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Shakespeare and the Female Voice in Soliloquy

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A character enters or is left onstage alone (*solus*, or in this case *sola*), and speaks (*loqui*). Except, of course, they are not alone. An audience—maybe several thousand strong—is looking on and listening. Other characters may be onstage by whom, according to dramatic convention, their speech is either un- or overheard. They may invoke whole hosts of others—in apostrophes to humans, ghosts, gods, planets, or abstractions such as fate or fortune—with whom they argue, plead, or bargain. They may address a part or parts of themselves in personified form (their heart, body, mind, soul, or thoughts), like Richard II whose ‘thoughts people this little world’.¹ On this model, the soliloquy is less a monologue than an inner dialogue—a colloquy staged between two beings, one speaking and the other spoken to—such that, as described by Augustine who invented the term and by the sixteenth-century dictionaries which imported it into English, the soliloquist is paradoxically ‘alone with god’.² Augustine had turned the practice of Socratic dialectic within so that (as enshrined in the Platonic dialogues) the use of question and answer to arrive at truth became an internal matter: a way of organising and disciplining thought to achieve the same end.³ The thinking mind is able to commune with itself in concentrated solitude, however, only because it remains in relation with an ideal Other: one that has none of the frailty or unreliability of the human interlocutors otherwise so briskly dispensed with. The soliloquist’s inward ruminations, that is to say, are conditional upon this *a priori* relation. Indeed, however fractious or meandering they may be, those internal debates are modelled on that relation, for, as divine Logos or Word, God serves as guarantor both that such truth exists

and that, however long it takes, human questioning will (or is at least theoretically able to) arrive at it: the desired and destined goal. The soliloquist's relation with God, therefore, is figured as an ideal specularity: with one made in the Other's image, two potentially 'full', 'whole' selves can exist in unbroken communion and unspoken communication with one another. This relation, that is to say, is a *stabilising* one, for the very awareness of a thinking, speaking self (the *cogito*) comes to serve as proof both of self-existence and of a good God who would not deceive us: a philosophical tradition that extends from Augustine to Descartes if not beyond.⁴ With their faith in such reflections secure, the soliloquist can ruminate away, confident that the exercise of self-questioning—of even the most rigorous self-doubt—will not so much fracture or divide them as endow them with a much-admired complexity and 'depth'.⁵

The soliloquist, therefore, is not alone—indeed, they are in very good company—and yet, for all that, they are not answered. The God who serves as witness to their self-speech is conspicuous by his silence; and, when translated from philosophy to drama, the soliloquy that enacts such thinking in public and out loud formalises this unnerving eventuality with a quiet but relentless insistence. For whatever the dramatic character's multiple and different modes of address, their soliloquy elicits no reply. Their speech might include apostrophe or self-address; it might be unheard by some characters and/or overheard by others; it might be a feigned soliloquy that pretends to be unheard while intending to be overheard (such permutations are the source of endless play among dramatists, and especially Shakespeare); and, whatever else, it is most definitely heard by the audience.⁶ In no case, however, is that speech responded to, or at least not directly or verbally.⁷ The formality with which these dramatic conventions are observed, and the resistance or embarrassment that arises when their decorum is breached (as, for example, when a character or actor addresses the audience directly and pressures them for a reply) suggests—on the part of all concerned—a willing

collusion in the special situation that is being very carefully contrived. A situation, that is, in which—in full view and for all to hear—human speech goes out into the void and receives nothing in return, no reassuring answer or response that would indicate it had been received, absorbed, and affirmed if not approved (like a telephone conversation in which the person on the other end never breathes a word). This is not ‘inner dialogue’—for dialogue is put on hold when the answer of a respondent is formalistically withheld—and, to the extent that this applies to ordinary conversation as much as to philosophical dialectic, soliloquy declares its difference from what passes for normal human discourse: the direct relay of information back and forth between interlocutors which shows language in its most basic, communicative, and instrumental function. As opposed to the latter, monologue (which is what this special kind of artificially unanswered speech—addressed to what cannot, will not, answer back—is) marks itself out as deviant, aberrant, and strange.⁸ The repeated rehearsal of this situation, moreover, in which *with everyone’s agreement* the habitual response is blocked, prevented, or denied (anything so long as it is not forthcoming), puts utmost pressure on that ideal Other on whom so much depends and whose truth and existence are presumed, believed, trusted, and so devoutly to be wished. If everyone is silent, including those who manifestly hear, then who is to say the silence soliloquy evokes is proof of presence rather than absence? At the very least, it puts faith in that presence to the test—draws attention to the fact that the Other in soliloquy is problematized, mystified, enigmatic, diffuse—with predictable consequences for the equanimity of the *cogito* and of the ‘full’, ‘whole’ self it supposedly represents. Soliloquy might, therefore, put one in mind of another situation—no less artificially contrived—in which a speaker is again denied the reply they ardently desire and may well consider theirs by right:

Let us ask ourselves instead where this frustration comes from. Is it from the analyst's silence? Responding to the subject's empty speech—even and especially in an approving manner—often proves, by its effects, to be far more frustrating than silence. Isn't it, rather, a frustration that is inherent in the subject's very discourse? Doesn't the subject become involved here in an ever greater dispossession of himself as a being, concerning which—by dint of sincere portraits which leave the idea of his being no less incoherent, of rectifications that do not succeed in isolating its essence, of stays and defenses that do not prevent his statue from tottering, of narcissistic embraces that become like a puff of air in animating it—he ends up recognizing that this being has never been anything more than his own construction in the imaginary and that this construction undercuts all certainty in him? For in the work he does to reconstruct *it for another*, he encounters anew the fundamental alienation that made him construct *it like another*, and that has always destined it to be taken away from him *by another*.⁹

The soliloquist, therefore, is not alone, but neither are they (as that word would imply) 'one', either.¹⁰ Instead, like every human subject, they emerge in and through language: a differential field in which subjectivity is organised—just as meaning is—by absence and difference.¹¹ The faithful soliloquist who is 'alone with god' projects that constitutive absence or difference outward: it is the unbridgeable gap that falls between self and Other but that nonetheless allows both to be conceived as entities, 'full' and 'whole', facing, reflecting, and proving one another's existence. The doubting soliloquist, on the other hand, is the product—the *effect*—of absence and difference, in a way that has decisive consequences for any hopes or claims to have a 'self' (as if that were some inalienable possession or right),

least of all a deep one. This soliloquist is not a unity—an entity, an individual unique, self-identical, and undivided—but is, rather, eccentric, elliptical, off-kilter in the sense of being other-centred; and it is not ‘atomic’ in the sense of being ‘un-cut’ but, rather, ‘castrated’, wounded, split. In this respect, therefore, the true soliloquist might be said to appear most visibly in the sex which is ‘not one’, although not in any crudely identificatory way that would see such metaphorical features as embodied in ‘women’, since to do that is merely to revert to the notion of individualised, essential selves.¹² Rather, true soliloquy might be said to be the female soliloquy in the sense that literary constructions of the female voice may perhaps be taken to show the subjectivity that is alienated in and by (or the subjection to) language—the fate of every human being—the most precisely.



The purpose of this preamble, then, is to arrive at the suggestion that the source and origin of soliloquy as such—soliloquy in this its most radical function, since it shows the true (and truly unsettling) nature of human subjectivity whatever the circumstances of any particular case—might be located in the tradition of female complaint: and that regardless of whether those soliloquies end up being spoken by ‘male’ or ‘female’ characters, a binary deeply compromised, in any case, by the acting conventions of the sixteenth-century stage. The tradition of female complaint is an ancient and trans-generic one—encompassing narrative, epic, lyric, drama, epic, and epistle—and fielding a series of iconic figures that range from the Bible’s Niobe, to Homer’s Hecuba, Sophocles’ Electra, Euripides’ Medea, Virgil’s Dido, and the numerous complaining heroines of Ovid’s *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. Such literary figurations inform, in turn, a long and no less engaged native tradition in which female-voiced lament appears in texts such as Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*, the *Mirror*

for Magistrates, Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamund*, Drayton's *England's Heroicall Epistles*, and, of course, Shakespeare's narrative poems.¹³ The classical tradition of female complaint would have been thoroughly familiar to recipients of the Tudor education system, moreover, not least through the pedagogic practice of *ethopoeia* in which boys were encouraged to develop a suitably rhetorical style by identifying with literary figures of the ancient past—among them these exempla of female lament—and composing speeches on their behalf.¹⁴ Trained early on in this kind of 'transvestite ventriloquism' or 'vocal cross-dressing', those pupils who went on to become writers would choose, time and again, to speak in a voice that was signalled as female and as suffering, and to experiment with the 'sustained articulation of a feminine *moi*' it allowed them.¹⁵

