

Silencing Ophelia: Male Aurality as a Controlling Element in Olivier's *Hamlet*

Kendra Preston Leonard, Independent Scholar, USA

In nearly all cinematic adaptations of *Hamlet*, Ophelia's role is the one most radically reduced by directors: her soliloquy is frequently excised, her remaining lines are abbreviated, her appearances are shortened, and the director's visual treatment often reduces her to the status of object. Her relationship with music, a crucial element in understanding her mental condition, is also altered: her songs are often significantly reduced or even eliminated. In this article I will demonstrate how composer William Walton's musical approach to Ophelia in Laurence Olivier's 1948 film of *Hamlet* establishes a "male aurality" that accompanies director Olivier's male gaze, the combination of which causes Ophelia to become even more marginalized.

Although Laura Mulvey's classic definition of the male gaze as that in which women appear on film in a manner created and situated by men is somewhat dated, and its more Freudian aspects have been disowned by Mulvey herself, the relevance of the core theory behind it has not disappeared, and serves as a basis for establishing an aural counterpart (Mulvey, 1999: 63). As film music scholar Robyn Stilwell has written, "One need not even buy the psychoanalytic trappings of such an argument to recognize the camera as an extension of male directors and male cinematographers working for an audience in which the male perspective is not just presumed but assumed to be the norm" (Stilwell, 2001: 171). Indeed, as of 2005, women make up only seven percent of the film industry's population of directors, and are often placed in charge of lower budget productions than male directors, so it is no surprise that every major *Hamlet* -- generally a costly endeavor -- to appear on screen has been directed by a man (Lauzen, 2005). It should come as no surprise, then, that the images that result from male-led enterprises often connote the objectification or, as Mulvey termed it, passive "the to-be-looked-at-ness," of female characters.

The concept of male aurality is based on Mulvey's essential observation that in the construction of a creative work led by a male aesthetic, that aesthetic will dominate the use of the integrated art forms in the overall work. With this consideration in mind, it is not too difficult to understand how music -- just as much as visual renderings -- can be used to situate, delimit, and control women within film. In this particular essay, male aurality refers to the use of music to privilege or place an emphasis in importance on male characters and their actions to the diminishment of female characters. The most common manifestations of male aurality are the use of themes and motifs to indicate the presence or actions of male characters accompanied not by similar treatment for female roles of equal stature but marked by a corresponding lack of or less involved musical material for female roles; and/or the use of musical expression -- in any form -- to define female characters as less serious, stable, or crucial to a film as its male roles. Simple examples of this are commonly experienced in action-adventure movies: the use of a major-key, triumphal theme in the *Indiana Jones* series to indicate the success of its titular character, whereas key female characters such as Marion Ravenwood and Willie Scott are not granted individual themes or even brief motifs. As Anahid Kassabian notes, "Willy [sic], whose rendition of *Anything Goes* in Chinese opens the

film, does not get another musical moment to herself" (Kassabian, 2001: 106). This article presents an extended discussion of the second manifestation, in which both the score and the manner in which the score is employed in the film work together to benefit the visibility and importance of Hamlet's role while shrinking Ophelia's. Ultimately, this kind of musical misbalancing controls the ways in which female roles and actors are viewed and understood as important within a film; in the case of Olivier's *Hamlet*, the application of Walton's score clearly controls Ophelia's ability to be fully heard and understood by lessening and eliminating her vocality.

The stage directions that begin Act Four, Scene Five in the First Quarto of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are unambiguous: "Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing;" the Folio, published nearly twenty years later, assumes that actors will know to incorporate these activities, based on earlier precedent: "Enter Ophelia distracted." These attributes firmly establish Ophelia's madness before she even begins to speak. Both her physical dishevelment, indicated by her hair in inappropriate disarray, and her singing and playing music in public were signs of madness that were well-known to theatre-goers of the early modern period (Charney, 1977: 453). As Carol Thomas Neely writes:

Onstage and off, madness is diagnosed by observers -- first laypersons and then, in some cases, specialists. The period's audiences participate with onstage watchers in distinguishing madness from sanity and from its look-alikes: loss of grace, bewitchment, possession, or fraud. [...] For the theater to reach its audiences, it must be readable. For this the stage develops a new form of speech, peculiar to the mad, and cues for how to read it. (Neely, 2005: 49)

Ophelia's gifts of flowers to the assembled company later in the scene carry symbolic meaning that would also have been transparent. A contemporary audience would have well understood that Ophelia's gift of fennel and columbine to Claudius was an insult, as these represented flattery, foolishness, and adultery (4.5.204; all references refer to the Folger Shakespeare Library edition). To Gertrude she gives a commonly known abortifacient, rue, which was also associated with adultery; and declares that all innocence has been lost when there is no one to whom she can give her daisy, its symbol (Neely: 51). Ophelia's references are such that, closely read and taken seriously, could end the tenuous political stability of Claudius' reign. The Queen, Horatio, and the King all seek to silence her in her proclamations; at the beginning of the scene, Gertrude initially refuses to speak with her (4.5.1); Horatio warns of her political liability (4.5.9-16); and Claudius orders her followed and then placed under guard (4.5.79). Ultimately she is silenced by death (Mowat, 1992).

