

Making Space:
Positioning Self and Other in
Early Modern Women's Writing

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Dedication

For my parents:

*Robert James Glendinning and (in loving memory) Joycemarie Glendinning
(nee Thordarson)*

*For my children:
Skelley and Ava*

*And for my husband, Will,
hoping (to quote Thomas More) that he likes me as much as ever,
because I like him more than ever*

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Abstract

This study looks at dialogue and the rhetoric of space, place, and embodiment in writing by or attributed to early modern Englishwomen. The aim is to show how women speakers authorise their voices and identities through their verbal “positioning” of themselves relative to others. The strategies they employ include both the conventions of address that distinguish status among interlocutors and the imaginative evocation of how speakers occupy space. One premise of this project is the notion that the symbolic (including the verbal) and material levels of experience are bound closely together in the early modern imagination. Words could *mean* or *make meaning* on more than one level at once. This assumption helps us to see the way that subjects legitimate and “make room” for themselves through their representations of situated, embodied speakers and the boundaries and affiliations between them. The rhetorical manipulation of one’s “place”—both symbolically and materially—has often been overlooked as a significant feature of early modern texts, but deserves our attention as a useful strategy because identity was already conceptualised in these terms. They were woven into proverbial and official discourses that guided people’s understanding of self, society, and cosmos. Recent decades have seen an increasing critical interest in both the body and the material aspects of the culture in which early modern subjects come into being. As well, work continues to be done on gender and rhetoric in the period. My study brings together these two streams—embodied, “material” or “spatial” experience and the verbal details in texts—in a way that has not been fully explored. My focus on dialogue keeps the texts’ addressees in view, enabling us to understand that the “subject” emerges as part of a material, ideological, and discursive community, within which she creates connections and constructs protective boundaries. Further, this study considers an

eclectic array of texts, bringing to light how diverse genres—early Protestant martyrology, pamphlet defences of women, selections of poetry, and drama—limit or enable women’s agency.

This approach takes into account the early modern understanding of the body, which informs my reading of the importance of experiential details in the text. Somatic discourses defined the body as porous, as “open”—in a very real way—to influences of all kinds from beyond its corporeal borders, and the female body as particularly liable to penetration by outside forces. In addition, the individual was vulnerable to being overcome from within by emotional destabilization related to humoral imbalance. Again, women were considered more susceptible to this loss of control. The unstable nature of the body’s makeup and contours made one’s proximity to others both dangerous in terms of the potential for the other’s trespass, and potentially empowering, as one could join or merge with another to enhance the space of the self. Writers could work with the possibilities offered by the notion of “fluid” bodily boundaries, and present the individual as extending beyond her borders (as the monarch’s body encompassed and “contained” the nation and its people, or the wanton woman’s body represented the ultimate insecurity for the nation); the subject’s “position” could be one in which she was dissolved in a larger, more powerful “subjectivity,” or she could strengthen herself through liaison with another subject. The verbal construction of the body, its borders, the objects and people in its vicinity, and other features of experience offered a vocabulary for describing and creating subjectivity. A subject knows herself in terms of an other—or others—with and against whom she identifies, locates, and defines herself. Spatial and bodied experience takes part in this process of definition, so that attending to the material and spatial aspects of dialogic communication in these texts helps us see the possibilities for gendered identities and selves that were emerging in the period.

Introduction

The snail and the bee: Two images with emblematic currency in early modern English culture that each suggested a kind of subjectivity appropriate for women. The first—put forward in male-authored books of conduct and advice—presents a being who is self-contained, always “at home,” fearful and apt to hide in her “shell” (Demers 48-50; Parker 105). The second offers a model of the individual who, like the bee, lives in close contact with others, working alongside and crossing paths with many in the course of her activities, as together they “produce” the goods and social cohesion represented by the “honey.” Apparently favoured by women, this latter metaphor appears in their needlework and literature, including the work of some writers in the present study.¹ I invoke these pictorial examples because they each work, just as they did in early modern England, to bring together, in one efficient form, important aspects of an idea. For the purposes of my study, I note that the snail conveys something of the period’s anxiety about borders and containment, particularly regarding women and their bodies. The bee’s socially oriented existence corresponds strikingly well with modern theories of identity formation that feature the importance of interaction. Imagined here as the individual being “fed” by cultural experience and in turn “feeding” others, it is this notion of dynamic interpersonal communication that first motivated my project. I observed that the study of early modern women’s writing had not focused closely enough on the dialogue between situated speakers in the texts, and between text and audience, for what we might discover about emergent subjectivities in the period.

¹ Susan Frye and Karen Robertson draw attention to the bee and hive image (4), noting that Book I of Virgil’s *Aeneid* is a likely early source for early modern people’s use of it. Frye and Robertson give examples that demonstrate its frequent presence in embroidery and writing of the period, such as that of Aemilia Lanyer and Mary Wroth (14), whom I discuss in chapters four and five.

