



## Proposal for Senior Honors Thesis

**HONS 497 Senior Honors Thesis**      Credits   3   (2 minimum required)

Directions: Please return signed proposal to the Honors Office **at least one week prior to your scheduled meeting with the Honors Council**. This proposal must be accepted by Honors Council the semester before presentation.

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Thesis Title: "Subverting a Foucauldian Authority in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*"

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Expected date of Graduation:

I. Provide goals and a brief description of your project or research.

Arguably John Webster's most well-known play, *The Duchess of Malfi* was first performed in 1613 or 1614 and published in 1623. Nineteenth-century critics lauded the works of John Webster as most closely approaching the standard of William Shakespeare's plays. Still staged today, *The Duchess of Malfi* is one of the more popular examples of Jacobean revenge tragedy, or Senecan tragedy, and exhibits many of the characteristics typical of the genre: ghosts, revenge, torture and mutilation, and extensive carnage. *Malfi* is notable among its contemporaries for featuring a strong, independent female in the title role; and even more so because the Duchess resists classification into either one of the two roles typically assigned to women in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, that of the whore or the idealized, chaste woman. *The Duchess of Malfi* centers on the title character's choice to marry her steward Antonio against the wishes of her brothers, Duke Ferdinand and the Cardinal. When her brothers find out about her forbidden marriage, they begin a program of psychological torture and revenge that ends in her murder. The Duchess's waiting-woman Cariola experiences these mechanisms of torture alongside her mistress and

provides a crucial lower-class interpretive lens in counterpoint to the perspective of the aristocratic Duchess.

The methods that the Duchess's brothers use to torture and murder her align with the Elizabethan and Jacobean tradition of public execution as a spectacle to reinforce state power. The twentieth-century French theoretician Michel Foucault famously calls the use of theatrical and spectacular effects to support patriarchal power structures the "spectacle of the scaffold" in his book *Discipline and Punish*. In the chapter of the same name, he explores this state appropriation of theatrical spectacle in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England and Continental Europe. Sixteenth-century public executions served not only as an example of the dangers of disobedience but also as displays of the absolute power of the monarch or state over the body and life of the victim. As Foucault says, public executions did not restore justice so much as they reactivated power.

Surprisingly, while Foucault has been actively applied to countless early modern texts, little has been done to read Webster's play through the informing lens of this crucial theoretician. Foucault's theories of the changing perception and treatment of madness, found in *Madness and Civilization*, have been applied to the play, but few scholars approach the play through Foucault's theories of authority and punishment. This project intends to apply a Foucauldian understanding of state power, taken from his work *Discipline and Punish*, to *The Duchess of Malfi*, and explore how a Foucauldian understanding of the text illuminates gender and power relations within the play, as well as how the manifestations of power are subverted. Using Foucault's "spectacle of the scaffold" as a theoretical framework, I will explore the connections between the Aragonian brothers' state and Foucault's characterization of sixteenth-century power, and investigate the ways that patriarchal power of that type oppresses women. Inherent in Foucault's theory of the spectacle of the scaffold is an understanding of the theater as a potentially subversive medium. I intend to explore the reasons why the theater poses such a danger to established power by studying contemporary antitheatricality pamphlets. I will then examine resistance to power by two female characters, the Duchess and her waiting-woman, Cariola. Observing the forms these characters' resistance take, I will pay particular attention to similarities and differences of the critique

from within the state—in the case of the Duchess, an aristocratic female figure—and a lower-class critique. I will also examine the role of Cariola, which has typically been overlooked or dismissed by critics in favor of the more prominent and aristocratic figure of the Duchess. I hope to correct a classist blindness to a character often ignored by critics, whose actions form an integral part of female resistance to Foucauldian power.

The research questions driving this investigation include: How does Foucault’s method illuminate gender and power relations within *The Duchess of Malff*? How is Foucauldian power represented and subverted within the text? How do early modern antitheatricality texts give insight into the critique of power in *Malff*? What characterizes the Duchess’s and Cariola’s resistance to power and how do their subversions differ by their relationship to the state? How have critics tended to view Cariola?

