

Title: Hidden Labor, Cloistered Knowledge: Staging Women's Agency in Early Modern England

Short Summary: Through the examination of three scenes that represent women within cloistered or gendered spaces, our seminar seeks to understand what forms of knowledge these women perform and how space enables or prevents the circulation of knowledge. Part of our concern is with the specifically *hidden* forms of understanding that women wield and impart to other women within these sequestered loci.

Seminar Organizers:

Margo Kolenda, University of Michigan, kolendam@umich.edu

Cecilia Morales, University of Michigan, camora@umich.edu

Katherine Walker, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, walkerkn@email.unc.edu

Seminar Contact:

Katherine Walker

3520 Greenlaw Hall

Department of English and Comparative Literature

Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Email: walkerkn@email.unc.edu

Phone: 940-368-6098

Proposal:

In Margaret Cavendish *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668) a group of women sequester themselves away from the company of males, during which time they perform a series of plays to entertain themselves. One of these performances centers around the act of childbirth:

Lady. OH my back, my back will break, Oh! Oh! Oh!

1 *Woman.* Is the Midwife sent for?

2 *Woman.* Yes, but she is with another Lady.

Lady. Oh my back! Oh! Oh! Oh! *Juno*, give me some ease (Act III, Scene VII).

The scene presents multiple forms of women's knowledge and labor, all of which are meant to remain hidden or cloistered from men's view. Before it is revealed that the Princess is really a Prince, the reader believes that the only people who have access to this play are women. Childbirth, an act performed strictly amongst women, is the primary form of labor presented in the scene. The call for the illusive midwife (a female laborer) points to a network of other women in labor offstage. The stage on which the actresses perform labor is constructed by unstaged female labor within the convent—labor that Monsieur Take-Pleasure and his men want to perform but cannot.

This short scene speaks to our larger concerns in this seminar: the ways in which hidden labor and cloistered knowledge afforded women agency in early modern England. In *The Convent of Pleasure*, Lady Happy and the other women enclose themselves in an attempt to avoid the very labor pains presented in the scene. Furthermore, the play also points to a larger debate surrounding childbirth and midwives in English culture. Midwives represent a form of intimate female labor and knowledge, usually hidden from men's sight. Their ability to conceal or create knowledge about paternity while men were excluded from the space of the birthing room caused a great deal of confusion and anxiety. With our three chosen texts we ask: what

does the hidden nature of women's knowledge and labor afford early modern women? How do these plays use space to stage the notion of gendered knowledge? What is the role of hidden or disguised labor in contributing to anxieties about women's knowledge? How does concealing knowledge and labor from men in these plays drive the plot or produce agency for female characters?

We chose three plays for our seminar because each either stages (or avoids staging) the hidden labor or knowledge of women. While childbirth and midwifery begins our conversation, we intend to consider knowledge and labor in as capacious of terms as possible. For example, *The Convent of Pleasure* is unique amongst our three plays for the fact that it was written by female labor: that of Margaret Cavendish herself. Given that the play was a closet drama, this was also an act of labor that remained somewhat obscured. Therefore, *The Convent of Pleasure* offers an opportunity to reflect on writing involving gendered knowledge and labor as well as questions of agency in the refusal or performance of gendered labor. The women in the convent depend on lower class women to labor for them, yet they spend most of their time writing and performing plays—two forms of labor traditionally performed by men. What are the politics of visibility surrounding women's labor in the play? When is women's knowledge revealed and when is it hidden? How is the play invested—both on the level of the plot and the level of authorship—in hidden female knowledge and labor?

Love's Labor's Lost provides an opportunity to approach the question of labor in a play that ostensibly obscures the labor of the court from its narrative. Rather than accept that the labor that the title promises is absent, we can use this play to reformulate our understanding about the forms that labor can take. What does the absence of obvious forms of labor afford for our understanding of gendered work and knowledge in this context? In a world where men attempt to cloister themselves from women in pursuit of labor, we see women negotiate hidden identity as a tool in knowledge acquisition. And yet these women, on a diplomatic mission, never lose sight of their political purposes; we can understand their amorous attentions to be a part of the labor they are performing. This performance contradicts the play's opening premise, that women must be absent from sites of knowledge in order for the labor of knowledge acquisition to occur. The women in *Love's Labor's Lost*, then, offer a space to think about how the concealed nature of their knowledge allows them a different kind of agency and freedom to carry out their labors.

