

# When violence occurs, other things do not matter

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Location is everything. The setting of Shakespeare's Hamlet, the royal court, functions as more than the backdrop to the drama. On the contrary, embedded within the play is the implicit significance of its environment. Court society, with its emphasis on attaining nobility, maintaining the power balance between the monarch and the members of court, and a detailed code of conduct regarding the relations between the sexes, exerts an overarching influence over the characters in the play.

The most salient aspect of Hamlet is its main characters notorious delaying to avenge his father's unjust murder. Critics have often struggled with how to account for Hamlet's incessant deliberations and have focused on his character construction. Yet people do not exist in a vacuum; Hamlet is an integral member of the society he belongs to. Examining Hamlet's conduct within the context of court society affords the reader the opportunity to contextualize and better understand Hamlet's perplexing behavior. Not only does Hamlet dramatize its protagonist's revenge narrative, it also dramatizes the intricate relationship between its characters and Court Society. Threaded through Hamlet's revenge narrative is the narrative of courtly restraint.

The narrative of courtly restraint offers an interesting interpretation of Hamlet's aggression towards women. In his essay, " ' To Please the Wiser Sort': Philosophy in Hamlet" John Guillory argues that Hamlet's " misogyny" is not a hatred of women. Rather, the desublimation of his courtier tendencies leads him to unleash aggression towards the women in his life. In order for Hamlet to kill Claudius, fulfilling his vow to avenge his father's death, he must realize violence within himself. Yet he must also do this

within the context of Court Society, a society that restrains violence and encourages cultural refinement. The events of the play dramatize Hamlet's struggle to act violently. By transforming himself from the courtier to the "pre-courtier" revenge hero, Hamlet undoes the sublimation of violent impulses and avenges his father's death. His delays and deliberations are symptomatic of this transformation. His interactions with women can be understood in the context of the desublimation of courtly persona.

In order to understand what the desublimation of the courtier entails, it is important to explain what Norbert Elias calls the "civilizing process" of the nobles. Elias sees the process of "courtization" as "a long term transformation of human society...the transformation of warriors into courtiers." It becomes the project of the monarchy to constrain and subdue the members of court society so that their violence towards each other, and especially against the monarch, becomes unacceptable within the confines of the established order.

Women play an interesting role in court society. Elias points out that, "women, considered as social groups, have far greater power at court than any other formation in this society." In the context of restraining spontaneous impulse, the women come to symbolize what the men cannot impulsively have. The reduction of spontaneity causes what Elias terms a "civilizing detachment" in the relations between men and women. The qualities of a courtier good manners, self-restraint are constructed by the court world in order distance the sexes and to complicate relations between members of the court world. The males must court the females; they can not

simply have them. The women are a large part of why the courtiers must “civilize” themselves.

Hamlet’s aggression towards Ophelia can therefore be understood in the context of courtly constraints. As a woman, she represents his need to sublimate his violence and impulses. He rejects her in the process of rejecting the barriers of court society.

The civilizing process requires a transformation from warrior to courtier. There’s a subordination of the self that occurs in this transformation from warrior to courtier. Elias explains:

To keep one’s place in the intense competition for importance at court...one must subordinate one’s appearance and gestures, in short oneself, to the fluctuating norms of court society that increasingly emphasize the difference, the distinction of the people belonging to it.

Courtly life becomes a game with rules and restrictions, one false move and the courtier opens himself up for attack of the nonviolent sort. The world is constructed like a game there are rules and regulations that dictate proper behavior. The individuals that comprise the members of court are all implicated in the relationship to the court power structure. At one point in the play Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that “ Denmark is a prison.” Courtly life is confining; Hamlet’s frustration is understandable in light of what Elias deems this. the “ intense competition for importance.” The courtiers must control their impulses in order to succeed in this environment of restraint. Elias suggests that by “ subordinating” themselves, the

members of court are concealing their own natural impulses. The dynamic of courtly life entails an implicit deception; the phrases of speech, mode of dress, and general interpersonal conduct are not the true representations of the individuals involved.