II. Outline your methodology. **Please be specific.** How does this achieve your goals and how reliable is it?

Using Foucault’s “spectacle of the scaffold” as a theoretical model, I will examine how power is represented and subverted in the text, as well as the implications of this subversion. Although *Discipline and Punish* was written in 1975, over 350 years after Webster wrote his play, an application of Foucault’s theories of power to an early modern text is not anachronistic and is in fact supported by a large body of critical work. A large portion of Foucault’s research deals with the sixteenth century in Europe and includes extensive examination of primary materials relating to his topic, including court proceedings, firsthand accounts of executions witnessed, and penal and judicial laws. Foucault remains one of the most respected twentieth-century theoreticians on torture, the power of the state, execution, and the development of the modern Western judicial/carceral system. His theories have transformed the way we think about these aspects of our society and developed a vocabulary for discussions of power and containment. Andrea Henderson’s article “Death on the Stage, Death of the Stage: The Antitheatricality of *The Duchess of Malff*” states its indebtedness to Foucault’s ideas about the theatricality of power, but my analysis aims to explain this link more fully than has previously been done.

This project also relies on the school of feminist criticism developed in the 1970s. Feminist criticism seeks to re-evaluate canonical works outside of traditionally male readings, focusing on the

depictions and roles women play in these texts, as well as questioning traditional understandings of power and patriarchy. My analysis will also practice aspects of Judith Fetterley's resistant reader, a female reader that must work against portrayals of women in a male-authored text or portraits of women drawn through male eyes. A resisting reader assumes that the text she is reading reflects an inherent ideology of the dominant group, of which she is not a part. She must read in opposition to this ideology, and resist the portrayal of women that the text presents.

Jill Dolan, author of *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, writes that "feminism begins with a keen awareness of exclusion from male cultural, social, sexual, political, and intellectual discourse. It is a critique of prevailing social conditions that formulate women's position as outside of dominant male discourse" (3). Feminist criticism seeks to acknowledge these marginalizing portrayals of women and provide alternate readings of literary texts that recognize and spotlight women's voices. Feminist criticism provides a way to identify patriarchal structures and readings within texts, and a new language to understand male-female dynamics and power relationships. A twenty-first-century analysis of Webster's play that focuses on its female characters is indebted to the resistant stance provided by feminist criticism as well as the critical path paved by scholars such as Dymphna Callaghan, Christina Luckyj, Leah Marcus, Jill Dolan, and Theodora Jankowski.

My research follows in the footsteps of this approach, but also seeks to participate in a widening of feminism's gaze to include women of color, lower social standing, and alternate sexualities now emerging. Feminist literary criticism, when it first developed, necessarily could not focus on every woman in every text, as it had to concern itself with justifying and developing its methods. Now that feminism has become a credible critical school, however, we can no longer ignore non-aristocratic, non-heterosexual women, or non-European women. We must look for ways to provide voices to all portions of the texts we value as a culture, not unintentionally marginalizing some.

The above methods compose my theoretical framework for the project, and close textual analysis provides the mechanism by which I will search for answers to my research questions. A form of analysis favored by the theoretical school of New Critics, textual analysis pays careful attention to imagery,

allusions, and patterns in the text, as well as the rhythm and meter of the lines to amass a body of data to answer research questions. For example, close textual analysis of the Duchess's lines reveals that many of the metaphors she employs refer to luxury goods created by violent processes—diamonds, which are cut from their natural state; pearls which are prized from their oyster shell; cassia, a kind of cinnamon made by pressing the bark. Her frequent use of these metaphors indicates not only that she acknowledges the violence inherent in representations of power, but also signifies her imbrication with the violent, patriarchal state of her brothers, which limits the forms of her resistance to it.

I will also incorporate Elizabethan and Jacobean antitheatricality pamphlets into my examination of the subversive potential of theater. Using the *Early English Books Online* and *English Short Title Catalogue* databases, I will access writings that Webster would have likely been familiar with, and identify responses to these attitudes addressed in Webster's play.