Our final theatrical moment asks seminar participants to consider another approach to the uses of hidden feminine knowledge: Women's labor could also be figured as illicit, part of the cunning tricks so celebrated in the period's city comedies. In Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, the titular character proudly boasts of her work in turning a profit. When we first meet the Wise Woman, she is pressed upon by a crowd of clients, primarily women, who all require her services. Despite her fraudulent practices, we learn that the Wise Woman serves an important role in the community. Her first lines emphasize the crowds that come to her for help: "Fie, fie, what a toyle, and a moyle it is, / For a woman to bee wiser then all her neighbours" (2.1). Her cunning, however, requires multiple iterations, and she practices within her home. She is seemingly cloistered here, continually undergoing the labors of cunning trickery to survive in an economic climate that often leaves little room for older women without husbands. Ingeniously using these contingencies to display a persona and an array of products, the Wise Woman of Hogsdon asks us to reevaluate the values of her services from a lens of knowledge made through labor.

Together, our aim is to consider these brief theatrical practices with seminar participants and discuss how we might theorize the often secreted, contained, or spatially determined

practices of women's labor. After reading selections from each play, we will ask participants to get into groups and "direct" a specific moment from the drama, in the process considering the placement of bodies and the forms of knowledge enacted on the stage. From our seminar's performances, we hope to chart collectively the interpretative possibilities of women and knowledge within a theatrical, fictional space and to apply that understanding to larger questions of agency and epistemology. We welcome an interdisciplinary audience who will help us understand the movements of knowledge and bodies in the early modern period and, as a seminar, to challenge productively the questions we pose above.

Required Readings:

Excerpts from Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668). Act II, Scene I; Act II, Scene 4; Act IV, Scene I.

Excerpts from William Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* (1594-6). Act II, Scene I; Act V, Scene II.

Excerpts from Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* (1638). Act II, Scene I.

Recommended Readings:

Caroline Bicks, "Introduction: Midwiving Subjects," *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Ashgate, 2003): 1-21.

Natasha Korda, *Labor's Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage*. Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2011.

Cynthia Lewis, "'We Know What we Know'-- Reckoning in *Love's Labor's Lost*." *Studies in Philology*. 105.2 (2008): 245-64.

Wendy Wall, "Knowledge: Recipes and Experimental Cultures," *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 209-50.

The Convent of Pleasure

By Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1624-1674.

First published in *Plays, never before printed,*

by Margaret Cavendish,

London: Printed by A. Maxwell, 1668.

From ACT II. SCENE I.

Takepl. O Madam *Mediator*, we are all undone, the Lady *Happy* is incloister'd.

Mediat. Yes, Gentlemen, the more is the pitty.

Advis. Is there no hopes?

Mediat. Faith, little.

Facil. Let us see the Clergy to perswade her out, for the good of the Commonwealth.

Mediat. Alas Gentlemen! they can do no good, for she is not a Votress to the gods but to Nature.

Court. If she be a Votress to Nature, you are the only Person fit to be Lady Prioress; and so by your power and authority you may give us leave to visit your Nuns sometimes.

Mediat. Not but at a Grate, unless in time of Building, or when they are sick; but howsoever, the Lady *Happy* is Lady-Prioress her self, and will admit none of the Masculine Sex, not so much as to a Grate, for she will suffer no grates about the Cloister; she has also Women-Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries, and she is the chief Confessor her self, and gives what Indulgences or Absolutions she pleaseth: Also, her House, where she hath made her Convent, is so big and convenient, and so strong, as it needs no addition or repair: Besides, she has so much compass of ground within her walls, as there is not only room and place enough for Gardens, Orchards, Walks, Groves, Bowers, Arbours, Ponds, Fountains, Springs and the like; but also conveniency for much Provision, and hath Women for every Office and Employment: for though she hath not above twenty Ladies with her, yet she hath a numerous Company of Female Servants, so as there is no occasion for Men.

Takepl. If there be so many Women, there will be the more use for Men: But pray Madam *Mediator*, give me leave, rightly to understand you, by being more clearly informed: you say, The Lady *Happy* is become a Votress to Nature; and if she be a Votress to Nature, she must be a Mistress to Men.

Mediat. By your favour, Sir, she declares, That she hath avoided the company of Men, by retirement, meerly, because she would enjoy the variety of Pleasures, which are in Nature; of which, she says, Men are Obstructers; for, instead of increasing Pleasure, they produce Pain; and, instead of giving Content, they increase Trouble; instead of making the Femal-Sex Happy, they make them Miserable; for which, she hath banished the Masculine Company for ever.

Advis. Her Heretical Opinions ought not to be suffer'd, nor her Doctrine allow'd; and she ought to be examined by a Masculine Synod, and punish'd with a severe Husband, or tortured with a deboist Husband.

Mediat. The best way, Gentlemen, is to make your Complaints, and put up a Petition to the State, with your desires for a Redress.

Court. Your Counsel is good.

Facil. We will follow it, and go presently about it.

From ACT II. SCENE IV.

****Monsieur* Adviser, Courtly, Take-pleasure, and Facil plot ways they might enter the convent. After rejecting plans to burn the convent down and to give up and start a male-only convent, they continue...