In sixteenth century England that voice had a very distinctive sound. For we should not forget that blank verse—the unrhymed, stressed, iambic pentameter line that would become the staple of Elizabethan drama but was still a 'strange metre' when it first appeared—made its debut in Surrey's translation of Book IV of the *Aeneid*: a text that is dominated by female voices (nearly a third of it comprises direct speech by Dido and her sister Anna) and includes the two soliloquies (of 27 and 57 lines apiece) that Dido makes prior to her suicide.¹⁶ When English men and women first heard blank verse, therefore, they heard it in Dido's voice. They heard it in her agony and rage at the departure of Aeneas; in the disintegration of her 'I' ('What sayde I? but where am I? what fransy / Alters thy mynde, vnhappy Dido?'); in her thought that she might have murdered Aeneas' son, Ascanius, 'And set hym on hys fathers borde for meate' (sig.D3^v)—indeed, that she might have destroyed 'The father, sonne, and all theyr nacion', as well as herself—and in her summoning of other dark female forces by way of revenge: 'Proserpyne thou, vpon whom folke do vse / To houle, and call in forked wayes by nyght, / Infernall furyes eke, ye wreakers of wrong...Receyue these wordes' (sig.D4). I quote Dido's soliloquy at some length only

because it epitomises so many features of the female complaint tradition and serves as an important crossing point from poetry into drama. For her speech articulates the loss not only of a lover but of a potential husband, king, father, and male heir—confronting Aeneas earlier, she had suggested that she would not ‘seeme forsaken’ if she had borne him a son (sig.C2)—the loss, in other words, of an entire male genealogy and bloodline and, with it, of the continuation of patriarchal control and political order down through the generations. It is presented as what speech would look like—what speech would sound like—in a world no longer organised by the phallus. In Marlowe’s play, which dramatizes—indeed, concludes with—a similar scene, Dido destroys the sword on which Aeneas had faithlessly promised ‘to be true to me’ as a token of male perfidy: of the manifest failure, that is, of a world so organised to make words correspond with meaning.¹⁷

And this, by and large, is what speakers in the female complaint tradition have in common: a situation in which—as the result, typically, of male violence (swords usually come into it)—they are without the phallus they might have possessed in the future (former lovers have abandoned them, often for war), or might once have possessed in the past (husbands, sons, and fathers have been killed), or never possessed in the first place (a fact forcibly imposed on them by rape). To that extent, their situation is emblematic of a ‘castrated’ subjectivity: a subjectivity that is not organised by—and is, indeed, demonstrably the victim of—those illusions of a subjective ‘fullness’, ‘wholeness’, ‘truth’, ‘meaning’, ‘existence’, ‘presence’, and ‘depth’ that in some quarters the soliloquy is still taken to celebrate. The speech of such female complainants, therefore, often opens out onto a whole other world—its difference signalled none too subtly by associations with darkness, the infernal, the occult—in which the old order comes to a permanent and shattered end: an end the speakers sometimes hasten on themselves, as when Dido fantasises the murder of Aeneas, Ascanius, and their whole ‘nacion’. In *Gorboduc*, Queen Videna mourns the murder of her

eldest son, who might have lived ‘And to his aged father comfort brought, / With some young son in whom they both might live’—the male bloodline at stake once again—and promptly destroys exactly that by resolving to stab her younger son to death for committing the murder in the first place (at 81 lines, this is by far the longest soliloquy of the play).¹⁸ Such speech is always passionate, and it frequently borders on madness: but these serve as measures—very precisely calibrated, in literary terms—of its distance from the supposedly ordinary, normal, ‘rational’ speech (in the name of which the old order governed) rather than as expressions of some ‘inner’ state or symptoms of a deranged ‘mind’.¹⁹