My goal was—and still is—to investigate the way women accessed authority through their engagement in verbal exchange with particular others in a variety of social relationships. While we have become attuned to the discursively dynamic social environment of early modern culture² and the linguistic aspects of identity formation,³ we have not fully explored the possibilities these insights have introduced regarding the “positioning” techniques of speakers. But as I tried to historicize my reading of the literature I had selected, it struck me that an early modern readership would interpret and respond to certain details of the texts differently from the way a late modern audience does, and that there was often an additional element in these interactions. If people were inclined to understand spiritual and intellectual concepts through their experience of the material world, as critics have demonstrated,⁴ then the “experiential” aspects of bodies interacting within a certain imagined space, was also occurring, concomitantly, with representations of verbal exchange—whether these elements are subtly or more overtly woven into the text. My argument takes as an assumption that these two streams of representation—the verbal and the embodied aspects of social interaction—were intertwined, and, in fact, were each necessary to the other, one informing the other in a reciprocal manner: at a time when individuals were very much aware of their rank and power relative to others, this aspect of social existence was experienced at the material or bodily level, and imagined in visual terms. The integration of these elements meant that the language of interpersonal address indicated speakers’ proximity; in writing, this capacity of language comes across, as textual details convey an idea of the space and boundaries between speakers and addressees, and other

² Pamela Allen Brown, in particular, draws a compelling picture of the linguistically vibrant culture of city and town life, in her recent article “The Street,” in Bicks and Summit (2013).

³ Gabrielle Spiegel gives an overview of significant developments in theories of the self, subjectivity, and agency, in the essay collection she edits, *Practicing History* (2005). Other contributors to this collection expand on these ideas in helpful ways. I draw on these and other theorists in my discussion of these topics, below.

⁴ Many commentators have talked about the “materiality” of early modern culture, including Catherine Richardson’s *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (2011).

elements of the specific social situation. Likewise, language evoking the expanse and solidity of body and place could be employed by a speaker, through dialogue, to understand and shape her relationship with an addressee both within and outside the text, and to position the speaker in ways that authorised her agency.

I am encouraged in my approach by a number of aspects of early modern culture particular to the era, which have not been viewed together. First, I note the implications of recent research, by Gail Kern Paster and others, into how the body was conceptualised and experienced in the period, and how an “unstable” bodily condition might affect the way meanings are generated in the texts. The “fluidity” of corporeal borders also figures into the way relationships are felt and imagined, and how they are represented in writing. In connection with this notion, the frequency with which the body is employed metaphorically in texts of the period, to represent ideas about political and domestic relations, for example, suggests its significance as a flexible component of early modern communication. I now see that speakers’ references to “others,” to the spaces in and from which interlocutors speak, and to the “material” elements of their encounters should be more carefully noted as signifying features of the early modern text.

Further, the lack of development in English visual art and the Protestant mistrust and denigration of images in the period⁵ suggest that English culture relied on other kinds of representation to express ideas, and that the images and scenes offered through words resonated particularly powerfully in the early modern imagination. One critical view is that the theatre took the place of these sources of images (Porter 2-5), and while the prominence of the theatre in the

⁵ Chloe Porter’s work on visual images in Renaissance drama makes this a convincing view (2-5). Porter does not uncritically accept the idea of theatre’s simply substituting for the missing visual opportunities, as some of her sources do, but her argument takes a different direction from mine, in her focus on ekphrasis and the “incompletion” of image-making on the stage.

culture is doubtlessly immense,⁶ I suggest, rather, that it was one of a collection of practices involving image-making. It seems to me more likely that the dramatic elements of public spectacle directed audiences to process literary texts through a kind of “mental staging” of the ideas and descriptions put to them. There is much evidence of the tendency for readers and listeners to understand what they heard in sensory or experiential ways, as they would the theatre. They could picture subjects and relationships verbally depicted in the texts, “placing” speakers in relation to one another, and “placing” them, as well, in relation to the structures that were also understood and imagined visually and experientially. The power dynamics of relationships could be conveyed in the representation of bodily trespass of a subordinate speaker by a dominant speaker; conversely, the sharing or merging of borders could be depicted through language to create an enhanced or more powerful subject. My aim is to draw out these details through a close reading of the texts—to help us see and feel how the early moderns were experiencing themselves as subjects.

Even in the simple images of the snail and bee, for example, a notion of both the relational and the spatial, or material, aspects of the “subject’s” experience comes across. The respective realms inhabited by these two creatures differ in important ways: the snail traces a small trajectory, its slow, oozing movements attaching it inescapably to the earth and to women’s “leaky” bodies, which were also associated with the earth; the bee, on the other hand, operates in the hierarchically organised hive, but it also ventures into the open air, flying above the earth to the sweet-smelling flowers that likewise bloom *above* the ground, and covering an area not clearly delimited. The snail, isolated, and with minimal access to the world, is much easier to control, and her insubstantial presence puts her at risk of accidentally being trodden on. The

⁶ Gale Carrithers and James Hardy argue for the crucial place of the theatre, saying that it acts as one of four tropes through which the culture made sense of itself.

bee's whereabouts at a given time might be undetermined, with her myriad of social contacts; she can make her presence known, and poses a potential danger to those who try to constrain her, or who stir up her passions. These images express value, perhaps to less-literate people particularly, and become part of the competing discourses that communicate ideas about the nature of interpersonal relationships, the proximity of bodies to one another, and the boundaries around those bodies, all of which are part of the experience of self for early modern people. I am rewarded for my attention to the rhetorical manipulation of space and place, in relation to the body, in the texts I have selected, with an increased ability to recognize how different subjectivities were conceived, asserted, and authorised, and this is what I demonstrate in my study.