Over the course of time, the musicality of Ophelia's role has been subjected to the influences of changing taste and stage practices. In the Elizabethan period, the role was played by a boy or young man able to accompany himself on a lute. Women first took on the role in the eighteenth century, at which point it appears that Ophelia's songs were no longer self-accompanied, although they may have been supported by a small theatre ensemble (Bevington, 2007: 17). During the first part of the eighteenth century, much of Ophelia's text was officially censored, and singers, rather than actresses, were cast in the part (Showalter, 1987: 92). Later, Ophelia's plight was reconsidered: no longer so much licentious as tragic, the character was romanticized and celebrated. Painters like Millais, Hughes, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti established a visual standard for Ophelias, dressing her in the blue and white of the Virgin Mary and providing her with earthly haloes of flowers and ripples in the water (Mesa-Villar, 2004: 228-9). In the late nineteenth century, the increasing interest in realism in

theatre led to actors being encouraged to visit asylums for the mentally ill and to study the women there in order to better portray Ophelia's madness (Showalter: 93). By this time, actors considered the part an essential element of the repertoire and singers were rarely, if ever, engaged for the role. Stage practices at this time usually included Ophelia's full text with the songs presented musically, usually unaccompanied.

Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* was the first version of the play shot on film with full sound. Although Sarah Bernhardt's 1900 production of the play had accompanying sound cylinders, these were used exclusively for dialogue and the sound effects of Hamlet and Laertes's duel, precluding the use of a film score. Having previously worked with William Walton on two prior Shakespearean adaptations, *As You Like It* (1936) and the propagandistic war-time *Henry V* (1944), Olivier again selected the British composer to create the music for his new film. Despite the glamour of working with Olivier and the opportunity for broadening his audience base, Walton took on film projects primarily because of the financial appeal, writing that "I've several things, chiefly commercial, on foot. [...] So I shall be able financially to keep my head, I hope, well above water for the time being" (Kennedy, 1990: 89). He found working on *Henry V* difficult: he declared the subject matter "pretty grim;" he felt rushed to complete the music after numerous delays in production; and was frustrated and angry when the recording of the piano score by Roy Douglas, who orchestrated the score, went unused (S. Walton, 1989: 95-96). His work on *Hamlet* seems to have been tempered by this experience: instead of writing long and difficult-to-track musical accompaniments for action sequences, as he had done for *Henry V*, Walton composed a number of set pieces that could also later be performed in concert settings without any loss of coherence. He was also apparently less emotionally involved in creating the music for *Hamlet*, describing it merely as "not uninteresting." He later called the concert arrangements of the music for *Hamlet* "frightfully dull," recalling that he "had to do nearly an hour of appropriate but otherwise useless music" for the film (Kennedy: 139).

As Bernice Kliman has pointed out, Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* is more of a fantasy upon themes of *Hamlet* rather than a true film of the play. This is due mostly to the nature of film at the time, and its somewhat uneasy mingling with the values and traditions of stage productions. She writes, "the relationship between stage and film was somewhat more complicated; the film is a hybrid form, not a filmed play, not precisely a film, but a film-infused play or a play-infused film, a form Olivier conceived as being the best possible for presenting the heightened language of Shakespeare" (Kliman, 1988: 23). Shakespeareans note that the text is heavily cut, omitting a number of major soliloquies, not to mention entire scenes and characters. For Olivier, however, the text is fluid and can be altered and reshaped at will; it is due no privilege, and the goal of the film is simply to tell the story in a dramatic fashion. The result of Olivier's approach is that his *Hamlet* is a very idiosyncratic one that is perhaps the farthest from Shakespeare's work than any other twentieth-century production using the original language. Richard Burt has written that "adaptation does not mean that one author substitutes for the other (film director for playwright), but that the authorship of a given adaptation is always in question;" there is no doubt that this is Olivier's *Hamlet*, not Shakespeare's (Burt, 2002: 11). Helen Stoddard has commented that, "the question 'Who is the author of the text?' always implies another, 'Who defines what the text means and for whom?'" (Stoddard, 1995: 39). Both of these questions, in this case, are satisfied through the recognition that Olivier, as the creator of his own *Hamlet*, removed plot elements and characters, transposed scenes and lines, and freely edited in order to construct a *Hamlet* that fit his own desires for the play's meaning and the ways in which he wanted his audience to understand his interpretation.