Takepl. Faith, let us resolve to put our selves in Womens apparel, and so by that means get into the *Convent*.

Advis. We shall be discover'd.

Takepl. Who will discover Us?

Advis. We shall discover our Selves.

Takepl. We are not such fools as to betray our Selves.

Advis. We cannot avoid it, for, our very Garb and Behaviour; besides, our Voices will discover us: for we are as untoward to make Courtsies in Petticoats, as Women are to make Legs in Breeches; and it will be as great a difficulty to raise our Voices to a Treble-sound, as for Women to press down their Voices to a Base; besides, We shall never frame our Eyes and Mouths to such coy, dissembling looks, and pritty simpering Mopes and Smiles, as they do.

Court. But we will go as strong lusty Country-Wenches, that desire to serve them in Inferiour Places, and Offices, as Cook-maids, Laundry-maids, Dairy-maids, and the like.

Facil. I do verily believe, I could make an indifferent Cook-maid, but not a Laundry, nor a Dairy-maid; for I cannot milk Cows, nor starch Gorgets, but I think I could make a pretty shift, to wash some of the Ladies Night-Linnen.

Takepl. But they imploy Women in all Places in their Gardens; and for Brewing, Baking and making all sorts of things; besides, some keep their Swine, and twenty such like Offices and Employments there are which we should be very proper for.

Facil. O yes, for keeping of Swine belongs to Men; remember the *Prodigal Son*.

Advis. Faith, for our Prodigality we might be all Swin-heards.

Court. Also we shall be proper for Gardens, for we can dig, and set, and sow.

Takepl. And we are proper for Brewing.

Advis. We are more proper for Drinking, for I can drink good Beer, or Ale, when 'tis Brew'd; but I could not brew such Beer, or Ale, as any man could drink.

Facil. Come, come, we shall make a shift one way or other: Besides, we shall be very willing to learn, and be very diligent in our Services, which will give good and great content; wherefore, let us go and put these designs into execution.

Court. Content, content.

Advis. Nay, faith, let us not trouble our Selves for it, 'tis in vain.

Exeunt.

From ACT IV. SCENE I.

Enter Lady Happy drest as a Shepherdess; She walks very Melancholy, then speaks as to her self.

My Name is *Happy*, and so was my Condition, before I saw this Princess; but now I am like to be the most unhappy Maid alive: But why may not I love a Woman with the same affection I could a Man?

No, no, Nature is Nature, and still will be
The same she was from all Eternity.

Enter the Princess in Masculine Shepherd's Clothes.

Prin. My dearest Mistress, do you shun my Company? is your Servant become an offence to your sight?

L. Happy. No, Servant! your Presence is more acceptable to me then the Presence of our Goddess Nature, for which she, I fear will punish me, for loving you more then I ought to love you.

Prin. Can Lovers love too much?

L. Happy. Yes, if they love not well.

Prin. Can any Love be more vertuous, innocent and harmless then ours?

L. *Happy*. I hope not.

Prin. Then let us please our selves, as harmless Lovers use to do.

L. *Happy*. How can harmless Lovers please themselves?

Prin. Why very well, as, to discourse, imbrace and kiss, so mingle souls together.

L. *Happy*. But innocent Lovers do not use to kiss.

Prin. Not any act more frequent amongst us Women-kind; nay, it were a sin in friendship, should not we kiss: then let us not prove our selves Reprobates.

They imbrace and kiss, and hold each other in their Arms.

Prin. These my Imbraces though of Femal kind,
May be as fervent as a Masculine mind.

*The Scene is open'd, the Princess and L. Happy go in.
A Pastoral within the Scene.*

The Scene is changed into a Green, or Plain, where Sheep are feeding, and a May-Pole in the middle.

*L. Happy as a Shepherdess, and the Princess as a Shepherd are sitting there.
Enter another Shepherd, and Wooes the Lady Happy.*

Shepherd Fair Shepherdess do not my Suit deny,
O grant my Suit, let me not for Love die:
Pity my Flocks, Oh save their Shepherd's life;
Grant you my Suit, be you their Shepherd's Wife.

L. *Happy*. How can I grant to every ones request?
Each Shepherd's Suit lets me not be at rest;
For which I wish, the Winds might blow them far,
That no Love-Suit might enter to my Ear.

Enter Madam Mediator in a Shepherdess dress, and another Shepherd.

Shep. Good Dame unto your Daughter speak for me.
Perswade her I your Son in Law may be:
I'll serve your Swine, your Cows bring home to Milk;
Attend your Sheep, whose Wool's as soft as Silk;
I'll plow your Grounds, Corn I'll in Winter sow,
Then reap your Harvest, and your Grass I'll mow;
Gather your Fruits in Autumn from the Tree.
All this and more I'll do, if y' speak for me.