III. Explain in what sense your project is original, unique, or beyond normal senior expectations. How does it relate to current knowledge in the discipline?

Despite its uniqueness among Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies for featuring a female tragic hero, *The Duchess of Malfi* still receives comparatively little critical attention. The works of Shakespeare are still the primary focus of Renaissance scholars, and a comparison of the Modern Literature Association database citations of Shakespeare's revenge tragedies and Webster's two tragedies reveals the difference in critical focus. Shakespeare's most famous tragedy, *Hamlet*, garners 5,098 entries in the MLA database; *Titus Andronicus*, his most Senecan tragedy, receives 552 entries. By comparison, *The Duchess of Malfi* is featured in only 334 scholarly works.

However, *The Duchess of Malfi* is arguably one of the more famous and studied of the non-Shakespearean revenge tragedies. An MLA search for contemporary revenge tragedies indicates its prominence among scholars of that genre. Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, written just before *The Duchess of Malfi*, is the subject of only 146 scholarly articles; Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, dating from the early 1590s, earns 226 citations; even Webster's earlier tragedy, *The White Devil*, appears in only 148 results. *The Duchess of Malfi* is then uncommon enough to warrant further study, but not so obscure

as to be without a solid critical basis.

Much critical work on *The Duchess of Malfi* has focused on the Duchess, her moral position, her transgressions and saintliness, and her position as victim. Some more recent scholars have focused on Julia, the other aristocratic figure in the play. However, little critical analysis has been devoted to the character of Cariola. Scholars who do mention her characterize her as a stock servant or choric figure, serving only to guide the audience's responses to the Duchess's actions and provide *sententiae* (short moral sayings or judgments) at the close of scenes. Those critics who focus on her death give it a perfunctory analysis—immediately following the heroic and noble death of the Duchess, Cariola's much more human response is dismissed as “hysterical,” foolish, and lacking an admirable nobility (Marcus, 2011). Cariola, a lower-class figure with only 57 lines in the entire 2,851-line play, is ignored both by the characters in the play and the majority of critics.

However, Cariola is significantly present for a number of critical scenes with the Duchess. An examination of the Duchess's resistance to her brothers' Foucauldian state should also include analysis of Cariola—yet this has not yet occurred. My project aims to provide one of the first readings of Cariola that considers her role in the play as vital to a radical questioning of the ontology of power and the roles of women within Webster's play.

The bachelor's degree in English does not require a capstone thesis or article; these larger papers are written within each class. However, even seminar papers written for 400-level classes are usually only 10-15 pages long. My completed paper will be 25-30 pages long, the length of a professional scholarly article, and will serve as a capstone project to my degree. Additionally, this project extends beyond normal senior expectations in its use of the *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) database. Just made available to Andrews students in summer 2012, and still a relatively uncommon database for college undergraduates to be using, the EEBO database allows users to access full-length scans of original texts from the early modern period.

This project is relevant to current concerns within the discipline both in its examination of structures of power within texts, a focus of study of the relatively recent school of New Historicism, and

its emphasis on gender criticism. Feminist critics are eager to extend the range of their analysis to not only women of means, ethnic majority, and heterosexual orientation, but also to women in texts who represent these “alternate” identities and the crucial roles they play. A project such as mine that focuses on not only an aristocratic woman but also her lower-class servant will contribute to this discussion; examining the two women together works toward this more complete picture of “woman” that feminist critics seek to explore.

IV. Include a **substantive annotated bibliography** of similar or related work.

Callaghan, Dympna. “The State of the Art: Critical Approaches 2000-08.” *The Duchess of Malfi: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Christina Luckyj. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. 66-86. Print.

Dympna Callaghan, editor of the New Casebooks anthology of *The Duchess of Malfi* below, outlines trends and concerns in criticism of Webster’s play from 2000-2008. Beginning in the 1980s, feminist criticism became the dominant approach to the play, and now permeates nearly every essay on *Malfi*. Within the last decade, however, criticism has also focused on the female body as a site for power struggles, the importance of the dead and ghosts, and the politics of medicine and poison. Many other essays have focused on interiority, private spaces, and performance; while still many more examine religion and religious imagery in Webster’s play. A productive area of investigation lately has been studies of Ferdinand’s lycanthropy and the presence of madness in the play. Callaghan ends the essay by theorizing about areas of further exploration in *Malfi* scholarship. This essay serves as a guide to recent scholarship as well as areas of promising exploration.