Olivier's control over the production of his *Hamlet* can hardly be overestimated. His work as the auteur for the film extended not only to the textual adaptation and staging of shots, but, as the post-production manuscript indicates, the nature and use of music as well (Olivier, 1948). Like many of the auteur filmmakers of his era (including François Truffaut, who was an early champion of auteur theory; Howard Hawks; and Alfred Hitchcock), Olivier was intimately involved in even the smallest details of the film's creation. Ophelia's appearances, speech and song were dictated by Olivier himself, starting with her first appearance: "Ophelia fades in," he writes in the script, indicating the incorporeal and insubstantial first view of her in the film (Olivier, 1948: 71). Ophelia is frequently "flung" about by Hamlet, always "to the floor" (Olivier, 1948: 74-75). Gertrude, too, is "flung," but in her case, it is "to the bed." (Olivier: 112) Olivier directs Ophelia as "starting to sing" and then "Ophelia singing off" at the beginning of her mad scenes (4.5). Later in the scene, she is directed as "Ophelia comes into picture from Camera left and walks away from camera;" very deliberate directions that obscure Ophelia's voice and song from being clearly heard (Olivier, 1948: 133). Finally, as Ophelia sings in the water, Olivier directs that "[m]ost of the words of this song are unintelligible" (Olivier, 1948: 138). Although Ophelia may not be the strongest character of the play in the Quartos and Folio, it is Olivier's cuts and alterations to her part that marginalize her far beyond Shakespeare's own words.

Olivier also apparently controlled the way Walton's music was employed. The shooting script's list of music indicates Olivier's approval of each set piece and song included, as well as its presentation; some entries are marked as "voice only," or "traditional," and Olivier indicated which of Walton's many fanfares written for possible use in the film are to be used. In the set piece "Ophelia and Hamlet," Walton's score indicates that the director making the recording for the film is to follow Olivier-as-Hamlet's actions and words as cues, never Ophelia's; in Hamlet's "Oh that this too too solid flesh" monologue (1.2.133-164), Walton's marks in the score indicate that pace (tempo), pauses, and holds (fermatas) are all based on Olivier's direction (W. Walton, 1948).

Filed with a cast of well-known British actors, including Jean Simmons as Ophelia and Eileen Herlie as Gertrude, Olivier's *Hamlet* took most of its interpretative cues from Tyrone Guthrie's 1937 West End production, in which Olivier had played the title role. Guthrie and Olivier relied heavily on a Freudian, Oedipal reading of the text, drawn primarily from Ernest Jones's *Essay in Applied Psycho-Analysis* (Davies, 2000: 217). In an interview with Kenneth Tynan, Olivier discussed this approach:

I thought it was the absolute resolution of all the problems concerning Hamlet. At least, it gave one a central idea which seemed to fill the great vacuum left by all the crossed ideas about Hamlet, what he really was, what he really wasn't, whether he was a man of action, whether he wasn't a man of action. He could safely be a man of action under the auspices of that particular idea, that he couldn't kill the king because, subconsciously of course, he was guilty himself. (Tynan, 1966: 83)

Much of the film focused on Hamlet's apparent inability to relate normally to women: an unhealthy, obviously Oedipal relationship with his mother is introduced early on in the film via a lingering mouth-to-mouth kiss between the two, and it is continued through Gertrude's ever-solicitous stroking of Hamlet's brow, hands, and torso. (Herlie, as Gertrude, was 28 at the time of filming, to Olivier's 41 and Simmons' 16.) Hamlet's intensely sexual confrontation with his mother in her chamber in the film's staging of 3.4 (in which he presents his belief in

his father's murder by Claudius and kills Polonius) is likely on its way to consummation when it is interrupted by the Ghost. Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia is likewise troubled, albeit in the opposite way: he is aloof with her, as though her physically female presence is distasteful to him. Peter Donaldson notes that Olivier's staging of 3.1 (Polonius preparing to use Ophelia as bait in his trap for Hamlet) is influenced by Dover Wilson's interpretation of the scene, in which Hamlet overhears Polonius instructing Ophelia in her role in the scene: because his erotic ideal is embodied in his mother, and because of this foreknowledge that Ophelia is a pawn in Claudius's and Polonius's game, Hamlet has no more use for her. (Donaldson, 1987: 33) Ophelia becomes the least important of the play's four major characters, leaving Gertrude as the only "surviving" woman, long before Ophelia's actual death. Kenneth S. Rothwell writes in his overview of Olivier's film that, "Hamlet shows only coldness without a trace of tenderness for the poor, beleaguered young woman, who remains the ultimate female victim" (Rothwell, 2004: 58).

For purists, the film fails: it is neither an accurate portrayal of the play nor a particularly compelling interpretation of the original material. Few viewers today are likely to agree with the now-dated Freudian approach to Hamlet's relationships with Gertrude and Ophelia, or, more particularly, that Hamlet was a weak man. However, the elements designed to help audiences understand language of the play and its altered sequences were popular among the 1940s cinema going demographic, and it is considered a classic of filmed Shakespeare. Olivier, mixing high and low approaches to the play, included the use of voice-over narration (such as in the film's opening, in which Olivier's own personal interpretation famously condemns Hamlet as "a man who could not make up his mind"), and a streamlined cast and plot. For his part, Walton's use of obvious leitmotif techniques helps viewers keep track of characters and events as the drama unfolds.