It has been suggested that when male authors ventriloquize the female voice and enter into a female role (an act that could be seen as appropriative, after all, and thus as implicitly violent) their aim—conscious or otherwise—is to perpetuate the patriarchal order by affirming lack as the essential condition of ‘women’ and phallic power, conversely, as the essential condition of ‘men’ (the literary tradition of female complaint has even been seen as an exercise in one-upmanship in which male poets compete to see who might do it best).²⁰ That is certainly possible, and will ensure with equal certainty that the battle of the sexes grinds interminably on. But it is also possible, I think, that a ‘male’ author might choose to identify with a position scripted as ‘female’ in *language*—in *literature*—in order to become more familiar with that uncanny experience of an alienated and de-centred subjectivity which, insofar as it emerges similarly out of language, is common to every human being. It might, in fact, be precisely to test the parameters of a position scripted as ‘male’ in language—in literature, in history, in society—that male poets should find themselves repeatedly drawn to scenes in which voices speak of a subjectivity that is neither whole nor divided into tidy ‘selves’ that can debate rationally with one another but, rather, quite literally (and literarily) “beside” itself.²¹

Female soliloquy might thus be taken as the special instance of a general truth: namely, that insofar as it goes unanswered all true soliloquy—regardless of who speaks it—represents the utterance of an unwhole, ‘cut’, or ‘castrated’ subjectivity, a model for which might be found in the ancient and much-rehearsed tradition of female complaint. This analysis, moreover, makes it possible to identify two features that Shakespeare, in particular, was to scrutinise with a special focus in his poetry and his plays. The first of these is the situation discussed already in which the subject in question is marked as existing or about to exist outside the phallic order, where that is figured as the loss (past or future) or lack (present) of the phallus—something that can be coded as both comic (as in *Venus and Adonis*) and tragic (as in *The Rape of Lucrece*)—and/or as the failure of words (supposedly guaranteed by the phallic order) to mean what they say: often through the experience, discovery, and consequences of (typically male) perjury or broken vows (as in *A Lover’s Complaint*). The second feature, not yet discussed but closely related to the first, is the situation in which the subject in question is shown to take their identity—including their most powerful passions and most intimate, ‘private’ feelings—not from some now demonstrably imaginary ‘interior’ (that mirage of a full, whole, inner self of unplumbed depths) but rather *from the outside*. Counterintuitive as this may seem, such a situation is the entirely logical conclusion of a subject that does not possess a self (like some kind of bourgeois commodity) but is, rather, beside itself; that is not self-possessed (comfortably whole in the guaranteeing presence of another) but, rather, dispossessed, or—if possessed at all—then possessed *by* that other as if by some external, ‘daimonic’ force (this, incidentally, is what ‘ventriloquy’ meant in the period, adding to the suggestion that ‘male’ poets who ventriloquized ‘female’ voices may have done so to experience alienation not to exercise power).²² Shakespeare’s poems and

plays, that is, repeatedly come back to this antifoundationalist model of human subjectivity in which, however unnerving, uncanny, strange this might seem, it is nonetheless evident that the most heartfelt passions—love or hate—are drawn from superficialities rather than depths and are all too readily transferable. This is the lesson of *A Lover's Complaint* in which the female soliloquist (who speaks for a total of 258 lines) reveals that she loved the youth who abandoned her not for his qualities—she knew he was a rogue from the start—but purely because other women loved him: and they likewise, for there is no original, authenticating, prior, or 'true' love of one person for another that sets off the series, but only an infinite regress of imitations and imitations of imitations that are no less powerfully felt or life-changing for that.²³ And it is manifestly the lesson of *Hamlet* in which the male protagonist (who soliloquises for a total of 211 lines) discovers that feelings do not, in fact, come from having 'that within' (I.ii.85) but, rather, from imitating that which is without (in both senses of that word): a lesson he and we could learn by watching a (male) actor imitate a (female) character—and iconic figure of the female complaint tradition, no less, who is mourning the violent loss of her sons, husband, king, and city—whose tears, which could not be more designedly factitious and literary if they tried, nonetheless bring tears to his (the actor's) eyes, tears which could not be more designedly factitious and literary, either, but are no less 'real' and moving for that.²⁴