Life in the court also “ demanded incessant self-control, a complex and carefully calculated strategy in one’s dealings with social equals and superiors.” The courtier becomes a subdued, calculating toady, forever appealing to superiors for recognition and reward. This is why, as Elias points out, “ membership of the court increasingly entails a pacification, a heightened control of warlike habits.” This leads to the restriction and control of aggressive impulses. What this also implies is that these courtiers, if they followed their own impulses, would be violent warriors. There is no room for the individual that does not want to be violent, or a courtier. There’s polarity between violence and propriety. As a courtier, Hamlet is conflicted between the rules of propriety he has maintained and the promise of violence he gives the Ghost.

Hamlet is a textbook example of the restrained courtier. Elias discusses the way that spontaneous impulse was held in check in the court world: “ The deliberate sizing up of a situation, the taking of bearings, in short, reflections intervene more or less automatically between the affective, spontaneous impulse to act and the actual performance of the action or deed.” Elias’s assessment of court society makes for a tidy explanation of Hamlet’s deliberations. Hamlet’s need to constantly question and reflect on his situation is “ automatic” behavior for him. Elias calls this the “ armour-

plating of self-restraint. In the absence of actual battle, the courtier girds himself for battles within the court by reigning in spontaneous impulse. Hamlet's inaction, therefore, is not simply a symptom of moral quandaries, but a result of his inability to throw off the shackles of court society. The need for reflection and hesitation are part of the control exerted on the courtier by court society, and it is "automatic" or habitual for the courtier.

Guillory focuses on Hamlet's philosophizing in the play with relation to a problematic between what he terms "theatrical fashion and court faction." Guillory defines fashion as "the sublimated, aestheticized expression of faction, a political reality." The fashion of the court is the masked, or sublimated, expression of a political reality. The necessity of court life is that things remain unsaid, political realities are rarely discussed. Courtly fashion, with its myriad of intricacies and nuances, becomes the encoded language of political discourse.

Hamlet's philosophizing is his way of decoding this fashion and revealing the political truths of the court or faction. As Guillory puts it, Hamlet's "performance of philosophy" is "an attempt to consolidate 'the wiser sort' around their knowledge of unspeakable political truth. Philosophy itself names their knowledge, without naming its content." In Hamlet's circuitous approaches to the act of revenge is the constant presence of a fruitless "performance of philosophy." His pontificating never leads to a resolve; rather it serves to stultify the action. He can never openly acknowledge the evil he knows Claudius has committed. Hamlet is verbally castrated; he is free to

soliloquize, but only in a limited capacity. He can never address the issue through speech, yet for most of the play that is his choice of defense.

Guillory extends the argument beyond the bounds of the play to suggest that Hamlet's performance of philosophy resonates with a portion of Shakespeare's audience, namely the courtly elite. This sector of the population relates to Hamlet's inability to act, with his sublimation of violence. And the performance of philosophy, containing an

Irresolution of fundamental questions, its reflections on its own failure to comprehend the totality of the real, tends toward the suspension of action (particularly violent action) and thus toward the cultivation of a certain elite pleasure in philosophizing.

Because these courtiers are prevented from violent action, they are resolved to participate in an act of "irresolution." Philosophizing becomes a comfortable positioning of one's inadequacy to act; the act itself is paralyzing.

There is a causal relationship between philosophizing and inaction. Since Hamlet is presented by the text as a Wittenberg student called back home from school, he is constructed as a person prone to thinking critically. He is a scholar, not a soldier. His studies abroad have taught him to think and reflect and challenge, not to murder. The fact that Wittenberg is an anachronism in the play is significant. The Hamlet of Shakespeare's imagined Denmark attends a school that did not exist during the play's historical time period. However, Hamlet's audience no doubt understood the implications of

mentioning of the famous university. Hamlet is a product of fine British schooling, a student of thought, not of war.

The cultivation of this “ elite pleasure in philosophizing” is emblematic of the behavior necessitated by the sociology of court society. Guillory makes reference to the work of Elias and Francis Barker when buttressing his point that “ court society imposed upon its participants the necessity of exercising great restraint on impulsive modes of behavior, particularly in the realm of aggressivity.” Hamlet is a product of this court world. He is constrained and restricted by the mechanisms of courtly life. However, he does not fit neatly into the confining role mandated by his status as a courtier. He is in the world but not of the world.