Walton's music for *Hamlet* is used in approximately one-third of Olivier's film. Much of it is used to move from scene to scene, or to establish the mood of a scene rather than to accompany spoken dialogue. In this way the music is much as it would be in a stage production using incidental music; it is entirely non-diegetic. Walton follows two established musical conventions in creating the motivic score for *Hamlet*: those of the high brow Wagnerian opera and the middle brow silent film. In operatic fashion, each character is assigned an individual and distinct leitmotif that allows audiences to follow their arrivals, temperaments, and actions. However, the music is not used to carry sophisticated metatextual meaning as it would in opera; instead, it is much more obvious in its employment, as it would have been in early silent film performances. Early silent films of the play were accompanied by a house pianist or organist who selected suitable -- or, in some cases, ironic -- pieces to accompany the action. With titles like "Sorrow", "Lovers' Embrace", and "Grand March", these short works could be used for any number of films. In some cases they were meant to be ironic or satiric while still conveying information about the plot. Comedian George L. Fox's early *Hamlet* (likely based on his 1870 burlesque *Hamlet Travestie*) for the nickelodeon, used the following popular tunes:

After a duet of Thomas Moore's "You'll Remember Me", in the second scene, Ophelia sings and dances the minstrel tune "The Girl with the Golden Switch". The third scene features Marcellus and Bernardo singing "Beautiful Night", an offstage chorus intoning "Johnny Fill Up the Bowl", and Hamlet warbling "I'm a Native Here". The mousetrap [sic; the play-within-a-play staged by Hamlet to prove Claudius's guilt] induces the chorus to sing "Shoo Fly", and the

graveyard scene features both "Five O'clock in the Morning" and "Why Do I Weep for Thee?" (Altman, 2004: 220)

Audiences were used to film music running the gamut of intent and intensity, from the recorded equivalents of nickelodeon accompaniments to the more mature and serious scores contributed to the war effort by Ralph Vaughan Williams and Walton himself. Yet critics of the time often found that music -- including Walton's -- detracted from the spoken word:

Although Burgundy's long speech was set to music, Henry's 'Once more into the breach' (the music stopped following the second line) and Saint Crispin's passage were unaccompanied, so that the music of the verse was permitted to soar as upon Shakespeare's stage. (Hurtgen, 1969: 57)

To this end, Olivier tried to privilege *Hamlet's* -- and Hamlet's -- text over any kind of musical dramatics, and for the most part succeeded in doing so. Walton's music for *Hamlet* establishes mood and character, and provides an aid within the film to help guide the audience, for whom Olivier's editing and rearranging of the traditional text may have been disorienting. Thus, in scenes with multiple actors present, Hamlet's words are unaccompanied, so that they might better stand out from the crowd. In solo moments, however, such as the soliloquies, Hamlet's text is weighted enough to garner accompaniment even when music is not indicated in the text (as it is for Claudius's revels in 1.4, as Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus wait for the appearance of the Ghost); this contrasts greatly with the comparatively unmusical treatment of Ophelia's decidedly musical text. However, in these cases both Olivier and Walton were still criticized for interfering with the flow of the spoken word. One writer commented that, with all of the other operatic conventions occurring in Walton's score, Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be" was turned into a recitative due to the overuse of accompanying music (Hurtgen, 1969: 63).

Music is established in its descriptive role at the very outset of the film. The opening shot shows the turbulent sea surrounding Elsinore, and the accompanying music matches the visual image perfectly, with waves crashing to heavily accented dissonances and fading to weak resolutions, providing an aural foreshadowing of the drama -- and its interpretation -- yet to come. Following the first appearance of the Ghost, the camera introduces the audience to the main characters in a visual tour of Elsinore, presenting objects and locations that serve later as important markers of place and scene. This tour is accompanied by Walton's score, which offers equal aural treatment: each item, representing its owner/inhabitant, is provided with an individual and easily distinguishable theme. Hamlet himself, indicated by the chair on which he later lounges and sulks, is characterized by a chromatic, wandering line with unexpected suspensions, ripe for variation as events progress. As the camera turns to Ophelia's doorway, Hamlet's somber and ambiguous theme modulates into Ophelia's, a modal, folk-like tune carried by the oboe.

Ophelia's theme is one redolent of the imagined idyllic pastoral Albion -- an England of thatched cottages, wildflower gardens, bucolic modal folksongs and rustic morris dances. Of all of the musical material in *Hamlet*, it is the most unlike Walton's usual harmonic language. Instead, it is closer in construction to that of Vaughan Williams, whose collection and use of folk songs and their elements was widely known and possessively labeled as "English" by contemporary audiences. Concert-going viewers would have recently heard Vaughan Williams' *Oboe Concerto* (1944) and his music for the film *The Loves of Joanna Godden* (1946), both of which feature folksong-like elements, the "pastoral" Dorian mode, and the

oboe to indicate the spirit of nature and the countryside. A departure from Walton's usual jazz-influenced or more harmonically progressive pieces, Ophelia's theme is pleasant but not very instructive as to her character, the first indication that her traditional expressive and controversial musicality will be subverted during the film.