These two features, then—being without the phallus and sourcing identity from without—appear, as one might expect them to, in soliloquies spoken by female characters (often when they are disguised as or aspiring to be 'men') in both comic and tragic figurations. In *Venus and Adonis* the absence of the phallus—which between the aroused female goddess and the reluctant maidenly boy is nowhere to be found (except, perhaps, in the latter's horse and in the boar that gores him)—is a matter of high comedy, and the

nocturnal lament that issues from Venus in consequence is, appropriately enough, the acme of what Lacan might call ‘empty speech’:

And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,
That all the neighbor caves, as seeming troubled,
Make verbal repetition of her moans;
Passion on passion deeply is redoubled:
‘Ay me!’ she cries, and twenty times, ‘Woe, woe!’
And twenty echoes twenty times cry so. (lines 829-34)

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Helena’s 26-line soliloquy in couplets (I.i.226-52)—a complaint that the boy she loves loves someone else—articulates nothing so clearly as desire’s chaos-causing tendency to be driven by surface, not depth, and its blithe defiance of any supposed ‘logic’ of inwardness or desert:

And as he errs, doting on Hermia’s eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities. (lines 230-31)

There is error all round when there is no truth within: an observation that leads to familiar reflections not only on love’s proverbial blindness, but on the inability, once that consolingly metaphysical logic is dispensed with, of words—even sworn oaths and binding vows—to mean anything whatsoever: ‘Love is perjurd every where’ (line 241). In *Twelfth Night*, Viola (disguised as ‘Cesario’) reflects—in a 25-line blank verse soliloquy which ends in a deceptively conclusive couplet (II.ii.17-41)—that Olivia has fallen for ‘him’ (rather than for Orsino on whose behalf ‘he’ sued for her love), and this solely on the basis of ‘his’ patently

false and yet evidently all too believable exterior: ‘Fortune forbid my outside have not charm’d her!’ (line 18). Like Helena, she (or perhaps one should say ‘she’) compares the blindness others show in love with her own:

How will this fadge? My master loves her dearly,
And I (poor monster) fond as much on him;
And she (mistaken) seems to dote on me. (lines 33-35)

Again, error seems to be all around, and there is no guarantee that any of these loves is based on anything more substantive or true: an uncertainty, moreover, that now extends to gender identity and to what, if anything, lies conclusively beneath the external signifiers of dress.²⁵

Similar themes are worked through in *Cymbeline*—another play in which the fidelity of outside to inside is put into question—and where Imogen (disguised as ‘Fidele’) speaks in soliloquy (IV.ii.291-332) to convince herself that the headless corpse she finds beside her is that of her husband, Posthumous. She identifies the body not only by its clothes but most convincingly, she thinks, by its parts (leg, hand, foot, thigh), much as Iachimo had earlier inventoried her own sleeping body as ‘proof’ of his seduction: ‘a voucher, / Stronger than ever law could make’ (II.ii.39-40). The identification proves wrong, of course—appearance and reality do not marry up—but in the course of the play romance conventions will work to restore that fidelity by locating it in the aristocratic legitimacy of the male bloodline: although brought up as outcasts in a cave, Imogen’s long-lost brothers display an innate nobility quite absent in her evil half-brother, Cloten (which is why the headless corpse, naturally, is his).

If these plays put the phallic order to the test, then as comedies and romances they move toward reinstating it. The same cannot be said of the more ‘problematic’ comedies, however. In *Troilus and Cressida*, in a 14-line soliloquy of rhyming couplets (I.ii.281-95),

Cressida divulges that she has been playing hard to get for the very good reason that desire for what is still ‘ungain’d’ (lines 289, 293) can be absolutely guaranteed. To ensure that her lover’s desire lasts as long as possible, therefore, she proposes to keep up appearances:

Then though my heart’s content firm love doth bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear. (lines 294-95)