Each of my chapters takes up for analysis these details of rhetorical positioning in a unique context. I show how these elements feature differently according to the conventions and requirements of particular genres, distinct in their intended audiences, political commitments, and conditions of production, as well as in when—and how—they were available to women. Constructing a diachronic approach to the literature, I keep these important distinctions in view while also finding previously unstudied connections between diverse writers during the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I, with consideration for the different constraints and possibilities each of these political eras held for the articulation of gendered subjectivity. This eclecticism allows me to investigate how questions of audience and aims, and of precursive models, class and social location, inflect the way material and “social” details were expressed, and to what ends. The “choice” of genre involves issues of access and acceptability for female writers and speakers, and affects what they can say. Although the strategies involved in the disparate genres differ in some ways, I trace a thread of similarity through the texts in that all

openly feature gender as a theme of their speakers' voicing of agency, and all make use of rhetorical techniques of distancing and "presencing," and of establishing connection and separation between speaker and others through imaginative manipulations of social and individual space. All use imagery in these tactics, although the images themselves differ much in character, and almost all draw—although also very differently—on what I will call "affective authority" to pull in their readers' and listeners' sympathies, and to give substance to their words.

Methodology and Scope

First, in chapter one, I situate my study in a theoretical framework, to demonstrate the logic by which I arrive at my conclusions in the chapters that follow. My analysis then begins in the second chapter, with the didactic "memoir" attributed to the early Protestant Anne Askew. This text, printed and widely circulated by the publisher/activists John Foxe and John Bale, presents the first-person account of Askew's interrogations and torture for her reformed beliefs. The text follows the conventions of the popular and formal dialogic structure, having the complexity of a "doubled" construction of both a reported dialogue between speakers and a rapport between narrator and audience. Thus "space" and proximity are features of both these relationships, as the speaker binds herself and other reformers together in a community. I draw on theories of social interaction to show how dialogue is put to work for the realignment of authority in the early days of the Reformation. I argue that Askew's text dramatises that shift, in the rhetorical "positioning" that the speaker accomplishes between herself and her interrogators—the bishops of the royal administration and the secular officials of London. In the process of establishing the superiority of reformed belief, the speaker simultaneously (and subversively) justifies and legitimates her disobedience of male and political power. The building-up of boundaries around herself through verbal techniques and the alternating invitation to her

interlocutor to occupy “common ground” with her, in argumentative terms, signal to early modern readers the way power is being negotiated at this high level of authority, but also show how the individual performs her role as spiritual subject.

The dialogic details of the text convey metaphorical space, but, in addition, the speaker brings other elements of the interactions into play, as she reconstructs the material aspects of her experience. When the speaker shows her interlocutor a passage in the Bible, when a book moves between her interrogator and herself and back again, or when she sits, in pain, conversing with her torturer in the intimate space of her cell, we are being given cues to how to understand her authority and to the kind of identity being put forward for the female first-person narrator: she is constant in her beliefs, heroically suffering, and privately self-reflective through writing and memory. Further, I draw attention to the significance of the speaker’s involvement of the locations in which these events take place; she refers, for example, to the imposing edifice of the Tower, as well as similarly familiar signifying places: the Guildhall, Newgate prison, and the racking chamber, which hold such great imaginative and dramatic possibilities for audiences. Even though her situation is one of duress, the speaker has access to the “heart” or hub of official power; this “nearness” comes across in both symbolic and material senses, and allows for a direct challenge to the established authorities. Further, the (female) body’s representation in the text—offered in a “concrete” way in the woodcut that accompanies the text in many of its published forms—also had to be coded in new and particular ways, with both orthodox and reformers capitalising on the signalling power of woman as either wanton or chaste, their bodily borders figuring strongly in the symbolism of the struggle. This emblematic depiction of the speaker in the woodcut represents the new church in a vivid depiction for readers and non-literate audiences alike. The image tells us more about how feminine subjectivity was being

shaped, and about the new possibilities—although still very limited in shape and scope—open to them for establishing self and authority.

Likewise involved in struggles over power, the speakers of pamphlet literature devoted to women's "defence" engage male interlocutors directly, as they take part in the long-running debate over the question of women's nature and role. For these "public" texts, which proclaim their female authorship, the conditions under which they were "consumed" are an important factor in how they were viewed. Printed at least in part for entertainment value and the economic rewards this element offered publishers, the material text of the pamphlet represented the female body in wanton exercise of her sexuality, as "she" passes through the hands of many readers and listeners. In this chapter I take up these and other "material" aspects of place and body, to argue that even though elements of the "defences" actually satirise and undermine women, they could also offer women grounds for authority over their reputations and their bodies; they could substantiate women's presence in—and their right to inhabit—the social spaces of the domestic and urban setting. The jumble of discourses and the wide-reaching aspect of the publically traded pamphlet, its diverse, unquantifiable audience, allowed for the possibility of varied interpretations, and the potential for any part of the "dialogue" to enable women's agency and their ability to assert themselves, even if the original intention behind the pamphlet was to deter women from doing so, through the parodying of such attempts. Through content, tone, and medium, the pamphlets I deal with could discredit women in some ways, but with their "free-floating" arguments incorporating humanist-styled debate, exceptional women in the religious tradition, and jesting vitriol against their rhetorical attackers, speakers attempt to build fortifications around the female community—although that community is more limited by class and race than they acknowledge. In unprecedented ways, speakers venture into the territory of

the interaction of male and female bodies, giving language to the idea of women's boundaries, and featuring their emotions as effective to securing their bodily security, even if that language proved titillating to readers. In these texts, published between 1589 and 1640, whose respective authors profess to be "Jane Anger," "Esther Sowernam," Rachel Speght, and "Mary Tattlewell and Joan Hit-him-home," among others, the possibility of "ventriloquised" female voices does not detract from the new ways of imagining women's behaviour and authority over their bodies.