Hamlet has internalized the modes of behavior established by court society. Yet, despite his integration into the courtly world, he is willing to abandon those rules of conduct to promise revenge to a ghost of his father. His promise to the Ghost is understandable; after all, he is moved by the Ghost’s narration of Claudius’s treachery and want to avenge the unjust murder. However, he is so easily won over by the Ghost’s admonitions; if Hamlet is the critical thinker we are meant to think he is, he should have hesitated more. Yet he uncharacteristically pledges his services without a moment’s thought. It is significant that the Ghost comes to him dressed in military garb (usually ghosts appear in their burial shrouds). Hamlet’s father, a celebrated war hero, beseeches Hamlet to be violent by reminding him of his own inadequacy as a soldier. Hamlet the King haunts Hamlet with the notion of unresolved violence. The Ghost presents Hamlet with a visible representation



of the polarity of violence and propriety inherent in court life. The Ghost makes clear that the only way Hamlet can redeem his father's soul is acting violently.

Therefore Hamlet the thoughtful courtier must attempt to be Hamlet the warrior. The tension between Hamlet's position and his promise result in a self-narrative that is fraught with contradiction. This is most clear in his intense vow of revenge. His declaration to the Ghost is that he will

Hamlet admits to his own reeducation of violence. He so easily wipes away the years of grooming, training, and formal education that has prepared him for a life in court society. Yet he can only process his conduct using the language of education and civil society. He replaces "fond records" and "books" with a commandment that will exist in the "book" of his brain. His language belies his purpose. If he were to really replace his revenge for culture, he would not need to articulate it. Violence implies a rejection of speech; the act speaks for itself. His commitment to avenge his father's murder is therefore problematic. Contained within his promise of violence is his "automatic" allegiance to culture and civility. He still operates within the modes of established court behavior.

In his eagerness to appease his father's Ghost he swears whole-heartedly in the only way he knows how by referring to the "book" of his brain. The only way he can express true resolve is by offering the power of his mind. The point of this promise is that it should be translated into action, not thought.

Hamlet's promise of revenge contains a contradiction in content and in practice. Not only does he rename the violence promised as a "commandment" to be contained within a book, he also refutes the promise as he is making it. He is talking to a Ghost, a representation of the past. This is a past that retells itself until it is resolved. The Ghost's narrative is one that begs to be retold and remembered, echoed in the Ghost's request of "Remember me." In the same breath that Hamlet vows revenge, he wipes away "all forms, all pressures past." Included in those "pressures past" is the memory of his father. He is telling the representation of his father's past that he will wipe away any record of that past. His promise is then meaningless. This speech, articulating whole-hearted allegiance to the Ghost, is filled with conflicting ideas.

Hamlet's idea of his self-narrative could not be more confusing. The intellectual grooming of his past is so distasteful to him that he rejects it and starts anew. He replaces his narrative of books and records with a narrative of revenge. But the logic of his promise collapses in on itself when examined closely. He thinks that he needs to wipe away the past in order to memorialize it. Hamlet actually does want to memorialize the Ghost in a meaningful way. The irony is that when attempting to narrate his decision, Hamlet's speech is thoughtful yet lacks clarity of thought.

This scene is puzzling because Hamlet easily and whole-heartedly rejects the confines of his upbringing. More than simply avenging an undeserved murder, he sees this revenge as an opportunity to begin anew, to have only one rule, one "commandment." With his promise of revenge Hamlet gains a

singularity of purpose not afforded him as a member of the courtly elite. This purpose is also more attractive to Hamlet. The promise of revenge rings truer for Hamlet than the need to be a courtier. He has an emotional attachment to this promise; it is his way of perpetuating his father's memory. Being a courtier is inherently deceptive and constraining; avenging his father is somehow more meaningful for him.

Hamlet wants to prove his mettle as a warrior of justice, but he can not break so easily from "the glass of fashion and the mould of form." Guillory points out that Hamlet's problem is not "how to exact revenge on Claudius's person but how to overcome the courtly inhibition of aggressivity he has internalized so well." So not only is he struggling against a constricting society, Hamlet is also fighting internal demons of restraint.

He is also too smart to simply kill Claudius right away. The text introduces him as an educated courtier returning from his studies at Wittenberg. The implausibility of this type of character avenging his father's death with "wings as swift as meditation" is obvious. No audience would have accepted a tidy revenge plot with Hamlet as the protagonist. Hamlet is a thinker, not a warrior. Hamlet's clumsiness and deliberations, though grating at times, resonate with his audience. He is a person struggling on the abyss of transformation; he is someone who wants so badly to do something, but falls prey to the seduction of procrastination and pontificating.