Callaghan, Dympna. *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of King Lear, Othello, The Duchess of Malfi, and The White Devil*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1989. Print.

In this book, Dympna Callaghan examines constructions of female character and identity in four famous Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies. Renaissance constructions of women focused largely on female sexuality and otherness to the male norm, but these constructions also continually threatened to unseat the very power that established them. Callaghan discusses the instability of gender binary and the phallus-based claims to male superiority, among other topics common to feminist discourse, in a straightforward way. This early work of feminist Renaissance criticism will be helpful to my project because it explicitly delineates many central tenets of feminist criticism that later articles assume; and that are necessary to my investigations.

Coddon, Karin S. “*The Duchess of Malfi*: Tyranny and Spectacle in Jacobean Drama.” *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 2000. 25-45. Print.

Coddon’s essay traces the deployment of madness and mad actions in Webster’s play not as indicators of a psychological condition, but as performative actions which ultimately decenter the subject—most notably Bosola and Ferdinand, whose speeches are filled with images of madness and commands to perform mad acts. Coddon extends the spectacle of madness and power to the entire play, briefly interrogating the use of theatricality by a violent state. The conclusion of this essay connects with Foucault’s ideas in “Spectacle of the Scaffold,” and provides an example of the use of Foucauldian ideas in criticism of Jacobean drama.

Cunningham, Karen. "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death." *PMLA* 105.2 (1990): 209-222. JSTOR. 23 October 2011. Web.

Cunningham's article focuses on the extremely violent plays of Christopher Marlowe, and the ways executions are staged in those plays. Marlowe's stage executions, although they mirror Elizabethan and Jacobean methods of public execution, use the inherent deceptions of the stage to expose the theatricality of power. However, in the highly choreographed spectacle of public execution, the subject's body or words would not always cooperate. Although this article deals specifically with Marlovian drama, many of Cunningham's observations are appropriate to Webster's play as well. Her analysis provides another link between power and theatricality, specifically citing and relying on Foucault's theories in *Discipline and Punish*.

Desmet, Christy. "Neither Maid, Widow, nor Wife': Rhetoric of the Woman Controversy in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dymphna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 2000. 46-60. Print.

Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is populated both with female characters of varying importance and misogynistic readings of those women. These readings were part of a larger discussion about the place and role of women during the Renaissance, here called the Renaissance Woman Controversy. Much of this controversy centered on the morality and legitimacy of female rule, and Desmet argues that the rhetoric launched against the Duchess's rule in the play mirrors the rhetoric used against real women in the Jacobean era. Desmet's essay examines the Duchess's dual role as political figure as well as wife and mother, and the crisis of identity that arises from these two contradictory selves. Her essay is a notable example of the applications of feminist criticism to modern discourse and concerns.

Dolan, Jill. "The Discourse of Feminisms: The Spectator and Representation." In *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1991. 1-18. Print.

In the first chapter of her book, Dolan describes three main branches of American feminism: liberal, cultural, and materialist feminism. Each of these forms of feminism can be applied to performance criticism, and feminist performance criticism aims to expose the dominant (male) ideologies written into theatrical texts and create a female-based discourse about women. The methods they use differ between the branches, but each form of feminism seeks to step outside the male spectator's gaze, examining women from a female lens and creating drama and cinema for this alternative conception of women. Dolan's chapter serves as an excellent survey of contemporary feminist criticism as it relates to theater and performance.

Dollimore, Jonathan. *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984. Print.