The problem, of course, is just where one might locate evidence for that ‘firm love’ if all we have is her word for it and external behaviours that would seem to indicate the opposite. What evidence, in fact, does one have for anything other than words, actions, and appearances, any or all of which may lie? The ‘inward’ qualities of truth, verifiability, and proof that the earlier comedies had tested but ultimately restored are, in this case, much more elusive and their metaphysical logic not reinstated by the ending of the play (Cressida opportunistically goes off with someone else). Similarly, in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, Helena uses a 20-line soliloquy (I.i.79-98) to inform the startled audience of a flat contradiction between the sorrow she affects—everyone thinks she is mourning for her father’s recent death, but ‘I think not on my father...What was he like? / I have forgot him’ (lines 79, 81-2)—and the sorrow she now tells us she really feels: for the imminent departure of Bertram whom she secretly loves. As in the case of Cressida (and, arguably, Hamlet), it is precisely by adverting to what lies within that Helena’s soliloquy serves to strain if not break any confidence that a continuity exists between inside and outside, or, indeed, that there might be any ‘within’ at all. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that her love for the supremely shallow Bertram is based on appearances no less superficial: namely, the pin-up brow, eye, and curls she has committed to her heart. Like her namesake in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, this Helena’s love (or ‘fancy’) is confessedly ‘idoltrous’ (line 97)—

basically, empty of content—and her determination to have Bertram come what may does not necessarily convince us either that this love of hers is particularly ‘deep’, or that the phallic order (supposedly responsible for maintaining presence, inwardness, truth, and meaning, and represented by the marriage she finally achieves) has, in any decisive way, been restored.²⁶

The end or absence of the phallic order—and the thinkability (if only that) of an alternative to it—is the business of tragedy. The rape of Lucrece not only reminds the heroine of her lack of the phallus in the most violent way imaginable but also serves conclusively to destroy the existing patriarchal system of marriage, legitimacy, and orderly generation: a cataclysm she figures in her first soliloquy—at a total of 400 lines, Shakespeare’s longest by far—as an irreversible passing of day (a world that made sense) into night (one bereft of intelligibility). In her second soliloquy (a mere 56 lines)—prompted by a painting of the fall of Troy—Lucrece identifies with the figure of ‘despairing Hecuba’ (line 1447) and ‘shapes her sorrow to the beldame’s woes’ (line 1458):

‘Poor instrument,’ quoth she, ‘without a sound,
I’ll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue’. (lines 1464-65)

Like the Player in *Hamlet*, she locates her grief not within but without: her lament is palpably the imitation of an imitation and shows how represented tears draw ‘real’—but still, of course, represented—tears. And, like Hamlet himself (though perhaps more effectively), she serves as the recorder or flute which, given breath, ‘will discourse most eloquent music’: for the heart of *her* mystery—what her story demonstrates—is precisely a human subjectivity that lacks a centre, a core, a reality that has been forced upon her consciousness by means of traumatic violence. In her very speaking and sounding—in the music that classically marks its difference from supposedly ‘normal’ speech—she is nothing but a hollow reed.²⁷

Shakespeare's other tragic female soliloquists share much of the burden of Lucrece's song. In her first soliloquy—relatively short at 16 lines—Juliet gets straight to the point by querying the supposed relation between word and meaning:

What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,
Nor arm nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. (II.ii.40-42)

In wishing that Romeo might 'Deny thy father and refuse thy name' (line 34)—or even 'doff thy name...which is no part of thee' (lines 47-8)—Juliet effectively scopes out an alternative system and an alternative subjectivity that is 'castrated' only in its defiance of the phallic order that otherwise insists on attaching signified to signifier (the *Nom/Non du Père* is very visible here). Almost if she had summoned that alternative system into being, the play goes on to record the collapse of the old order in now familiar ways: deprived of her beloved by means of male violence (men fighting with swords, predictably enough), Juliet will subsist thereafter in the state of loss she has been in all along, subjectively speaking, but which her separation from Romeo brings home to her in no uncertain terms. That state is figured, moreover—exactly as it would be by Lucrece—as a symbolic shift from day to night. The irony of Juliet's third and longest soliloquy (III.ii.1-31)—which, spoken at midnight as she awaits Romeo's coming, mirrors her second (II.v.1-17), spoken at midday as she had awaited the Nurse and news of their imminent marriage—is that what she excitedly expects to be her wedding night turns out to be the interminable night of existential loss with which Lucrece characterises her condition. Since Juliet does not yet know that Romeo has been banished, her repeated invocations of night—'Come civil night, / Thou sober-suited matron all in black', 'Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night', 'Come, gentle night, come,