While the lyric poetry of the era seems "far," in some ways, from the angry retort to male-authored tracts denigrating women, the continuity between them comes from more than just the "versified" sections that are often incorporated into the pamphlets, which could be sung and memorised by less literate consumers. The poets I examine likewise employ spatial representation to convey their desires and to claim identity and territory. The pamphlets also share with the poetry of Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and Aemilia Lanyer's "Description of Cooke-ham" an affective force, although very different emotions are involved. In contrast to the rage of the defences, Wroth's melancholic grief and Lanyer's nostalgic yearning infuse their texts with the emotive quality associated with lyric poetry, to move their readers and, as I argue, to make space for the expression of their desires. We can trace a strong dramatic element running through the texts, beginning with the portrayal, in Askew's text, of a bravely suffering heroine defending herself through scripture and rhetorical strategies. This dynamic reappears in a more aggressively defiant attitude in the pamphlet-writers' colourful depictions of male-female bodily interactions, their graphically rendered degradation of the male sex, and the feminine subject under siege. In "representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth," as Sir Philip Sidney calls the poet's task in his "Apology for Poetry" (331), the lyricists Wroth and Lanyer likewise work with theatrical scene-setting; they, too, use spatial and bodily imagery to enhance

the authority of their poems' subjects. The ways in which they depict the relationship with a specific "other" to whom they speak in the texts also becomes significant in their constructing of an embodied, emotionally rich, poetic voice. In Wroth's case, I look closely at how the interior "spaces" of her speaker's emotional life mimic the intimate emotional and material places she and her lover occupied together in the past; in the Petrarchan mode, her speaker calls on other elements of her surroundings, too, to validate and help her establish her bearings, so that the "labyrinth" becomes a space full of meaning and substance. I show how, after the negating experience of being abandoned by her beloved, Wroth's speaker uses interior space in which to re-establish herself, calling in emotional authority in the figures of Venus and Cupid, as actively present in the affective narrative she traces. Through her use of irony, Wroth's dialogue occurs on two levels: on one, she evinces her emotional investment in romantic love and in "constancy," both the recognisable social necessity for women to maintain their identities as chaste, and an element of the religious subjectivity that substantiates the speaker. On the other, the speaker distances herself and the knowing readers through a parodic critique of the Petrarchan mode, creating room for her creative voice "outside" of the male-dominated tradition she takes up, in which women figure as objects rather than subjects.

I argue that Lanyer's emotional appeal, too, involves some ambivalence, and therefore operates with a similar potential for critique. Her theme and tone derive from her expression of affection for her dedicatee, the Countess of Cumberland, Margaret Clifford, with whom she may have stayed at the country house at Cooke-ham. The poem's interests are bound up with the quest for patronage, so that the "subject" that the narrator establishes most deliberately is that of the countess, with the narrator's own legitimating coming from her association with the aristocratic woman and her daughter, Anne. I hope to offer a convincing case for how Lanyer

works with the association between woman and earth in a strategic way. Hers was an era in which the body of the monarch figured strongly in the imaginative renderings of the nation—particularly in the reign of Elizabeth I, which was only recently over when Lanyer penned her work. Taking up the artistic trope that, problematically, equated the monarch’s body with territory, Lanyer inverts the typical denigration of women through earthly associations, and weaves the countess’s body and presence into the description of the estate. Lanyer creates a discourse of possession through the countess’s occupation of the place, and this approach works towards what she knows is the countess’s concern for her own and her daughter’s right to their ancestral lands. She simultaneously incorporates herself into the poetic space, layering issues of courtship, marriage and patronage together. Creating presence in what is also an empty space, bereft of the countess’s presence and that of all the forms of life that inhabited the place when she and her daughter dwelt there, Lanyer plays with presence and absence, and with hierarchical “positioning,” in ambivalent ways, creating what can be read as a critique of the ordering system.

The connective thread between these disparate genres can be seen when we look to drama, as well, with which the earlier genres share some of the same techniques of resistance to silencing discourses and spatial techniques of authorisation. I look, in four plays by aristocratic women, at the “container” model of the self, its gendered aspects, and its consequences for relationships in different dramatic contexts. All of the plays I examine—Mary Sidney’s *Antoine*, Elizabeth Cary’s *Mariam*, Mary Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*, and Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley’s *Concealed Fancies*—feature the marital arrangement, and all feature the effect of mistrust on these relationships of heterosexual partnering; I look at how, within these themes, all incorporate space and spaces in the course of their speakers’ enunciation of subjectivity. I also consider how their political investments vary, due both to England’s relations with its

Continental counterparts and with the type of dramatic form they follow. These plays take part in a two-fold dialogic structure in which the author communicates with the audience, so that there is an allegorical or extra-textual dimension; while all plays can be said to have such a dual-level existence, these plays are particularly, and self-consciously, involved with the “secondary” element of meta-textual address. Where it is relevant to my discussion, I note this element of the drama in question.