Dollimore addresses the misconception that Renaissance dramatists believed in and thus inserted into their plays a belief in order, Providence, and tradition. He asserts that Renaissance plays reflect and encourage the intellectual revolution then taking place in the Western world. However, Renaissance England was not ideologically one-dimensional; there existed simultaneously residual elements of medieval thought and practice, and harbingers of the future, and these combined in the drama of the time, so much so that he asserts many Jacobean tragedies, including Shakespeare's, "were more radical than has hitherto been allowed." The chapters on the decentralization of the human subject and cycles of power in Webster's *The White Devil* will be most helpful to my analysis.



Ekeblad, Inga-Stina. "The 'Impure Art' of John Webster." *The Review of English Studies*, 9.35 (1958): 253-267. JSTOR. 17 July 2012. Web.

Ekeblad's article was one of the first to consider Webster's tragedies as innovative dramatic works rather than theatrical failures. Rather than a bad dramatist who neither followed conventions of Jacobean drama nor effectively deployed psychological realism onstage and is thus a terrible playwright, Webster at his best blended the two styles into something new and wholly ironic. Drawing on Jacobean traditions of celebratory masques, Ekeblad argues that the madmen's interlude and the subsequent murder of the Duchess comprise an antimasque-masque sequence, and are intended to draw attention to the incongruity and brutality of the Duchess' murder. This article marks a transition to a new type of criticism of Webster, where the play's internal contradictions were revelatory rather than repulsive. Much criticism since has been influenced by Ekeblad's analysis of the play as worthy of study, extensive in its exploration of ontological questions, and masterfully representative of Renaissance thought and counter-thought.

Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978. Print.

This influential feminist work proposes the idea that the English canon as we know it reflects a dominant, male ideology. Women reading canonical texts are forced to adopt a male point of view while remaining women, thus experiencing immascultation—the process of totally losing one's identity. Female readers must then resist the ideology being propagated in the text and approach the text with new eyes, identifying male-constructed reality and portraits of women. Although the book specifically focuses on a selection of American works, Fetterley's argument as outlined in the introduction applies to the whole of English literature.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. Print.

In this seminal work on punishment and power, Foucault explores the shift in penal and juridical systems that took place in the eighteenth century. Renaissance forms of punishment centered largely on torture, public confession, and execution, and involved a nascent court system. By the nineteenth century, the focus of punishment and justice had shifted from the body to the soul of the prisoner. Penal and judicial systems were now concerned not only with determining guilt, but determining the reasons for guilt and searching for a psychological knowledge of the criminal. Foucault's meticulously researched work spans three hundred years; my research draws on his chapter entitled "The spectacle of the scaffold," where he describes the dramatic nature of public executions and their inherent instability as an assertion of power.

Gunby, David. "The Critical Backstory." *The Duchess of Malfi: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Christina Luckyj. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. 14-41. Print.

Early criticism of Webster's play focused on appreciation of the play and efforts to determine its quality and success. Restoration critics, concerned with what they deemed gratuitous violence, revised the play several times, and considered the play an appealing melodrama, although inferior when compared to Shakespeare's works. New Historicist and feminist analyses of the play arose in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and these approaches reshaped critical thought toward Webster's play. Gunby focuses on key issues addressed by critics since the 18<sup>th</sup> century: the success or failure of the play as drama, entertainment, or moral; the purpose of the bloody Act Five; and Webster's relationship to other drama of his time. Gunby notes that critical examinations of the play are often contradictory, like the play itself, and that critics are undecided whether these internal contradictions are intentional or a result of Webster's failure as a dramatist. This essay outlines important critical trends and insights surrounding four centuries of criticism.

Henderson, Andrea. "Death on Stage, Death of the Stage: The Antitheatricality of *The Duchess of Malfi*." *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 2000. 61-79. Print.

Henderson's reading of the play divides its characters into two realms, the aristocratic (Ferdinand and the Cardinal) and the bourgeoisie (the Duchess and Antonio) and bases her characterization on the groups' relationship to theatricality. The aristocratic figures rely on spectacles and show to assert their power, and also enforce their dramatics on other figures in the play. The bourgeoisie figures represent an emerging definition of identity, reacting against power and theatricality rather than participating in it. Henderson also discusses the play as an early indicator of the middle-class ideology beginning to permeate Jacobean culture, here defined by the division between the public and the private spheres. Henderson's essay, which was the inspiration for my own research, is indebted to Foucault's ideas of theatricality as power play.