When Hamlet does kill someone, it does not resolve the political problem brought on by Claudius's usurpation of the throne. "The effect of Polonius's murder," Guillory argues, "is rather to drive Hamlet in the last two acts of

the play into another mode of philosophizing...Hamlet's philosophizing has been in a certain sense radicalized by his moment on deinhibited violence." Guillory sees this act of violence as the point of departure for Hamlet's performance of philosophy and as the vehicle for Hamlet's engaging of " real philosophy," or a meditation on substance.

Killing has a revelatory function for Hamlet. He does not abandon philosophy after he kills Polonius, but rather improves his philosophizing. The seductive irony is that an act of violence becomes the catalyst for improving philosophy, a position of inaction. After this point in the play he straddles the worlds of violence and thought, never quite settling in either camp. It's not surprising that the confrontation with death, and his confrontation with violent impulse, would enhance his meditation on substance. Up until this point, Hamlet's grasp of philosophical ideas lacked empirical evidence. The more Hamlet destroys life, the better he understands it.

This act of uninhibited violence is also one of absolute clumsiness. The image of Hamlet stabbing through the arras, ignorant of his target, trying to convince himself is it Claudius when there is no possibility that it could be Claudius since he has just left him in another room, is so emblematic of his enterprise. When Hamlet does resort to violence, he stabs into the darkness, ungracefully killing, and not fulfilling his purpose.

One can extend Guillory's idea of a " performance of philosophy" to define this act as a " performance of violence." In the same way that Hamlet uses philosophy to express knowledge without addressing content, his initial act of violence displays spontaneous impulse but accomplishes nothing.

Murdering Polonius actually works to worsen Hamlet's situation. He kills Ophelia's father, committing the very crime against her that he is supposed to be avenging. Murdering Polonius effectively equalizes Hamlet and Ophelia insofar as they both experience their fathers' murders.

Murdering Polonius is also interesting because it marks Hamlet's aggression towards women. He comes to Gertrude's closet in a rage. The implication in the text is that he wants to murder her. "Come, come and sit you down," he says, "you shall not budge./ You go not till I set you up a glass/ Where you may see the inmost part of you." (3. 4. 17-19) He comes to her in order to confront her about her unfaithfulness. Though he does not articulate his intentions, his language implies violence. He is obviously threatening her with some sort of violence because Gertrude's next line is "What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?" Hamlet wants to kill her; he enters her private closet, an indication that he is no longer abiding by the rules of courtly propriety. He violates the accepted norms of courtly conduct, thus compromising his reputation and renouncing his position as the polite courtier.

His anger towards Gertrude is not only because she has been disloyal to Hamlet's father, but also because she is a woman and as a woman she embodies the reasons for his courtly restraint. Therefore, it would be reductive to view Hamlet's violence towards women as misogyny. It's not that Hamlet hates women, it is how women are implicated in the rules of court society that spurs his violence towards them.

Gertrude accepts the deception inherent in court life and actively participates in it. She easily switches her allegiance to Claudius after he kills King Hamlet. She is good player in the courtly game; her strategy is to assimilate into the twisted rules mandated by the court. Hamlet gets mad at her for this because he sees it as a breach in her loyalty to his father. He takes her conduct to indicate a lack of remorse, when really she is doing her best to survive in Claudius's court. Gertrude's behavior indicates that though she is a member of the court, she does not feel constrained by its restrictions. By remarrying Claudius she conveys complicity with the rules of court society.

Ophelia's response to being a woman implicated in court society differs from Gertrude's. Whereas Gertrude is comfortable with the fluctuating norms of court society, Ophelia is disturbed by their fluid constructions. Like Hamlet, she is a youth constrained by the court. As a woman, she must marry well and protect her most valuable asset- her virginity. Laertes alludes to this when he warns her not to take Hamlet too seriously. When describing Hamlet, Laertes says, " his will is not his own./ For he himself is subject to his birth." (1. 3. 17-18) Since Hamlet is destined to inherit the throne, he is not free to love whomever he wants. Ophelia, as the object of Hamlet's intended affections, must consider the strategies that will result in a successful marriage. The nature of courtly life is such that even her supposed lover does not have the freedom to choose her.