The first two works, Sidney’s translation and Cary’s original play, are modelled on Senecan tragedy, and both can be read as critique addressed to the monarch. Indeed, the relationship and proximity of the authors to the centres of power is important in assessing the plays’ dialogues and what the characters are revealing through their speeches and interactions. Each portraying a chapter of Roman history, these plays make use of vast geographical spaces, and, like Lanyer’s employment of land to communicate subjectivity and authority, the plays depict how subjectivity can be enhanced through its projection onto landscape and territory. In taking into account the dissimilarities between these plays and the latter two, which are comedic in form, I recall the situations of the authors; I consider how Wroth’s relationships within court circles and her intimate knowledge of this social arena, for example, might have contributed to her artistic choices for the play, and how the violence and upheaval of the English civil wars fed into the experience and creative process of Royalist sisters Cavendish and Brackley. This latter play engages directly and at the same time ironically with the issues of marriage and domestic happiness for women of the upper class during and after significant shifting of powers in the wars. Sharing some but not all themes, all of these plays fall into the category of “closet” or “household” drama, which women writers used for expressing their ideas about both domestic and civic political matters. In these last chapters, I show the variations in how the “self” is

configured through space, boundary, containment, and relationship, in a genre so focused on the depiction of subjects and interaction between them.

To introduce my approach, I offer a brief discussion here of Mary Sidney's dedicatory poem to her brother, "To the Angel Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip Sidney." The piece appears at the start of their collaborative translation of the psalms, which she completed after his death. In this panegyric celebrating Sir Philip, she puts into play the language of social "ordering" along with affective address, and also a language of embodiment, as she evokes the idea of expansion and movement beyond borders. Through these strategies, she joins herself (mortal, earthly, and female) and the "Angel Spirit," whose social, literary, and even spiritual "position" she can use to authorise her poetic voice, as critics have noted. The sexually suggestive language of the piece has also attracted comment, as critics have speculated about the possibility of an incestuous relationship between Sidney and her brother; however, as valid as this concern is to some observers, I wish to focus, rather, on the spatial and bodily language she uses and its efficacy in authorising her voice. For instance, she begins in the poem's first line to establish a theme of expansion, in the effusive outpouring of emotion that characterises the poem throughout: "To thee, pure sprite, to thee alone's addressed / This *coupled* work, by *double* inter'st thine" (1-2, emphasis added). The part of the Psalter Sidney wrote after Sir Philip's death, "what is mine," was "Inspired by thee, thy secret power *impressed*" (3-4, emphasis added). Bound with one another through the medium of the text, a shared creation, the siblings are also "blended" together through the pronouns' intermixture and juxtaposition. She continues the pattern of joining in the next lines: "So dared my Muse with thine itself *combine*, / As mortal stuff with that which is divine" (5-6, emphasis added). The images of merging and mixing (*coupling, combining*), of enhancement through expansion (again *coupling*, and *doubling*), and

of being inhabited, infused or penetrated by her brother—by him *impressed*—gives the sense of a bodily experience of the other in an intimate way, and beyond, in an image of the poem’s enlarged, “double” subject.

To express her brother’s great worth, Sidney uses imagery conventionally associated with divine presence, which entails expansiveness, height or elevation, and clothing—the latter so indicative of material wealth and status. Sir Philip’s part of their Psalm translation could be claimed by “heaven’s king” (8), which is the first of many references she makes to the place where he is “fixed among [his] fellow lights” (57), far above the earthly realm. She herself, she tells him, “would mount thy highest sphere” (89), to be with him. In his psalm translations, Sidney avers to Sir Philip, he has “transformed” God’s word, “In substance no, but superficial tire [attire] / By thee put on; to praise, not to aspire / To those high tones, so in themselves adorned, / Which angels sing in their celestial choir” (9-12). This wording can be read in two ways, so that Sir Philip both clothed the divine *word* with the beautiful “tire” of poetic language, and he “put on” the “tire” himself that made *him*, as a poet, resemble the divine creator. Similarly clad or “adorned” are the “high tones” of the angels, which are associated not only with pleasurable musical sound, but also with the space between celestial bodies (*OED*, 4b), and “a special or characteristic style or tendency of thought, feeling, behaviour ... *esp.* the general or prevailing state of morals or manners in a society or community” (*OED*, 9). Sidney utilises imagery that ascribes value to Sir Philip through height and space, and fine appearance, and her language is rich with all of the material connotations that come with these terms.

Similarly, when Sidney repeatedly expresses her brother’s worth through the use of superlatives—“Wonder of men,” “perfection’s kind” (37), and others—her meaning is inseparable from the material components of the early modern class system in England, whose

distinctions were understood so experientially. Again, she capitalises on the multivalent “kind” to indicate both material and symbolic dimensions. “[*P*]erfection’s kind” blends the sense of *type* with that which is “natural” or “native” (*OED* I, 1a, 2b, 3b), with the idea of “kinship” (*OED* I, 3d) between Sir Philip and “perfection,” and also with the breeding—bloodlines—aristocratic heritage and entitlement entailed by the terms “birth,” “rights,” “rightful,” “claim,” and “quality” that are repeated in its definitions (*OED* I, 3a, 3c, II, 4a). These associations appear again in her assertion to Sir Philip that “Where, in my heart the highest *room* thou hast; / There, truly there, thy earthly being is *placed*” (33-4, emphasis added). I will discuss these terms in more detail in the next chapter, and in Chapter four, in which they figure in especially important ways in Aemilia Lanyer’s poetry, but here I will just note that they carry strong implications of social and political “positioning,” conveyed in a very visual and tactile way. Reading Sidney’s poetry, we should be alert to the early modern sense of the integration of world and symbol, and the important notion of how, for example, social “standing” involves both material, human bodies and property, which are necessary to “place” her brother—and herself—in the social hierarchy.