Heywood, Thomas. *An Apology for Actors Containing Three Briefe Treatises*. London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1612. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 3 September 2012.

Heywood's pamphlet is an example of the antitheatricality pamphlets in circulation during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. In his pamphlet Heywood makes the case for the dignity and respectability of actors, as well as the morality of the theater. His overarching argument is for the theater as exposor of vice and corruption and moral example to the many who view it. Heywood also cites the value ancient Greek and Roman society placed on the theater as a point in its favor, and points out that neither Christ nor Paul denounced the theaters, although they were in operation during their lifetimes. Heywood's arguments for theater as a medium to expose, examine, or extol human actions, particularly those of figures in power, illustrate Jacobean dramatists' consciousness of the power of their medium. Additionally, one of the dedicatory poems prefacing the play was written by John Webster, indicating Webster's familiarity with Heywood's arguments and the larger antitheatricality debate.

Hutson, Lorna. "Rethinking the 'Spectacle of the Scaffold': Juridical Epistemologies and English Revenge Tragedy." *Representations*, 89.1 (2005): 30-58. JSTOR. 17 October 2011. Web.

Hutson, acknowledging the prevalence of the Foucauldian model in recent English Renaissance tragedy, suggests that previous applications of Foucault have overlooked the important role of the lay jury in determining guilt in English trials. Foucault bases his model in *Discipline and Punish* on the continental model of evaluation, which Hutson refers to as "inquisitorial." But Renaissance and early modern English trials more closely resembled the forensic and Roman style of inquisition, featuring a non-monarchical jury that judged the truth and guilt of the accused on its own. English revenge tragedy begins to reflect this method of gathering information about the accused in the language of probability used by the courts and in drama. While Hutson specifically applies her new reading of Foucault to Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, her insights are relevant to my own study of Foucault and theatricality in Webster's play.

I.G. *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*. London: Imprinted by W. White for Thomas Langley, 1615. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 3 September 2012.

An anonymous author attempts to refute Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* in this pamphlet, and brings the whole force of classical history and Biblical injunction to bear on Heywood's arguments. Primarily concerned with showing Heywood's classical examples to be historically incorrect, I.G. cites a long list of "correct" history in opposition of theaters. Less rhetorically persuasive than Heywood's pamphlet, *A Refutation* is concerned more with revealing Heywood's arguments to be based on falsehood than proposing any equally convincing arguments of his own. I.G.'s pamphlet represents a current of thought prevalent in Webster's time that was strongly opposed to the theaters and dramatic arts.

Jankowski, Theodora A. "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*." *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000. 80-103. Print.

The Duchess of Webster's play inhabits two worlds: that of political figure and, after Act I, that of devoted wife. As a female ruler and one who married below her class, the Duchess draws criticism in both spheres of her life, criticisms paralleling those levelled at female rulers and women in general who desired a level of autonomy. The Duchess chooses to keep her political and private life separate, retaining an unusual level of agency that, within the realm of the play, threatens the male authority figures around her and hastens her demise at their hands. The play's ending, although seeming to restore traditional patriarchal authority, actually questions patriarchal systems by establishing its males as either corrupt or without patriarchal claims to power. Jankowski's essay of the Duchess examines another form of subversion of patriarchy: the threat posed by a woman in power stepping out of her sphere and expressing autonomy.

Lord, Joan M. "*The Duchess of Malfi*: 'The Spirit of Greatness' and 'Of Woman.'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 16.2 (1976): 305-317. JSTOR. 17 July 2012. Web.

Lord discusses the use of acting, or "histrionics," in Webster's play, focusing particularly on the characters of the Duchess and Bosola. While Bosola's several roles throughout the play lead him to question his purpose and existence, the Duchess synthesizes two modes of being: the spirit of greatness in facing death calmly and nobly, and the spirit of woman in acting emotionally. She combines these two to produce an emotional reality that depends on self-aware playacting. This article also includes a discussion of Cariola that may provide an explanation for the tradition of critical scorn upon her death: Montaigne's view of the virtuous death asserted the need to be prepared for death.