Hamlet's theme is constructed in a manner that lends itself well to ambiguity, further development and increased complexity: a representation of Hamlet's own intellect and personality. In contrast, Ophelia's plaintive melody remains mostly unchanged throughout the film from its original hearing, implying a simplicity of mind and character. While Hamlet's motivic material changes and progresses in complexity and character during the film, Ophelia's theme is only minimally varied in tempo and orchestration, even when she is depicted in the deepest throes of madness, dashing across the brook in which she will die. In the scheme of the symphonic score, she is denied the more intricate musical agency granted to Hamlet and even Claudius, whose motifs warn audiences of his evil -- albeit occasionally conflicted -- ways and scheming plans.

In addition to his lack of desire to create more significant music for Ophelia, Walton later re-used her theme without alteration for his 1954 opera *Troilus and Cressida*, indicating that her music was conceived as a more general product than that of Hamlet. It apparently contained so little meaning that its later employment for Cressida, a vastly different character -- albeit also one objectified by men -- was not a concern to the composer. Walton's own take on the re-use was to justify his practices by comparing them to Shakespeare's own: "Of course, Shakespeare repeats himself the whole time, battle after battle after battle." (S. Walton, 1989: 143) For Walton, it was the same with Shakespeare's female characters: men warrant musical complexity and individual treatments, but one generic gesture is sufficient for all of the plays' women.

After its initial introduction during the tour of the castle, Ophelia's theme is first heard in the transition from Hamlet's "fishmonger" conversation with Polonius (2.2.169-220) to the scene between Hamlet and Ophelia in which he denies his relationship with her (3.1.91-150). She moves in a slow, dream-like fashion from her chamber into the lobby. Indeed, she appears at first translucent and ghost-like, her presence only gaining corporeal significance as she comes into the view of the men who control her life and, by extension, the gaze of the audience. Despite the fact that her gown actually has a high neck, the upper portion is made of mesh, creating the appearance of a low-cut dress. The camera is leveled at her breasts as she approaches it, a view broken only when Polonius hands her the book from which she is to read, and later she pulls out Hamlet's remembrances from the lower neckline. As he tells her, "get thee to a nunnery," Olivier's own gaze travels from Ophelia's face to (hidden) cleavage and back again a number of times, while she uses her hand to cover as much of her chest and throat as she can. Hamlet physically bullies her in the scene, tossing away her book and pinning her hands early on, then later throwing her on to the stairs. Here, the male gaze of the director clearly sexualizes her as an adult woman in direct contrast to her costuming and acting, in which she is dressed and directed as a young and innocent girl. This is the first of many contradictory elements in Olivier's treatment of Ophelia; generally speaking, she is infantilized by his directions to Simmons to play the role as an innocent, but is accorded a highly sexualized visual approach, with the camera's gaze lingering over her legs, shoulders and breasts.

Her music is at first unaltered from its initial introduction. Unlike scenes in which Hamlet's dialogue is the focal point and privileged to the exclusion of background music, the music

continues beneath Polonius' instructions to Ophelia to "read upon this book" (3.1.49-50). When Polonius tells his daughter, "Ophelia, walk you here," the music changes, modulating upwards and introducing a dissonance to Ophelia's theme, indicating a small but significant loss of innocence by complying with her father's instructions to dupe Hamlet. However, this minor alteration doesn't change the ultimate representation of Ophelia in music: a simple mind, incapable of the complex thoughts Hamlet has, and that his music indicates, in a pretty body, subjected repeatedly to Olivier's objectifying gaze. Walton then introduces elements of Hamlet's theme, including its characteristic chromaticism, into the overall mix, privileging Hamlet's musical material over Ophelia's, and indicating the importance and blamelessness of Hamlet in the scene. While he may be mistrustful and unsure of his own mind, he is the victim in this scene; his words are not undermined by altered thematic material. The scene itself is moved forwards from its normal location in the play to preface Hamlet's "to be or not to be" soliloquy, and Olivier's emphasis on Hamlet's mental state rather than the emotional interplay between the pair discounts the importance of Ophelia's reaction to the encounter.

The scene is played in a traditional manner, with a shirking Ophelia, suspicious and domineering Hamlet, and lurking Polonius and Claudius. Jean Simmons, who played Ophelia in the film when she was just sixteen years old, can hardly be described here as distracted. Nevertheless, her actions foreshadow her later scenes as she physically fetishizes the remembrances when she tries to return them to Hamlet, turning them over and over nervously in the same manner she later uses with her flowers and herbs. When the music resumes at the end of the scene, after Claudius and Polonius have exited, still leaving her weeping on the stairs, it recalls Ophelia's theme briefly in a lower register and without the solo oboe. It is clear that though damaged emotionally by her encounter with Hamlet, Ophelia has not yet lost her reason. Simmons' own performance indicates that Ophelia here is merely unhappy, and the consistency of her theme, unchanged from its origins, corroborates this interpretation. By setting her theme in the lower register, the music at the end of this scene depicts Ophelia's still-sound psychological condition. Her emotions are "low," and her theme has been transposed from its previously higher pitch level to one that is literally lower, or depressed, in relation to its original statement.