Shepherdess. My Daughter vows a single life,
 And swears, she n're will be a Wife;
 But live a Maid, and Flocks will keep,
 And her chief Company shall be Sheep.

The Princess as a Shepherd, speaks to the Lady Happy.

Prin. My Shepherdess, your Wit flies high,
 Up to the Skie,
 And views the Gates of Heaven,
 Which are the Planets Seven;
 Sees how fixt Stars are plac'd,
 And how the Meteors wast;
 What makes the Snow so white,
 And how the Sun makes light;
 What makes the biting Cold
 On every thing take hold;
 And Hail a mixt degree,
 'Twixt Snow and Ice you see
 From whence the Winds do blow;
 What Thunder is, you know,
 And what makes Lightning flow
 Like liquid streams, you show.
 From Skie you come to th' Earth,
 And view each Creature's birth;
 Sink to the Center deep,
 Where all dead bodies sleep;
 And there observe to know,
 What makes the Minerals grow;
 How Vegetables sprout,
 And how the Plants come out;
 Take notice of all Seed,
 And what the Earth doth breed;
 Then view the Springs below,
 And mark how Waters flow;
 What makes the Tides to rise
 Up proudly to the Skies,
 And shrinking back descend,
 As fearing to offend.
 Also your Wit doth view
 The Vapour and the Dew,
 In Summer's heat, that Wet
 Doth seem like the Earth's Sweat;
 In Winter-time, that Dew
 Like paint's white to the view,
 Cold makes that thick, white, dry;

As *Cerusse* it doth lie
 On th' Earth's black face, so fair
 As painted Ladies are;
 But, when a heat is felt,
 That Frosty paint doth melt.

Thus Heav'n and Earth you view,
 And see what's Old, what's New;
 How Bodies Transmigrate,
 Lives are Predestinate.
 Thus doth your Wit reveal
 What Nature would conceal.

L. *Happy*. My Shepherd,
 All those that live do know it,
 That you are born a Poet,
 Your Wit doth search Mankind,
 In Body and in Mind;
 The Appetites you measure,
 And weigh each several Pleasure;
 Do figure every Passion,
 And every Humor's fashion;
 See how the Fancie's wrought,
 And what makes every Thought;
 Fathom Conceptions low,
 From whence Opinions flow;
 Observe the Memories length,
 And Understanding's strength
 Your Wit doth Reason find,
 The Centre of the Mind,
 Wherein the Rational Soul
 Doth govern and controul,
 There doth She sit in State,
 Predestinate by Fate,
 And by the Gods Decree,
 That Sovereign She should be.

And thus your Wit can tell,
 How Souls in Bodies dwell;
 As that the Mind dwells in the Brain,
 And in the Mind the Soul doth reign,
 And in the Soul the life doth last,
 For with the Body it doth not wast;
 Nor shall Wit like the Body die,
 But live in the World's Memory.

Prin. May I live in your favour, and be possest with your Love and Person, is the height of my ambitions.

L. *Happy*. I can neither deny you my Love nor Person.

Prin. In amorous Pastoral Verse we did not Woo.
As other Pastoral Lovers use to doo.

L. *Happy*. Which doth express, we shall more constant be,
And in a Married life better agree.

Prin. We shall agree, for we true Love inherit,
Join as one Body and Soul, or Heav'nly Spirit.

Here come Rural Sports, as Country Dances about the May-Pole: that Pair which Dances best is Crowned King and Queen of the Shepherds that year; which happens to the Princess, and the Lady Happy.

L. *Happy to the Princ*. Let me tell you, Servant, that our Custome is to dance about this May-Pole, and that Pair which Dances best is Crown'd King and Queen of all the Shepherds and Shepherdesses this year: Which Sport if it please you we will begin.

Prin. Nothing, Sweetest Mistress, that pleases you, can displease me.

They Dance; after the Dancing the Princess and Lady Happy are Crowned with a Garland of Flowers: a Shepherd speaks.

***The play from here down is marked "Written by my Lord Duke."

LOVE'S LABOURS LOST :ACT II SCENE I.91-178

Enter the PRINCESS of France, ROSALINE, MARIA, KATHARINE, BOYET, Lords, Attendants

Enter FERDINAND, LONGAVILLE, DUMAIN, BIRON, and Attendants

FERDINAND

Fair princess, welcome to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS

'Fair' I give you back again; and 'welcome' I have not yet: the roof of this court is too high to be yours; and welcome to the wide fields too base to be mine.

FERDINAND

You shall be welcome, madam, to my court.

PRINCESS

I will be welcome, then: conduct me thither.

FERDINAND

Hear me, dear lady; I have sworn an oath.

PRINCESS

Our Lady help my lord! he'll be forsworn.