Luckyj, Christina. "'Great Women of Pleasure': Main Plot and Subplot in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 27.2 (1987): 267-283. JSTOR. 17 July 2012. Web.

The figure of Julia, the Cardinal's mistress, in *The Duchess of Malfi* has typically been read as a stock Jacobean whore, or amplification of the Duchess's lust into a cautionary tale. Luckyj argues that Julia should be read as much more complex. Rather than a simple foil to the Duchess, the Julia subplot mirrors and extends the main plot of the Duchess. Appearing in similar contexts and suffering a similar fate—unjust murder by a patriarchal and oppressive state—Julia serves to elaborate and intensify the themes and concerns in the figure of the Duchess. Additionally, Luckyj's justification of a study of Julia could also be applied to a study of Cariola, another much-ignored figure in the play.

Marcus, Leah S. "The Duchess's Marriage in Contemporary Contexts." *The Duchess of Malfi: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Christina Luckyj. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. 106-118. Print.

In her essay, Marcus examines the historical context surrounding the early performances of Webster's play to determine how early modern audiences would have viewed the Duchess's marriage to Antonio. Early modern audiences, likely unfamiliar with the laws of Italy, where the play is set, would have judged the validity of the Duchess's marriage through an English mindset. Drawing on evidence of growing anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic sentiment during the reign of James I and the tightened marriage canons issued by the English church in 1604, Marcus concludes that although considering her marriage illegal, most Protestant viewers would have sympathized with her actions. The Duchess's marriage would have been seen as an act of resistance against Catholic traditions, personified in her corrupt brothers. This essay provides not only a reading of the Duchess's marriage similar to my own, but also a negative reading of Cariola's actions that serves as the departing point for my own more positive one.

McLuskie, Kathleen. "Drama and Sexual Politics: the Case of Webster's Duchess." *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000. 104-121. Print.

Representations of women in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama tended to fall into very strict categories. Webster's play, McLuskie argues, presents a heroine with an unprecedented amount of agency and depth of character. Webster takes pains to portray the Duchess in opposition not only to the corrupt aristocrats around her, but the other characters' descriptions of her. McLuskie focuses on the Duchess's marriage as a representative of her opposition and autonomy; not only does she choose and woo her own husband, but provides a portrait of private married life that contradicts the ideas held by other characters in the play. Another example of feminist criticism of Webster's play, McLuskie's analysis adopts the stance of a resistant reader who refuses to see the Duchess as angel or whore but rather something more complex and tangible and therefore dramatically powerful.

Rose, Mary Beth. "The Heroics of Marriage in Renaissance Tragedy." *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dympna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000. 122-143. Print.

Rose presents the Duchess as a heroic figure in tragedy, an unusual role for a female in drama. The Duchess inhabits many worlds, and her fluid position in the play makes her an ideal representative of the changing social conditions of Jacobean England. Her marriage to Antonio serves as the centerpiece of this heroism, for she maintains her role as a public ruler and her role as a private wife and mother. However, this balance cannot last, and the Duchess dies a martyr. For the final act of the play, her radical function as social changer is completely subsumed into an idealization that places her within the traditions of the past. The conclusion of the play, rather than pressing towards future change, actually contains female heroism, and much of the Duchess's heroism is lost to the larger concerns of seventeenth-century tragedy, which acknowledged the coming future by mourning the loss of past hierarchies.

Solga, Kim. "Witness to Despair: The Martyr of Malfi's Ghost." *Violence Against Women in Early Modern Performance: Invisible Acts*. Hampshire, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 98-140. Print.

In this chapter of her monograph, Solga examines and critiques the role of martyr that is often associated with the Duchess's death. She argues that the Duchess subverts the expectations of the female martyr in early modern drama by refusing to abandon her temporal struggles in favor of heavenly reward; rather the Duchess emphasizes her corporeal suffering. Solga then includes performance critiques of Peter Hinton's 2006 Stratford Shakespeare Festival production of the play and Phyllida Lloyd's 2003 production at the Royal National Theater in London. Although both plays emphasized the role of the performer and spectator, Solga argues that Lloyd's production was able to blur these lines more successfully.