As the camera and microphone retreat from a distraught and weeping Ophelia, lying on the staircase of the lobby and grasping at the stone, it again presents the male gaze from Hamlet's point of view: this time, in keeping with Olivier's Freudian direction, she is not lovely, but an impure wretch unworthy of attention. This scene is a definitive example of Mulvey's conception of the male gaze: Ophelia is subjected to "devaluation, punishment, or saving of the guilty object" by Hamlet as she is first cast aside (devalued) and brutalized (punished) and then told to retreat from Elsinore altogether (an attempt at mercy or salvation) (Mulvey, 1999: 65). Her musical treatment reflects this gaze, creating a male aurality in which the perspective and prerogative of the male has the utmost value. Ophelia's accompaniment is undercut with -- devalued by -- Hamlet's theme, and, as she remains alone and ignored on the stairs, suffering in her punishment, her music is again displaced in favor of his as the camera rushes up the dark staircase on its way to his monologue. His actions and thoughts are thus signified as paramount; his theme introduces and accompanies his next action, in which the ambiguity of the music and Hamlet's thoughts are, for the first time, clearly shown in parallel.

While it is true that the play is titled *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and not *The Tragedy of the Court of Denmark*, the reactions of those involved are lost in Olivier's all-consuming, all-media focus on his role. That Ophelia's theme is structured to give way so easily to that of Hamlet's as the camera moves up the stairs, indicates as well that Ophelia's

distress and role is secondary or even tertiary in importance to the personal melodrama of the Prince. In this scene, it is clear that Hamlet's actions in rebuking Ophelia and distancing himself from her Polonius-driven manipulations take precedent over Ophelia's burgeoning distress. Because of the editing of the text that moves Hamlet's most famous soliloquy to the next scene, his music overtakes hers; her single soliloquy, following Hamlet's rejection of her, "O what a noble mind if here o'erthrown," is eliminated. This treatment, both of the cuts made to Ophelia's role and her simplistic and unchanging theme, again indicate that for Olivier and Walton, Ophelia is a pretty diversion within the play, not to be taken seriously in the overall structure of the work or given screen time beyond what is absolutely necessary. As Carol Chillington Rutter notes, with her soliloquy omitted, Ophelia is viewed as a body rather than a person, and this is certainly true with consideration to the camera's gaze in regard to Ophelia (Rutter, 1998: 302). As the film progresses, Ophelia is increasingly silenced by both the men around her in the play and those controlling her character from outside of it through the male gaze and auralty, supporting this view of her disempowerment.

The overt pastoralism of Ophelia's musical material returns with the onset of her madness in Act Four, Scene Five. Her distraction is not immediately evident: she is first shown inquisitively plucking a flower out of the brook. However, the scene is deceiving. She soon begins to scream, and in a bit of cinematic foreshadowing runs across the willow that "grows aslant" the stream and into the castle. As before, her music is subject to a limiting factor that disprivileges her song, speech, and action. Her theme here is slightly altered in its accompaniment; instead of the static, supporting strings used when it is introduced, the stability of Ophelia's theme is now lessened by the repeated patterns of rising sixteenth notes from the other winds. This minor adjustment to the accompaniment is the only time her theme is varied, and it is only minimally indicative of Ophelia's own unsteady and anxious mind. As her mood rapidly shifts and her screaming gives way to a vacant smile, the music changes to match it on the surface, with the oboe line relaxing in tempo. However, the active figures beneath the oboe continue, providing the audience with a "Mickey-Mousing" score that illustrates Ophelia's two minds as she runs into a chamber in Elsinore to confront Gertrude. The overall effect is one of little difference from her earlier music. The gentle modal tune of the oboe is most prominent, and the sixteenth note figures underneath could just as well represent the flowing water of the brook as they could Ophelia's mental disquiet. As a character, her emotions and their impact on the action of the play are downplayed by the music; as a disturbed woman whose role will soon come to its end, there is little motivation for Walton to write new material. The dismissive male auralty of the scene's score begins to diminish Ophelia's importance, even in this crucial scene, before she ever even addresses Gertrude. As before, the male gaze is obvious: Ophelia's dress hangs off her shoulders and her bodice is loose and decorated with flowers, and the camera's focus again is her breasts.

Ophelia's singing of popular and bawdy songs is one of the key elements in constructing her madness on stage. The songs she sings are unresolved but necessary clues to her relationship with Hamlet and her understanding of what has happened around her at Elsinore, so much so that it considerably reduces the impact and importance of her character when her vocality is altered. At the beginning of 4.5, Olivier omits Ophelia's first stanza of song, taken from the song "Walsingham", but does have her sing the later stanza from it -- "He is dead and gone, lady,/ He is dead and gone,/ At his head a grass-green turf,/ At his heels a stone" (4.5.29-32) - to the traditional tune associated with it. As in the earlier scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, Ophelia is directed in a contradictory manner that both derides her character's maturity while emphasizing her physical beauty. The song is interpolated with an infantilely

pitched crying, which is juxtaposed by Olivier's sexualizing shot of Ophelia's bare upper thigh while she writhes on the ground.