In the process of legitimating her writing through her identity as Sir Philip’s sister, Sidney builds and layers the connection between herself and her famous brother in extreme images relating to the body and in vivid emotions—areas which would be linked in the early modern understanding. In this endeavour, she speaks of being alternately constrained by, and going beyond, limits. Her love is “love which hath never done, / Nor can enough in world of words unfold” (27-8), and “it hath no further scope to go” (29). Further, she “owes a debt of infinites” (35) in another of the passages that ties her to him in a space created through overflowing affection. The speaker’s thoughts “would [*praise*] thee more than ever heart could show, / And [*my thoughts are*] all too short” (47-8). Further, tying Sir Philip and herself together

by associating his fatal wound on the battlefield with her own pain and grief, she laments, “Deep wounds enlarged, long festered in their gall, / Fresh bleeding smart; not eye- but heart-tears fall” (19-20). This language joins the two subjects in graphic terms. She is bound to him so closely that she suffers his wound with him. Building on this idea, she refers to her “thoughts, whence so strange passions flow” (45), which appears, in the variant printed in Samuel Daniel’s 1623 *Works*, as “Sometime of rase my swelling passions know / How work my thoughts.” Whether *strange* and *flowing*, or *raging* (as *rase* indicates) and *swelling*, Sidney’s passions are active in her body in highly suggestive ways. Likewise, Sidney describes her writing as the “dearest off’rings of my heart / Dissolved to ink, while pen’s impressions move / The bleeding veins of never-dying love, / I render here: these wounding lines of smart” (78-81). In the context of Sidney’s attachment to her brother and the sophisticated poetic form, this language gives her a kind of bodily, affective authority—brought to life through her “dialogue” with her deceased sibling.

The integration of levels of experience invites an investigation into how words and experience were entwined, as this example suggests. I have not by any means exhausted the poem’s store of these kinds of associations, or of links the speaker makes between herself and “others” besides Sir Philip; the manuscript of the psalms with this dedicatory poem and one addressed to the monarch would have sent a strong political message—Protestant and “militant,” as Margaret Hannay shows (*Philip’s Phoenix*, 89-91). Much more can be said about this “extra-textual” dialogue *with* authority—the communication she fosters with the monarch—that is taking place here. The discussion to follow is based on the understanding that language reifies and reproduces social relations, as I demonstrate in the next pages, and how dialogue represents the psychic dimensions of personal encounter, often using the language of materiality and

experience, to which early modern readers would be sensitive. My project is to make these aspects of the text more visible, in order to understand the way subjects construct and imagine themselves.

Chapter One

Writing (Back to) Herself:

Dialogue, Embodiment, and Early Modern Women's Writing

O husband, be not deceived with the world, & thinke that it is in your power to repent when you will ... Call to remembrance the dissoluteness of your life, I speake it not to lay anything to your charge, for I doe love you more deerely then I doe myself, but remember in what case you have lived, howe poore you have many times left me, how long you have beene absent from mee, all which advantage the devil tooke to subvert mee. (qtd. in Demers 54)

These lines from Elizabeth Caldwell's nine-page letter to her husband, written in 1603 before her trial and execution for his attempted murder, particularly highlight the terms between the two of them—or rather, make us question these terms. Caldwell's position is seen to shift as she addresses her husband carefully in relation to herself, supplicating and accusing him in turn, advising him and declaring her devotion at the same time that she justifies her behaviour and cautions him about the spiritual risk he runs for his role in their marriage's violent end. Significantly, she presents an alternating sense of "where she stands" in the social hierarchy as she makes these various pleas and assertions with regard to her purported addressee. At some moments she is cast in a role "above" him—when she offers moral instruction, for example—while at others she is "below" him, referring to her dependence on him in matters of judgment and material sustenance, and at still other points she occupies a position "level with" his, when she suggests the absence of his companionship as a factor in her behaviour. As part of a dialogue she constructs between herself and her spouse, Caldwell's letter also illustrates relative "positioning" in terms of distance: she attempts to draw her husband close to her by creating within the letter the intimate space of their marital relationship, where they can express their mutual affection; but she moves away from him when she evokes the powerful codes of the

religious authorities, with whom she implicitly “places” herself, outside this private realm. We can see the speaker’s use of appropriate registers in each of these positions, in the deference she shows when engaging in dialogue with a social “superior,” for instance, as well as the potential for her to use rhetorical interaction to manage her figurative proximity to her interlocutor, and so for her to manoeuvre within the social order—an order that “places” both parties in material and symbolic ways. She also evokes the early modern gendering of place and space: without his presence to see to the security of the “borders” of both home and wife—commonly seen as equivalent, and as male property—these boundaries have been breached; further, his “absence” contrasts with her having been “left,” indicating the differences in scope (physical and otherwise) of each of their lives and the disparity in their respective agencies. Such material realities and social dynamics contribute to the shaping of the self, as numerous critics attest, and it is by reading, and reading into, these details when we encounter literature from the period that we can trace the possible forms that early modern gendered selfhood could take. In attempting to understand something of the self and of subjectivity in their time, I observe the way early modern women writers engage with others around them, drawing on both the codes governing social exchange and on the language of “place,” that is, on aspects of occupied space—such as the density, breadth, and emotional quality of that space, and including the nature and solidity of its limits—on the language of embodied experience, as an organising topos to express or resist their circumstances and to substantiate and authorize themselves.