FERDINAND

Not for the world, fair madam, by my will.

PRINCESS

Why, will shall break it; will and nothing else.

FERDINAND

Your ladyship is ignorant what it is.

PRINCESS

Were my lord so, his ignorance were wise,
Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance.
I hear your grace hath sworn out house-keeping:
Tis deadly sin to keep that oath, my lord,
And sin to break it.

But pardon me. I am too sudden-bold:

To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me.

Vouchsafe to read the purpose of my coming,

And suddenly resolve me in my suit.

FERDINAND

Madam, I will, if suddenly I may.

PRINCESS

You will the sooner, that I were away;

For you'll prove perjured if you make me stay.

BIRON

Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

ROSALINE

Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

BIRON

I know you did.

ROSALINE

How needless was it then to ask the question!

BIRON

You must not be so quick.

ROSALINE

'Tis 'long of you that spur me with such questions.

BIRON

Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill tire.

ROSALINE

Not till it leave the rider in the mire.

BIRON

What time o' day?

ROSALINE

The hour that fools should ask.

BIRON

Now fair befall your mask!

ROSALINE

Fair fall the face it covers!

BIRON

And send you many lovers!

ROSALINE

Amen, so you be none.

BIRON

Nay, then will I be gone.

FERDINAND

Madam, your father here doth intimate

The payment of a hundred thousand crowns;
Being but the one half of an entire sum
Disbursed by my father in his wars.
But say that he or we, as neither have,
Received that sum, yet there remains unpaid
A hundred thousand more; in surety of the which,
One part of Aquitaine is bound to us,
Although not valued to the money's worth.
If then the king your father will restore
But that one half which is unsatisfied,
We will give up our right in Aquitaine,
And hold fair friendship with his majesty.
But that, it seems, he little purposeth,
For here he doth demand to have repaid
A hundred thousand crowns; and not demands,
On payment of a hundred thousand crowns,
To have his title live in Aquitaine;
Which we much rather had depart withal
And have the money by our father lent
Than Aquitaine so gelded as it is.
Dear Princess, were not his requests so far
From reason's yielding, your fair self should make
A yielding 'gainst some reason in my breast
And go well satisfied to France again.

PRINCESS

You do the king my father too much wrong
And wrong the reputation of your name,
In so unseeming to confess receipt
Of that which hath so faithfully been paid.

FERDINAND

I do protest I never heard of it;
And if you prove it, I'll repay it back
Or yield up Aquitaine.

PRINCESS

We arrest your word.
Boyet, you can produce acquittances
For such a sum from special officers
Of Charles his father.

FERDINAND

Satisfy me so.

BOYET

So please your grace, the packet is not come
Where that and other specialties are bound:
To-morrow you shall have a sight of them.

FERDINAND

It shall suffice me: at which interview
All liberal reason I will yield unto.
Meantime receive such welcome at my hand
As honour without breach of honour may

Make tender of to thy true worthiness:
You may not come, fair princess, in my gates;
But here without you shall be so received
As you shall deem yourself lodged in my heart,
Though so denied fair harbour in my house.
Your own good thoughts excuse me, and farewell:
To-morrow shall we visit you again.
Sweet health and fair desires consort your grace!
Thy own wish wish I thee in every place!

PRINCESS
FERDINAND

Exit

ACT V. SCENE II. 130-310

PRINCESS: *Hold, Rosaline, this favour thou shalt wear,
And then the king will court thee for his dear;
Hold, take thou this, my sweet, and give me thine,
So shall Biron take me for Rosaline.
And change your favours too; so shall your loves
Woo contrary, deceived by these removes.*

ROSALINE *Come on, then; wear the favours most in sight.*
KATHARINE *But in this changing what is your intent?*
PRINCESS *The effect of my intent is to cross theirs:
They do it but in mocking merriment;
And mock for mock is only my intent.
Their several counsels they unbosom shall
To loves mistook, and so be mock'd withal
Upon the next occasion that we meet,
With visages displayed, to talk and greet.*

ROSALINE *But shall we dance, if they desire to't?*
PRINCESS *No, to the death, we will not move a foot;
Nor to their penn'd speech render we no grace,
But while 'tis spoke each turn away her face.*

BOYET *Why, that contempt will kill the speaker's heart,
And quite divorce his memory from his part.*

PRINCESS *Therefore I do it; and I make no doubt
The rest will ne'er come in, if he be out
There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown,
To make theirs ours and ours none but our own:
So shall we stay, mocking intended game,
And they, well mock'd, depart away with shame.
Trumpets sound within*

BOYET *The trumpet sounds: be mask'd; the maskers come.*

The Ladies mask

*Enter Blackamoors with music; MOTH; FERDINAND, BIRON,
LONGAVILLE, and DUMAIN, in Russian habits, and masked*