loving, black-brow'd night' (lines 10-11, 17, 20)—do not sound to her as they might to us: like an unwitting spell that summons the dark and female forces of the night (as Dido did) to trace the contours of a world in which the phallic order has been well and truly dismantled.

It may seem odd to associate Juliet with witchcraft, but it puts her in company with Shakespeare's other tragic female soliloquist, who first speaks *sola* when she enters reading her husband's letter about his meeting with the 'weird sisters' (I.v.8). Where Juliet had resisted the phallic order, however, Lady Macbeth seeks to reinforce it, using the 33-line soliloquy that follows—interrupted only by the messenger who brings news of Duncan's arrival (I.v.15-30, 38-54)—to articulate her determination to boost and bolster her husband's otherwise slack resolve. She will have none of such 'castrated' subjectivity and summons the forces of darkness to endow her with a phallic potency instead:

Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here...

Come, thick night,

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,

That my keen knife see not the wound it makes. (lines 40-41, 50-52)

Her attempt fails—not because it denies her essential 'femininity' but because it denies a human subjectivity that is constitutively other-centred, eccentric, and displaced—which is why, the next time we see her soliloquise (in Act V, scene i), her grand blank verse has given way to symptomatic prose that (in a still new variant on monologic speech) is not even heard by the speaker herself. Lady Macbeth's sleep-talking is Shakespeare's most poignant example, perhaps, of speech that comes from beside and outside the *cogito*—the 'self'—and of what a decentred and self-estranged subjectivity might sound like, if given a voice.

¹ *Richard II*, V.v.9, all references to Shakespeare to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, et al (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2nd ed., 1997). On these various aspects of soliloquy, see James Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003).

² See Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae tam accurate congestus* (London: Henry Wykes, 1565), defining *soliloquium*, sig. 5Y6^v; also Sir Thomas Elyot, *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knyght* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1538), sig. Z6^v, who defines the word in much the same way: both usefully antedate *OED*. On this see Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³ See Brian Stock, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁴ On the similarities and differences between these religious and secular forms of inquiry, see *ibid*, chapter 2; and Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁵ See e.g. Lloyd A. Skiffington, *The History of English Soliloquy: Aeschylus to Shakespeare* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); Karen Newman, *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character: Dramatic convention in Classical and Renaissance comedy* (New York: Methuen, 1985); Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, trans. Charity Scott Stokes (London: Methuen, 1987); and Alex Newell, *The Soliloquies in Hamlet: The Structural Design* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991).

⁶ On Shakespeare's inventiveness with these conventions, see Hirsh (2003). Cummings (2013) also explores the question of address.

⁷ When, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo overhears Juliet's soliloquy (his own going unheard by her) and then answers it—[*Juliet*:] '...Take all myself'. [*Romeo*:] 'I take thee at thy word' (II.ii.49)—the effect is striking precisely because soliloquy here formally segues to dialogue: i.e. it is an exception that proves the rule.

⁸ See Ken Frieden, *Genius and Monologue* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, with H  lo  se Fink and Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006), 207-8 (italics original).

¹⁰ ‘Alone’ is a contraction of ‘all one’.

¹¹ See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (London: Harvester 1984); Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and difference in Renaissance drama* (London: Methuen, 1985); Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Jonathan Goldberg, ‘Shakespearean inscriptions: the voicing of power’, in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London: Methuen, 1985), 116-37; Richard Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama: Subjectivity, Discourse and the Stage* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); and Stuart Sillars, ‘Style, rhetoric, and identity in Shakespearean soliloquy’, in *Style in Theory: Between Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Ivan Callus, James Corby, and Gloria Lauri-Lucente (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 49-69.