My project takes part in an ongoing discussion about early modern women’s writing and the gendered subject, an area in literary studies that has been invigorated by ongoing discoveries of archival documents and textual evidence from the period. In my investigation, I bring together a view of subjectivity that stresses one’s experience of being part of the material world, and the

notion that dialogue or “discourse” takes a primary role in the construction of the self—both of which I draw from current streams in this discussion. My interest in objects and spaces created and manipulated through rhetorical practice derives in part from essay collections focusing on the importance of these considerations, such as *Renaissance Configurations: Voices / Bodies / Spaces, 1580—1690* (1998, edited by Gordon Macmillan), and *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (1996, edited by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Sallibrass). Patricia Parker’s *Literary Fat Ladies* (1987) takes up specifically the figures of rhetoric in relation to women’s representation in literature, but nonetheless offers a suggestive perspective on the connections between women, language, bodies, spaces, and borders. These areas of experience or sources of knowledge—the material and discursive—are not in competition with one another, but reciprocal and dependent upon one another, as I show below.

I also add a third factor in my investigation, which is the question of how genre affects the way writers can express subjectivity. My intention is to examine a mixture of modes of representation, in order to gain a wide perspective on the techniques speakers were employing, and the variety of situated subjectivities that might be found in these diverse writings and their contexts. Differences in the circumstances of the speakers and “authors”—supposed or known—reflect different sites at which varying cultural pressures and “positioning” forces were at work, including the degree and types of mediation that can be identified, on the production of the texts. Sir Philip Sidney and George Puttenham’s early modern humanist views on proper guidelines for writing “poetry,” which drew on classical authors such as Longinus, put forward an aesthetic that excluded much of everyday experience, with the intention of educating readers while moving them, and this description of literature’s purpose set up an ideal that only a certain “kinds” of writing—the term for genre (Roe 12)—could satisfy. However, as modern critics like Raymond

Williams remind us, genre is defined by the organisation of material, and corresponds to social arrangements (183), so that when these arrangements change, genres must evolve. The political shift in authority from religious clerics to scriptural and personal interpretation during the Reformation, for example, provoked the tightening of state controls, but also legitimated certain types of “disobedience,” which Anne Askew could take part in through her writing. However, the type of “scripts” she had to draw on were still limited by ecclesiastic authority. Another shift during which women’s voices found acceptance was the Civil War period, one hundred years later, at which time a more secularised society meant that different kinds of investments informed the subject. Between these “moments” other possibilities arose for women to take hold of generic models and work with them in specifically “feminine” ways. The women in my study are bound by genre, but find legitimacy in their use of “male” literary models, as well as the room for innovative shaping. While genre informs the kinds of subjectivity the writers can express, they incorporate similar techniques of embodied language that can be traced across all the texts.

A related facet of my study is women’s relationship to the activity of writing, which is vexed in the period. To take a “gendered” position—that is, for a text to announce its authorship as female—actually proved efficacious for a number of reasons, political and otherwise. Speaking about women writers and their strategies for attaining agency, Megan Matchinske notes that “[i]n identifying themselves as women, they locate their textual authority; they gender their authority and authorize their gender” (10-11). This claim can be taken further yet, and complicated as well, when we remember the tendency for male writers to ventriloquise women’s voices, with the results both undermining and potentially empowering women in their attempts to assume authority in relation to the subject positions put forward in the texts; men, too, could

“authorize” their work through the use of a woman’s voice. In the case of the pamphlet publishers, the use of women’s voices—and their “authority,” if at times dubious in nature—could add to the commercial appeal of their textual product. The upheavals that brought women speakers into the political arena for the purposes of strengthening a cause (including both those that allowed women to write and publish, and those that aped women’s voices) trumped the feeling that women must be suppressed. Karen Raber explains the acceptance of the work of closet dramatists Mary Sidney and Katherine Philips as “a small price to pay for the larger project of establishing a more conservative state apparatus” (33); it is a fruitful notion that women’s voices were permitted to enter the literary landscape because accepting them was “a small price to pay” for the male authorities who stood to benefit from their words, and we can look at some of the earlier texts in such a context. Anne Askew’s narrative came at just the right time for the reformers Bale and Foxe and the movement they took part in, for example, and the pamphlet-writers increased the entertainment value of their products when they used an explicitly female voice.

I base my claims on the interconnection of specific concerns in this project, which I hope to convey as my discussion proceeds. These concerns are as follows: the ability of speakers to draw on available social scripts and discourses for articulating their desires and opinions, shaping the image of themselves that they present while responding to the demands of social positioning; the importance of the “other”—whether singular or plural—to these manoeuvres, with the speaker aligning herself with, and dissociating herself from, the addressee or someone (or something) else; the speaker’s ability to take control of her proximity to her addressee through dialogue, and to imbue the space between them with an affective charge; the speaker’s evocation of space and place, her manipulation and representation of the borders and dimensions of the self

in her responses to others, and her bringing the body into being in terms of occupied space; and the constitutive role of language in the formation of the self. My approach comes out of a critical background in Renaissance studies that has begun to feature the body and the spaces, objects, and other “presences” around it—which often involve issues of sexuality—while continuing to be informed by the insights of the “linguistic” or “discursive” turn; we see that the world and every formation in it is filtered through language, and that language operates in connection with power. As I proceed with close readings of the texts, I make use of theories from across the disciplines in addition to literary scholarship, including (new) historicism, cultural materialism, philosophy, feminism, and psychoanalysis. This eclecticism allows me to make a convincing case for my arguments about the shaping of the self in and through the literature.

