-eight years of resistance, Anne did receive the "right of mine Inheritance," but only because a family member died without a male heir.

Anne captured the proceedings of this economic and legal battle in a multitude of diaries.

These diaries add nuance to the concept of paradoxical privatization as they "blur the line between public and private" (2012 405). On one hand, Anne possessed the ability to freely think and write without interference as she penned these diaries, an ability Juliet, Desdemona, and Ophelia did not possess. On the other hand, these diaries were intended to reach a wider audience and thus, similar to Ophelia, Anne likely took into account male preconceptions, if even just to combat them.

From these diaries, the paradoxical privatization of Anne can be seen. On April 1, 1616, while visiting her mother, her husband commanded her to send all her servants back to him while she remained at her mother's estate. In response, she passionately wrote the following paper:

> A memoranda that I, Anne, Countess of Dorset, sole daughter and heir to George, late Earl of Cumberland, doth take witness of all these gentlemen present, that I both desire and offer myself to go up to London with my men and horses, but they, having received a contrary commandment from my Lord, my husband, will by no means consent nor permit me to go with them. Now my desire is that all the world may know that this stay of mine proceeds only from my husband's command, contrary to my consent or agreement, whereof I have gotten these names underwritten to testify the same (Clifford, Diar, supra note 11, at 16-17 n.26.).

Here, Anne is forced to obey her husband, but still, like the women of Shakespeare, tries to resist the second axes of paradoxical privatization and assert her personal boundaries. When she states "contrary to my consent or agreement," Anne's voice reads as that of a "rights-bearing subject who is being denied recognition" (Spivack 410).

Still, despite this example of resistance to her husband and resistance to allowing her inheritance to be usurped by the state, it took thirty-eight years and a lack of a male heir for her to possess her rightful property. Anne tries to resist, as evidenced by her extensive writing, but is denied legitimacy of consideration by the king, her husband, and her contemporaries. In one diary, she writes that "many did condemn me for standing out so in this Business." How much agency does she have with her words if she experiences condemnation for a refusal to acquiesce to male-centric property laws?

Still, within her written works, she powerfully articulates a progressive concept of self and rights. In fighting for her inheritance, Anne determination to receive her write to her ancestral estates "draws us back to the etymology of *individual* providing what may be our boldest historical example of the inalienability of person from property" (*Women* 301) This unbridled individualism exudes in Anne's writings, but, as previously stated, is not actualized until no male individual lays claim to her rights. Rather than being inherent, her rights depend upon circumstance, namely a lack of contest.

Anne's story shows how Renaissance women's access to property ownerships holds linkage to personhood and privacy. Unfortunately, her resistance did not change the social order as she could not preserve her estate for future generations of women (Spivack 421). Vita Sackville West, a descendant of Anne, grew up in part of Anne's estate, "but lost it when the laws of primogeniture prevented her inheritance and the property passed to her mother's male cousin" (Spivack 421).

While Anne's story holds complexity, paradoxical privatization absolutely occurs. Her husband relegates her spatially, financially, and emotionally; the state strips her of her right to property; her linguistic resistance to these relegations face condemnation; and, although she has a

diary that allows her to freely think, as these thoughts enters public discord, no one absorbs their weight due to Anne's position in society as a wife. While Anne's resistance is powerful, it cannot undo the legal system and her victory of securing property cannot be maintained.

Through Anne's story, the concept of paradoxical privatization garners additional weight. Because it is not just fictional characters who experience the possession and property-like characterization that paradoxical privatization deposits. Real women in the Renaissance, with varying degrees of confidence in self, face these simultaneous relegations and barriers and struggle to navigate a world of "private ownership and control." And it goes beyond just Renaissance women; this struggle continues today as women fight to break beyond stereotyped reductions and fight to be heard in an effort to guarantee the fundamental, yet currently fractured, right to privacy.

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