Ophelia faces the same pressures as the courtier that Hamlet faces as the courtier. Her restraints, though different than Hamlet's, function to confine

her within accepted social mores. “ Weigh what loss you honour may sustain,” cautions Laertes, “ If with too credent ear you list his songs/ Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open.” (1. 3. 29-31) He does not advise her to be careful because she may get hurt, but rather because she may sustain a “ loss” of honor. He encourages her to restrain herself and protect her chastity, her only “ treasure.” In a world where women are the target and men the civilized archers, Ophelia must guard her prize. The implication is that she will be worthless once she compromises her honor. Her value as a person only matters insofar as relates to the rules established in the court.

Ophelia does not casually accept the rules mandated for her a woman in the court. In contrast to Gertrude she protests to her position in this world and conveys her distaste for Laertes’s concise summation of her situation. Her famous lines, in which she tactfully chastises Laertes, reveals her insight into the mechanisms of courtly life. “ Do not as some ungracious pastors do,/ Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,/ Whiles like a puff’d and reckless libertine/ Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads.” (1. 3. 47-50) She realizes that his advice to her is tinged with a certain hypocrisy; he tells her to be chaste, yet he can be reckless. This incident is the first indication that Ophelia is not comfortable with the atmosphere of courtly life. She knows that the accepted social norms are unfixed and unfair. Her voice in this passage is lucid and conveys a penetrating understanding of her environment. Like Hamlet she is implicated in the restriction of the court, and like Hamlet she eventually resorts to violence in response to those restrictions.

Ophelia's position in this web of courtly life is significant both for what it reflects about her role as a woman in court society and for her status as recipient of Hamlet's desublimated aggression. Francis Barker sees Ophelia as "the object of all that masculine discourse which seeks, along with the text itself, at once to use and control her, allotting her a passivity and a marginality that is both poignant and repulsive."

Yes, Ophelia is relegated to the role of the love interest, the fragile daughter whose virtue must be safeguarded, and the thoughtful sister. But this does not make for a neat equation of viewing her as victim of misogyny.

Though she is confined to this "masculine discourse" she manages to break out of that constraint and create her own. Barker points out that while the response of Hamlet and Laertes to the confinements of their world is violence, in Ophelia "it prompts to breakdown (but also to a kind of empowerment), when at last she interrupts the action and finds a voice." Her voice, defined by the rest of the characters as "mad", is also "both weirder and truer than rational discourse" argues Barker. She frees herself from the illusory constructs of Claudius's court world by articulating in a voice that is "truer" and therefore construed as weird.

Whereas Hamlet philosophizes and uncodes nothing of the faction of Claudius's monarchy, Ophelia uses a speech that "doth move the hearers to collection." (4. 5. 8-9) If Hamlet's desublimation requires him to abandon propriety and civility, to choose violence over speech, then Ophelia's own recognition is the result of her embracing speech to articulate truths. She co-opts the male discourse and subverts it.



After Hamlet kills Polonius, Ophelia enters the court singing “mad” songs and giving flowers to Laertes, Gertrude, and Claudius. This scene illustrates Ophelia’s use of language and symbol to expose the truth of Claudius’s court. In her madness she exhibits clarity of thought; she is able to say those truths without fear of impropriety.

The editor of the Arden Shakespeare, Harold Jenkins, comments that “the plants have their meanings appropriate to their recipients” and extensively glosses the significance of the scene. Ophelia gives rosemary and pansies to Laertes, fennel and columbine to Gertrude and rue to Claudius. Jenkins argues that “with rosemary and pansies, the first two flowers, Ophelia indicates and Laertes accepts an emblematic meaning, thereby inviting us to do the same which follow.” The flowers therefore clearly have an intended meaning for their recipients and that meaning is not lost on the recipients. Laertes calls it a “document in madness” but then quickly acknowledges that this document has “thoughts and remembrances fitted.” (4. 5. 176) Meaning that she exhibits all the qualities of madness, but the content of her speech and action are inescapably rational and sensible. She gives fennel and columbine to Gertrude and those Jenkins argues symbolize flattery and insincerity combined with “cuckoldry,” or marital infidelity. She gives the King rue which symbolizes “the rue of regret including not merely sorrow but repentance.” This emphasizes the King’s need for repentance that he has divulged to audience in 3. 3 and is reinforced during his prayer scene. She bids the King to wear his “with a difference” which Jenkins understands as the difference between innocence and guilt. She also gives the King a daisy, which Jenkins admits has proved baffling. It would seem to be an

emblem of love's victims and she gives it to the King as an afterthought, which offers a bit of symmetry to her giving everyone two flowers.