In her continuation of the song, Olivier changed Ophelia's lines from the Second Quarto's "Which bewept to the ground did not go" to the more obvious "Which bewept to the *grave did go*" from the Folio and First Quarto (4.5.39, emphasis added) to emphasize that at this moment, Ophelia is focused on her father's death rather than Hamlet's actions towards her. This point that she is not thinking of Hamlet is driven home even further with the virtual omission of Ophelia's second song, "Tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day," the very clear narrative of a woman who has lost her virginity to a man she trusted who then -- in a common double-standard -- shuns her for having done so:

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose and donned his clo'es,
And dupp'd the chamber-door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.
[....]
By Gis, and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie for shame!
Young men will do't if they come to't,
By Cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.'
(He answers.)
'So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,
And thou hadst not come to my bed.' (4.5.48-55, 58-66)

Ophelia does sing a small excerpt of "St. Valentine's Day" but it occurs after she has been placed under Horatio's watch, and only Horatio and the two sailors delivering Hamlet's letter to him hear her -- even the film's viewers cannot clearly hear or understand her. She paces about her terrace, picking up and setting down flowers; her music, like that at the end of her scene with Hamlet, is unchanged from her appearance earlier in the act. Ophelia sings as she is walking away from Horatio and the soldiers, and away from the camera and microphone. Her words are muffled to the point of abstracting the song and reducing it to a vague tune, and it fades rapidly while the focus of the camera and audio equipment is on the three men. Horatio speaks over Ophelia's singing, dismissing it entirely and then leading the sailors away from Ophelia, leaving her on her own. The fact that Olivier first removes this song from its original setting in front of the entire court and then later shortens its full performance and obscures its hearing and meaning both eliminates Ophelia's own sexuality and diminishes the roots of her madness. Here Olivier and not just Walton create a male aurality by discounting song as a signifier of madness and squeamishly hiding the possible personal meaning of the song for Ophelia. This Ophelia is a sad but minor inconvenience to the court, not a voice of sometimes bawdy truth in recounting her experiences with Hamlet and her observation of the goings-on at Elsinore. The opportunity that the original text creates to more fully explain Ophelia's bewildering actions is removed by Olivier's editing in order to focus more on the adventures of Hamlet with the pirates. In fact, Ophelia's material is cut short while Olivier

interpolates an interlude of fighting ships and a swashbuckling Hamlet only mentioned in the play but shown with great drama and swagger on the part of Olivier in the film. This episode reinforces the primacy of Olivier himself in the film and the lack of interest he has in the role of women in the play.

Ophelia also sings from "Walsingham" again (but still very briefly) before and after bequeathing her flowers to Gertrude, Claudius and Laertes. Before she gives the flowers to the assembled group, she again sings while facing away from the camera and audio equipment, making her words difficult to understand and easily ignored by players and viewers alike. Visually, she appears in the scene as a potential seductress, offering Laertes a kiss that threatens to go into decidedly non-sisterly territory. She is physically depicted through her loose and revealing clothes and the camera's focus on her breasts as a sexualized object, but since Ophelia, for Olivier, cannot actually *be* a sexual being, her words to such effect are purged or dominated by the words of the men present. Even when Ophelia interrupts Claudius' and Laertes' conversation, her singing -- which Ross Duffin identifies as a conflation of lyrics from "Bonny Sweet Robin" and "Robin is to the Greenwood Gone", both of which he suggests may have been sung to the same tune --with their double entendres, in which "robin" stands for "penis"-- is once more covered up by speech, this time by Laertes' own male rhetoric (Duffin, 2004: 72).

Only when she resumes speaking in prose as she doles out the flowers does Olivier let the camera come back to her face to allow her voice to be heard. Walton's music retains its barely altered accompanimental figures, and her own vocality is eliminated as needless. In the last instance of Ophelia's singing, she again has her back to both the character audience and the viewer, and as before her song is scarcely heard. Gertrude, Claudius and Laertes watch her leave the castle without a single gesture, physical or musical, that indicates their concern. Ophelia looks back twice to see if they are following her to help her or give her comfort, but when she realizes they are not, her arched eyebrow indicates that she knows that their minds are made up. From this point onward, the court -- even her own brother -- considers her pitiable but unimportant. She tells them, from a distance, "God be with you," and very deliberately exits the room. The accompanimental figure for her theme becomes an ascending cadential sequence that finally resolves when Gertrude begins her announcement of Ophelia's death. Ophelia's theme is heard once more in an augmented fashion as Gertrude speaks. As it was in the introduction, it is accompanied by static strings and the augmentation is broad enough that a typical audience might not even notice that it is the same music. As the still-living Ophelia floats past the camera in a singular moment of grotesquerie, she sings, but, not unsurprisingly, her words are distorted and broken up with childish giggles and sighs, giving her no final true words at all. Instead, Olivier has turned her into an embodiment of the Pre-Raphaelite painters' vision: lovely, chaste, and silent.