MOTH *All hail, the richest beauties on the earth!--*
BOYET *Beauties no richer than rich taffeta.*
MOTH *A holy parcel of the fairest dames.*
The Ladies turn their backs to him
That ever turn'd their--backs--to mortal views!
BIRON *[Aside to MOTH] Their eyes, villain, their eyes!*
MOTH *That ever turn'd their eyes to mortal views!--Out--*
BOYET *True; out indeed.*
MOTH *Out of your favours, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe*
Not to behold--
BIRON *[Aside to MOTH] Once to behold, rogue.*
MOTH *Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes,*
--with your sun-beamed eyes--
BOYET *They will not answer to that epithet;*
You were best call it 'daughter-beamed eyes.'
MOTH *They do not mark me, and that brings me out.*
BIRON *Is this your perfectness? be gone, you rogue!*

Exit MOTH

ROSALINE *What would these strangers? know their minds, Boyet:*
If they do speak our language, 'tis our will:
That some plain man recount their purposes
Know what they would.
BOYET *What would you with the princess?*
BIRON *Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.*
ROSALINE *What would they, say they?*
BOYET *Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.*
ROSALINE *Why, that they have; and bid them so be gone.*
BOYET *She says, you have it, and you may be gone.*
FERDINAND *Say to her, we have measured many miles*
To tread a measure with her on this grass.
BOYET *They say, that they have measured many a mile*
To tread a measure with you on this grass.
ROSALINE *It is not so. Ask them how many inches*
Is in one mile: if they have measured many,
The measure then of one is easily told.
BOYET *If to come hither you have measured miles,*
And many miles, the princess bids you tell
How many inches doth fill up one mile.
BIRON *Tell her, we measure them by weary steps.*
BOYET *She bears herself.*

ROSALINE *How many weary steps,
Of many weary miles you have o'ergone,
Are number'd in the travel of one mile?*

BIRON *We number nothing that we spend for you:
Our duty is so rich, so infinite,
That we may do it still without accompt.
Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face,
That we, like savages, may worship it.*

ROSALINE *My face is but a moon, and clouded too.*

FERDINAND *Blessed are clouds, to do as such clouds do!
Vouchsafe, bright moon, and these thy stars, to shine,
Those clouds removed, upon our watery eyne.*

ROSALINE *O vain petitioner! beg a greater matter;
Thou now request'st but moonshine in the water.*

FERDINAND *Then, in our measure do but vouchsafe one change.
Thou bid'st me beg: this begging is not strange.*

ROSALINE *Play, music, then! Nay, you must do it soon.*

Music plays

FERDINAND *Not yet! no dance! Thus change I like the moon.
Will you not dance? How come you thus estranged?*

ROSALINE *You took the moon at full, but now she's changed.*

FERDINAND *Yet still she is the moon, and I the man.
The music plays; vouchsafe some motion to it.*

ROSALINE *Our ears vouchsafe it.*

FERDINAND *But your legs should do it.*

ROSALINE *Since you are strangers and come here by chance,
We'll not be nice: take hands. We will not dance.*

FERDINAND *Why take we hands, then?*

ROSALINE *Only to part friends:
Curtsy, sweet hearts; and so the measure ends.*

FERDINAND *More measure of this measure; be not nice.*

ROSALINE *We can afford no more at such a price.*

FERDINAND *Prize you yourselves: what buys your company?*

ROSALINE *Your absence only.*

FERDINAND *That can never be.*

ROSALINE *Then cannot we be bought: and so, adieu;
Twice to your visor, and half once to you.*

FERDINAND *If you deny to dance, let's hold more chat.*

ROSALINE *In private, then.*

FERDINAND *I am best pleased with that.*

They converse apart

BIRON *White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.*

PRINCESS *Honey, and milk, and sugar; there is three.*

BIRON *Nay then, two treys, and if you grow so nice,
Methbeglin, wort, and malmsey: well run, dice!
There's half-a-dozen sweets.*

PRINCESS *Seventh sweet, adieu:
Since you can cog, I'll play no more with you.*

BIRON *One word in secret.*

PRINCESS *Let it not be sweet.*

BIRON *Thou grievest my gall.*

PRINCESS *Gall! bitter.*

BIRON *Therefore meet.*

They converse apart

DUMAIN *Will you vouchsafe with me to change a word?*

MARIA *Name it.*

DUMAIN *Fair lady,--*

MARIA *Say you so? Fair lord,--*

Take that for your fair lady.

DUMAIN *Please it you,*

As much in private, and I'll bid adieu.