The "withered violets" assume a dual meaning. The recipient of the flower should ideally be her lover since violets symbolize faithfulness. Jenkins explores the irony of the violet's withering in relation to Laertes' early warnings to Ophelia when he compared Hamlet's love to a violet "sweet, not lasting." In her grief for her father's death is also the grief for her lost lover. Jenkins concludes that the violets "have a double implication: they recall along with a lost love Polonius's faithful service to the state (the first thing suggested to us about him) while seeming to rebuke a court which knows faithfulness no more." And again, this is directed at the King and Gertrude, by extension.

Jenkins also points out that in giving Laertes "rosemary for remembrance" Ophelia plays in his revenge the role of the Ghost in Hamlet's. Equating Ophelia with the Ghost allows for her to have a pivotal role in Laertes's and Hamlet's simultaneous revenge narratives. Her agency, though, like the Ghost's, must be coded through means other than acceptable civil discourse.

The Ghost comes as apparition, she comes in madness. Those two routes seem to be the only way to communicate and effectively prompt action in the courtiers.

Ophelia's flowers function as a parallel to Hamlet's performance of philosophy. She expresses her knowledge and alludes to its content without ever defining it. She uses the guise of madness to publicize her insight into

the sins and grievances of Claudius's court. Her discourse, like Hamlet's, is coated for smoother consumption by members of the court. Despite the fact that her listeners are struck by the "fitted"ness of her mad ramblings, they do not acknowledge the truths she reveals. The members of Claudius's court resist the requests of both Hamlet and Ophelia to repent and transform. The irony is that these two characters can only declare truths through indirect means, and it is their means that undermine their cause.

The question of Ophelia's agency in co-opting the male discourse is left ambiguous in the text. The text resists a tidy explanation as to whether or not Ophelia's rational-though-mad discourse is internal or a symptom of her breakdown. She is marginalized and diminished by the other characters. Those perspectives indicate Ophelia's position in court society. The word "nothing" is repeatedly used to describe Ophelia in direct relation to her sexuality. The first time Hamlet uses the word it has sexual connotations. In their dialogue before "The Mousetrap," Hamlet verbally spars with Ophelia, his wit and cruelty obvious, her wit overshadowed by her innocence.

Besides the "nunnery" sequence, this episode no doubt wins in terms of displaying the verbal assault Hamlet unleashes on his women, now understood in the context of his attempt to desubliminate violence. Jenkins glosses "country matters" to prudently refer to "physical lovemaking." And "nothing" to be "in jocular allusion to virginity, perhaps with specific reference to the male 'thing.'" Alternatively the figure O, in allusion to the woman's sexual organ." Therefore Hamlet is crassly referring to Ophelia's

sexuality in terms that diminish her. She is only nothing in comparison to his “thing.”

This passage marks Hamlet’s public rejection of Ophelia. In acting out his aggression towards her Hamlet comes closer to realizing his own violent impulses. Yet even this aggression is manifested through language, not action. He verbally abuses her instead of physically assaulting her. The traces of courtly conduct are still present within his rejection of Ophelia. His aggression towards her is still coded.

Hamlet’s use of “nothing” becomes emblematic for how the other characters describe Ophelia’s presence. When describing Ophelia’s mad ramblings to Gertrude, the Gentleman says, “her speech is nothing” (4. 5. 7) and then goes on to say how it moves the hearers to collection. This, added to Laertes’s conclusion that “this nothing’s more than matter,” (4. 5. 172) combines to classify Ophelia and her speech as nothing but still uneasily dismissed. She is caught on the periphery of male discourse as Barker pointed out, yet that periphery here is defined as a vacancy. She surrounds the center and is “nothing,” but her nothing has undeniable presence. The males at the center are therefore defined in relation to the vacancy at the periphery.

Barker discusses Ophelia within his larger argument of the practice of memory in Hamlet, or what he terms “inadequate commemoration.” From the ghost’s inj