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*. Ed. Brian Gibbons. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001. Print.

Of the editions of *The Duchess of Malfi* used by the scholars I have studied for this project, two received widespread use: the 1964 Revells edition, first edited by John Russell Brown; and the 1964 New Mermaids edition, originally edited by Elizabeth Brennan. Both texts use the 1623 first quarto printing of the play as their source text, and are considered equal in their scholarly value. I have chosen to use the New Mermaids edition for a number of reasons: Brown's edition reflects critical trends of the 1960s, including reader-response criticism and an evaluation of the morality of the Duchess's marriage which has largely fallen out of fashion. Brennan's reading of the text acknowledges its formation in a culture steeped in Protestant ideology and therefore acknowledges a larger religious and moral vision in the play that Brown does not. Additionally, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of an early female scholar in the field. Because of my project's indebtedness to feminist critics before me and its continuance of feminist analysis, a version edited by a woman is preferable over an equally respected edition by a man.

Whigham, Frank. "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *PMLA*, 100.2 (1985): 167-186. JSTOR. 17 July 2012. Web.

Whigham, in this foundational essay, explores the effects of a changing Jacobean culture on the characters in the play. The tension between old and new modes of class division and the formation of identity results in the complex psychological portraits of Ferdinand, the Duchess, Antonio, and Bosola. Whigham discusses Ferdinand's incestuous tendencies as a function not so much of sexual desire, but rigid adherence to the old-order preservation of noble blood. The Duchess embraces the emerging conception of marriage and the private life. Antonio seeks social mobility yet is unprepared for his entrance into the aristocratic world; Bosola's desperate search for identity arises from an adherence to older forms of self-fashioning through the ruler's identity. Whigham also provides a more positive reading of Cariola that accords her a role in creating a new space for women outside of male rule.

White, R.S. "The Moral Design of *The Duchess of Malfi*." *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Dymphna Callaghan. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000. 201-216. Print.

White posits Webster's play as very intentionally directing the viewer/reader's moral judgments to a condemnation of corrupt government. Webster paints the Cardinal and Ferdinand as morally reprehensible and corrupt from the beginning, although he allows the Duchess and Bosola to occupy a more ambiguous moral position until Act IV. The fourth act causes the audience to re-evaluate any moral judgments they may have had about the Duchess, allying the audience firmly on the side of the martyred Duchess. White's analysis suggests the threat to real power that a dramatic work represents and the subversive power of the theater.

V. Provide a statement of progress to date and list the research methods coursework completed.

This project takes as its starting point a 15-page paper written in Fall 2011 for Dr. L. Monique Pittman's ENGL372, English Literature 1600-1800 class. I went on to present the paper at the 2012 Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters conference in March and will be presenting an extended version of the project at the 2012 National Collegiate Honors Council Conference in Boston, Massachusetts in November. To date, I have amassed a considerable body of scholarly research on the topic, including 35 different scholarly works on a continually growing list.

Research methods in my discipline are integrated into every class, where we practice writing literary analysis, using secondary scholarly sources, and developing original argumentation. More specific training in methods of literary theory and criticism occur in ENGL267, Approaches to Literature, which I took in the spring of 2010 from Professor Gary Gray; and ENGL450, Literary Criticism and Theory, which I took from Dr. Scott Moncrieff in the spring of 2012.

**Department Chair Approval**

- **This student's performance in his/her major field is acceptable.**
- **He/she has completed the requisite research methods coursework for the research to be pursued.**
- **I understand that he/she plans to graduate with Honors.**

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Department Chair (signature)

**Research Advisor Approval****I have read and support this proposal:**

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Primary Advisor (signature)

**I have read and support this proposal:**

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Secondary Advisor (signature)

If human subjects or if live vertebrate animals are involved, evidence of approval from the Institutional Review Board or an Animal Use Committee is needed through the campus scholarly research offices (Ext. 6360).