¹² See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Since it serves both pro- and anti-feminist positions, however, this politically-motivated categorical collapse is likely to occur, if only so that the battle of the sexes might go on: see e.g. Belsey (1985), Part II; and Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 52-79.

¹³ Several of these texts are anthologised in John Kerrigan, ed., *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and ‘Female Complaint’* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

¹⁴ See Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

¹⁵ In turn: Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1; Enterline (2000), 21; Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 177.

¹⁶ See *The fourth booke of Virgill, intreating of the loue betweene Aeneas and Dido, translated into English, and drawne into a strau[n]ge metre by Henrye late Earle of Surrey* (London: John Day, 1554).

¹⁷ See *Dido Queen of Carthage* (1594), in *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), V.i.296: Dido burns the sword, along with Aeneas' other love tokens—'These letters, lines, and perjur papers all' (line 300)—and then throws herself on the fire. The detail seems to have been Marlowe's invention (in Virgil, she kills herself by falling on the sword).

¹⁸ See *Gorboduc* (1561-62), IV.i.59-60, in *The Minor Elizabethan Drama*, ed. Ashley Thorndyke (London: Dent, 1910).

¹⁹ Shifts from verse into prose and/or song serve as formal indicators of 'abnormal' discourse: see e.g. Ophelia, and the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. On the move into song as serving this function, see Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, eds., *Embodied voices: Representing female vocality in western culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁰ See Linda S. Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Lawrence Lipking, *Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Götz Schmitz, *The fall of women in early English narrative verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Harvey (1992) reads Donne's 'Sappho to Philaenis' as an exercise in one-upmanship over Ovid's 'Sappho to Phaon' (i.e. *Heroides* XV).

²¹ See Enterline (2000); and Bates (2007).

²² See *OED*, ventriloquy, *n.*: speaking or producing sounds such that the voice appears to proceed from some person or object other than the speaker; speaking or appearing to speak from the abdomen. The earliest citation comes from Reginald Scot, *The discoverie of witchcraft* (London: Henry Denham, 1584), K7^v: ‘a wench, practising hir diabolicall witchcraft, and ventriloquie’.

²³ See Bates (2007), 174-215.

²⁴ See Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion’s Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 76-96. For a useful study of such antifoundationalist passion, see Jacqueline T. Miller, ‘The Passion Signified: Imitation and the Construction of Emotions in Sidney and Wroth’, *Criticism* 43.4 (2001): 407-21.

²⁵ Viola attributes Olivia’s error to ‘frailty’, as if this were an essential female condition—‘How easy is it for the proper-false / In women’s waxen hearts to set their forms! / Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we, / For such as we are made of, such we be’ (lines 29-32)—but (a) this would apply to ‘her’ as much as to Olivia; and (b) the gender identity of either, if that is to be decided by what lies under their clothes, is already multiply over-determined. On this see Peter Stallybrass, ‘Transvestism and the “body beneath”: Speculating on the boy actor’, in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992), 64-83.

²⁶ For the other Helena as one ‘who dotes in idolatry’, see *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I.i.109. While John Fletcher rather than Shakespeare may have been its author, Emilia’s soliloquy in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (IV.ii.1-54) raises similar themes. What emerges from her speech is the totally arbitrary nature of ‘love’. The eponymous cousins, Palamon and Arcite, are utterly interchangeable and which she marries is not a matter of inner character, worth, desert, or choice but dictated wholly by chance. Emilia is comparing portraits of the two men as she speaks, and (like Helena in *All’s Well*) her evaluations go little further than these representations.

Emilia's conclusion—'What a mere child is fancy' (line 52)—echoes that of Helena in *Dream*: 'And therefore is Love said to be a child, / Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd' (I.i.238-39).

²⁷ *Hamlet*, III.ii.359. It is little comfort that one of the scenes represented in the painting shows 'how list'ning Priam wets his eyes, / To see those borrowed tears that Sinon sheds' (lines 1548-49)—thereby allowing the Trojan horse into his city—for, as the jilted speaker of *A Lover's Complaint* also discovers, tears produce tears whether they are true or false precisely because representation makes that distinction moot: 'O, that infected moisture of his eye... Would yet again betray the fore-betray'd, / And new pervert a reconciled maid' (lines 323, 328-29).