They converse apart

KATHARINE *What, was your vizard made without a tongue?*

LONGAVILLE *I know the reason, lady, why you ask.*

KATHARINE *O for your reason! quickly, sir; I long.*

LONGAVILLE *You have a double tongue within your mask,
And would afford my speechless vizard half.*

KATHARINE *Veal, quoth the Dutchman. Is not 'veal' a calf?*

LONGAVILLE *A calf, fair lady!*

KATHARINE *No, a fair lord calf.*

LONGAVILLE *Let's part the word.*

KATHARINE *No, I'll not be your half*

Take all, and wean it; it may prove an ox.

LONGAVILLE *Look, how you butt yourself in these sharp mocks!*

Will you give horns, chaste lady? do not so.

KATHARINE *Then die a calf, before your horns do grow.*

LONGAVILLE *One word in private with you, ere I die.*

KATHARINE *Bleat softly then; the butcher hears you cry.*

They converse apart

BOYET *The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen*

As is the razor's edge invisible,

Cutting a smaller hair than may be seen,

Above the sense of sense; so sensible

Seemeth their conference; their conceits have wings

Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter things.

ROSALINE *Not one word more, my maids; break off, break off.*

BIRON
FERDINAND
PRINCESS

*By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!
Farewell, mad wenches; you have simple wits.
Twenty adieus, my frozen Muscovits.*

Exeunt FERDINAND, Lords, and Blackamoors

Are these the breed of wits so wonder'd at?

BOYET
ROSALINE
PRINCESS

*Tapers they are, with your sweet breaths puff'd out.
Well-liking wits they have; gross, gross; fat, fat.
O poverty in wit, kingly-poor flout!
Will they not, think you, hang themselves tonight?
Or ever, but in vizards, show their faces?
This pert Biron was out of countenance quite.*

ROSALINE

O, they were all in lamentable cases!

PRINCESS
MARIA

*The king was weeping-ripe for a good word.
Biron did swear himself out of all suit.
Dumain was at my service, and his sword:
No point, quoth I; my servant straight was mute.*

KATHARINE

*Lord Longaville said, I came o'er his heart;
And trow you what he called me?*

PRINCESS
KATHARINE
PRINCESS

*Qualm, perhaps.
Yes, in good faith.
Go, sickness as thou art!*

ROSALINE

*Well, better wits have worn plain statute-caps.
But will you bear? the king is my love sworn.*

PRINCESS
KATHARINE
MARIA

*And quick Biron hath plighted faith to me.
And Longaville was for my service born.
Dumain is mine, as sure as bark on tree.*

BOYET

*Madam, and pretty mistresses, give ear:
Immediately they will again be here
In their own shapes; for it can never be
They will digest this harsh indignity.*

PRINCESS
BOYET

*Will they return?
They will, they will, God knows,
And leap for joy, though they are lame with blows:
Therefore change favours; and, when they repair,
Blow like sweet roses in this summer air.*

PRINCESS
BOYET

*How blow? how blow? speak to be understood.
Fair ladies mask'd are roses in their bud;
Dismask'd, their damask sweet commixture shown,
Are angels vailing clouds, or roses blown.*

PRINCESS

*Avaunt, perplexity! What shall we do,
If they return in their own shapes to woo?*

ROSALINE

*Good madam, if by me you'll be advised,
Let's, mock them still, as well known as disguised:*

*Let us complain to them what fools were here,
Disguised like Muscovites, in shapeless gear;
And wonder what they were and to what end
Their shallow shows and prologue vilely penn'd
And their rough carriage so ridiculous,
Should be presented at our tent to us.*

BOYET

PRINCESS

*Ladies, withdraw: the gallants are at hand.
Whip to our tents, as roes run o'er land.*

Exeunt PRINCESS, ROSALINE, KATHARINE, and MARIA

The Wife-woman of Hogsdon. 291

headed wicked *Chartley*, whome nothing will tame. To this Gallant was I poore Gentle-woman betroathed, and the Marriage day appoynted : But hee out of a fantaftick and giddy humour, before the time prefixed, posts up to London. After him come I thus habited, and you see my welcome, to see an eare-witnesse of his second Contracting. Modestie would not suffer mee to discover my selfe, otherwise, I should have gone neere to have marred the match. I heard them talke of *Hogsdon*, and a *Wife-woman*, where these Aymes shall bee brought to Action. Ile see if I can insinuate my selfe into her service : that's my next project : and now good luck of my side.

Exit.

Explicit Actus primus.

Actus secundus, Scena prima.

Enter the Wife-woman and her Clyents, a Country-man with an Vrinall, foure Women like Citizens wives, Taber a Serving-man, and a Chamber-mayd.

Wifewoman. Fie, fie, what a toyle, and a moyle it is,
For a woman to see wifer then all her neighbours ?
I pray good people, presse not too fast upon me ;

U 2

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Though I have two eares, I can heare but one at
 once.
 You with the Vrine.

Enter 2. Luce, and stands aside.