Olivier's Ophelia is quite obviously made to be an accidental death; the Millais-inspired, singing, child-like creature in the water lacks the knowledge and determination to commit suicide. Instead, she is rendered speechless and breathless by Gertrude and the placid pastoralism that marked her living actions, and it is possible that during this scene the music refers more to Gertrude's mental state than Ophelia's. Gertrude is, after all, an apparent witness, given her narrative; a witness who took no action when watching Ophelia drown, and her own mind is in flux trying to decipher the recent events at her court. It is not surprising that Gertrude's words are given more musical import than Ophelia's; throughout the film Ophelia's appearances and text have been omitted to place her at the very bottom of

the order at Elsinore. Even the Gravedigger (First Clown) is allowed to sing uncensored: his song is allowed a full and lusty hearing as a preamble to Ophelia's burial (5.1.61-64).

In directing Simmons as a primarily childlike and innocent Ophelia, Olivier abnegates much of her power. In the brief moments that Ophelia's sexuality *is* hinted at -- the shot of her bare leg on the stone floor, her off-the-shoulder nightgown -- it is exclusively seen through the male gaze, a view that privileges Hamlet, Horatio, Laertes and Claudius well above the women of the court. In taking away the eloquence and meaning of her songs, Olivier cuts away even more of Ophelia's substance, creating instead a woman who is never actually heard. In examining the music that signifies Ophelia and her traumas, the male gaze is applied to music as well, in an aural form that, alongside its visual counterpart, objectifies Ophelia through its simple pastoralism, its lack of development or variation, and its casual treatment as a work that could be easily reused for other Shakespearean women Walton also saw as unimportant -- or as the "frailty" that is woman -- and denies her her most important attribute -- her voice of truth in a court of lies.

References

Altman, Rick (2004) *Silent Film Sound*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bevington, David (2007) *This Wide and Universal Theater: Shakespeare in Performance Then and Now*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burt, Richard (ed.) (2002) *Shakespeare after Mass Media*. New York: Palgrave.

Charney, Maurice and Hanna (1977) The Language of Madwomen in Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 3, 2. (Winter), pp. 451-460.

Davies, Anthony (2000) The Shakespeare films of Laurence Olivier, in Russell Jackson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 163-182.

Donaldson, Peter (1987) Olivier, Hamlet, and Freud, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 4. Summer, 1987, pp. 24-48.

Duffin, Ross (2004) *Shakespeare's Songbook*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co.

Hurtgen, Charles (1969) The Operatic Character of Background Music in Film Adaptations of Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (Winter), pp. 53-64.

Kassabian, Anahid (2001) *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*. New York: Routledge.

Kennedy, Michael (1990) *Portrait of Walton*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kliman, Bernice W. (1988) *Hamlet: Film, Television, and Audio Performances*. London: Associated University Presses.

Mesa-Villar, José María (2004) Musings from Ophelia's Watery Voyage: Images of Female Submission in Shakespeare's and Millais' Drowning Maiden, *Sederi*, 14, pp. 227-237.

Mowat, Barbara and Paul Werstine (eds.) (1992) *Hamlet*. Folger Shakespeare Library. New York: Washington Square Press.

Mulvey, Laura (1999) Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, in Sue Thornham (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: a Reader*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 58-130.

Neely, Carol Thomas (2004) *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Olivier, Laurence (1948) *Hamlet*. Post-production shooting script. Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC. Prompt Ham. Fo. 7.

Rothwell, Kenneth S. (2004) *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rutter, Carol Chillington (1998) Snatched Bodies: Ophelia in the Grave, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 3, (Autumn), pp. 299-319.

Showalter, Elaine (1987) *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*. New York: Virago Press.

Stilwell, Robyn (2001) Sound and Empathy: Subjectivity, Gender and the Cinematic Soundscape, in K. J. Donnelly (ed.), *Film Music: Critical Approaches*. New York: Continuum Publishing Group, pp. 167-187.

Stoddard, Helen (1995) Auteurism and Film Authorship Theory, *Approaches to Popular Film*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, pp. 37-58.

Tynan, Kenneth (1966) The Actor: Tynan Interviews Olivier, *The Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (Winter), pp. 71-101.

Walton, Susanna (1989) *Behind the Façade*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Walton, William (1948) *Hamlet*. Full score. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Websites

Lauzen, Martha M. (2005) The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women in the Top 250 Films of 2005, *Movies By Women.com* [Online]. Available at: http://moviesbywomen.com/stats_celluloid_ceiling_2005.php [accessed 5 June 2008].

Filmography

Hamlet. 1948. Dir. Laurence Olivier. Two Cities Films (Rank Film Organisation).