Countryman. Here forfooth Mistresse.

Wifew. And who disill'd this water ?

Country. My wives Limbeck, if it please you.

Wifew. And where doth the paine hold her
 most ?

Country. Marry at her heart forfooth.

Wifew. Ey, at her heart, shee hath a griping at
 her heart.

Country. You have hit it right.

Wifewo. Nay, I can see so much in the Vrine.

2. Luce. Iust so much as is told her.

Wifewo. Shee hath no paine in her head, hath shee ?

Countrym. No indeed, I never heard her com-
 plaine of her head,

Wifewo. I told you so, her paine lyes all at her
 heart ;

Alas good heart! but how fees shee her sto-
 macke ?

Countrym. O queasie, and sicke at stomacke.

Wifewo. Ey, I warrant you, I thinke I can see as
 farre into a Mill-stone as another : you have heard of
 Mother *Nottingham*, who for her time, was prettily well
 skill'd in casting of Waters : and after her, Mother
Bombye ; and then there is one *Hatfield* in Pepper-
 Alley, hee doth prettie well for a thing that's lost.
 There's another in *Coleharbour*, that's skill'd in the
 Planets. Mother *Sturton* in *Goulden-lane*, is for Fore-
 speaking : Mother *Phillips* of the *Banke-side*, for the
 weaknesse of the backe : and then there's a very reve-
 rent Matron on *Clarkenwell-Green*, good at many
 things : Mistris *Mary* on the *Banke-side*, is for recting
 a Figure : and one (what doe you call her) in *West-
 minster*, that practiseth the Booke and the Key, and the

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Sive and the Sheares : and all doe well, according to their talent. For my selfe, let the world speake : harke you my friend, you shall take—

(*Shee whispers*)

2. *Luce.* 'Tis strange the Ignorant should be thus fool'd.

What can this Witch, this Wizard, or old Trot, Doe by Inchantment, or by Magicke spell ? Such as professe that Art should be deepe Schollers. What reading can this simple Woman have ? 'Tis palpable grosse foolery.

Wifewo. Now friend, your bufinesse ?

Taber. I have stolne out of my Masters houte, forfooth, with the Kitchin-Mayd, and I am come to know of you, whether it be my fortune to have her, or no.

Wifewo. And what's your suit, Lady ?

Kitchin. Forfooth, I come to know whether I be a Maid or no.

Wifewo. Why, art thou in doubt of that ?

Kitchin. It may bee I have more reason then all the world knowes.

Taber. Nay, if thou com'st to know whether thou beest a Maid or no, I had best aske to know whether I be with child or no.

Wifewo. Withdraw into the Parlour there, Ile but talke with this other Gentlewoman, and Ile resolve you presently.

Taber. Come *Sifly*, if shee cannot resolve thee, I can, and in the Case of a Maiden-head doe more then shee, I warrant thee.

Exeunt.

The Wom. Forfooth I am bold, as they say.

Wifewo. You are welcome Gentlewoman.—

Wom. I would not have it knowne to my Neighbours, that I come to a Wife-woman for any thing, by my truly.

Wifewom. For should your Husband come and find you here.

Wom. My Husband woman, I am a Widdow.

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Wifewom. Where are my braines ? 'tis true, you are a Widdow ; and you dwell, let me see, I can never remember that place.

Wom. In *Kentstreet.*

Wifewom. *Kentstreet, Kentstreet!* and I can tell you wherfore you come.

Wom. Why, and say true ?

Wifewom. You are a Wagge, you are a Wagge : why, what doe you thinke now I would say ?

Wom. Perhaps, to know how many Husbands I should have.

Wifewom. And if I should say so, should I say amisse ?

Wom. I thinke you are a Witch.

Wifewom. In, in, Ile but reade a little of *Ptolomie'* and *Erra Pater* : and when I have cast a Figure, Ile come to you presently. *Exit Wom.*

Now Wagge, what wouldst thou have ?

2. *Luce.* If this were a Wifewoman, shee could tell that without asking. Now me thinkes I should come to know whether I were a Boy or a Girle ; forfooth I lacke a service.

Wifewo. By my Fidelitie, and I want a good trusty Lad.

1. *Luce.* Now could I figh, and say, Alas, this is some Bawd trade-falne, and out of her wicked experience, is come to bee reputed wife. Ile serve her, bee't but to pry into the mysterie of her Science.

Wifewo. A proper stripling, and a wife, I warrant him ; here's a penie for thee, Ile hire thee for a yeare by the Statute of *Winchester* : prove true and honest, and thou shalt want nothing that a good Boy—

2. *Luce.* Here Wife-woman you are out againe, I shall want what a good Boy should have, whilst I live : well, here I shall live both unknowne, and my Sex unsuspected. But whom have wee here ?