I begin with my focus on the integral role of dialogue in the construction of the self, and I find it interesting to note that by drawing on the writing of others—both early modern theorists and recent writers on these ideas—I take part, in an obvious way, in an aspect of the “social” nature of dialogue, as Mikhail Bakhtin describes it, and that many have found so fruitful in discussions about subjectivity. We might also see my “borrowing”—appropriate to modern scholarship—as hearkening back, too, to popular early modern writing practices such as the creation of commonplace books, which contributed to ideas of “authorship”—to the idea of the individual engaged with language as an organising authority, but also to the text as a compilation, behind which lies a “dispersal of authorial voice” (Demers 25). Partly to keep these ideas in mind, I purposely choose the words of others, or my own, to appear independently as annotations or “glosses” to guide my reader’s interpretation, although I am aware that the structures informing my writing—and the stakes involved—differ from those of early modern women writers.

We can't understand human life merely in terms of individual subjects, who frame representations about and respond to others, because a great deal of human action only happens insofar as the agent understands and constitutes himself as integrally part of a 'we'.

(Taylor, "Dialogical" 63)

Essential to my approach is Bakhtin's work, in which the term *dialogue* and its variations have a number of contexts, all of which pertain to an understanding of the self. For him, all speech is dialogic in the sense that it consists of quotation, of repetition and adaptation, from the words of others to which the speaker has been exposed. Bakhtin's theory gives us the model of the verbal utterance as being shot through with multiple discourses, and the understanding that this complexity makes language itself "dialogic." The origin of any speaker's rhetorical output is not herself, but the speech of others around her, in this perspective. Bakhtin makes us aware that such a characterisation of verbal production takes emphasis away from the idea of an author as an isolated, exceptional genius, and places it, instead, on the social world as the source of literary works. This formulation resonates particularly well when we read early modern writing, because of the instability of the category of "author" in the period, and because of the openly collaborative practices of artistic productivity, which suggest the understanding of the self at that time as a similarly social being. These ideas are useful for my project because of the strength of power structures in early modern society that limited women's access to many avenues of learning and communication, and because of the nature of the discourses pertaining to women that circulated in the period—that is, of the words and ideas available to them for thinking of themselves and potentially for authorising their own speech. While many of these discourses devalued them and were intended to constrain their speech, the practice of "quoting" the words of others in the process of translation or in political or religious polemic (taking part in the reformation or counter-reformation movements, for example, or in the efforts of factions involved in the Civil Wars) gave women licence to write under the aegis of those authorised

others, with a kind of protected status. As Annabel Patterson argues in her discussion of censorship, both of these activities “allowed an author to limit [her] responsibility for the text (‘Tacitus wrote this, not I’)” (57). Consciously or unconsciously, to speak is to involve others, both as addressees and as sources of our words, and an investigation of language and subjectivity such as the one I undertake here, then, finds relationship and “others” important sources of insight.

I also take up another facet of Bakhtin’s thought that is suggestive for my study, and that many scholars take note of, which is the idea of speech as anticipatory, of utterance as always structured with an awareness of its potential reception, or its future answer. Thus, speakers are understood to be shaping their words at all times to the expectations associated with specific situations and the others they address. As Bakhtin points out,

...actual meaning is understood against a background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments—that is, precisely that background that, as we see, complicates the path of any word toward its object. Only now this contradictory environment of alien words is present to the speaker not in the object, but rather in the consciousness of the listener, as his apperceptive background, pregnant with responses and objections. (281)

It seems to me that Bakhtin suggests that consciousness itself is social, which points to the make-up of the self as similarly “other”-oriented, and to the centrality of dialogue in self-construction, and this is a point I keep in mind as I proceed.

My view of the function and prominence of speech, relationship, and “other” in self-definition resonates with some of Lynne Magnusson’s observations in her study of dialogue in Shakespeare’s plays, and I make use of her work in the first chapter particularly, and at certain

moments as I go along. Magnusson provides insight into the implications of Bakhtin’s ideas about how cultural codes govern social interaction, and how these inform what a speaker says before it is uttered. Magnusson, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s work as well, presents the helpful view that “the anticipated conditions of reception shape discourse production, constraining the speech of dominated speakers and enabling the speech of dominant speakers” (9); she discusses “the housework of language, its rituals of maintenance and repair” (13) that speakers rely on in social exchange. Developing this idea further, Magnusson notes the “element of risk” present in ordinary interactions, since, seen through the lens of politeness theory, these exchanges “threaten potential damage to the persona of either hearer or speaker (or to those of both)” (17).⁷ She explains our understanding of politeness as “the complex remedial strategies that serve to minimize the risks to ‘face,’ or self-esteem, of conversational participants” (17-18). As Bakhtin linked the development of subjectivity to these language practices, so does Magnusson, who draws from his work; she sees that “the speaking subject is formed partly out of this unceasing play of dialogue, for the language helping to shape subjectivity” arises out of the connection—of whatever nature—between the interlocutors (9). Emphasising this social aspect of how subjectivity develops, Magnusson adds, “Through the part language plays in the elaboration of repetitive social practices, discourses can be said to contribute to the construction and reproduction of subject positions and personal identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief” (10). Even subconscious awareness of how one must address the other, then, informs the speaker’s language and her idea of herself. My discussion benefits from these significant conclusions, but I find that speakers are not always entirely constrained by the conventions of politeness, rather they find ways to work with the scripts and interpersonal

⁷ Magnusson cites Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson’s *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1978) for her extended treatment of these ideas.

“managing” techniques, such as hyperbole, irony, and even purposeful flouting of these, in certain circumstances.

I also draw on Charles Taylor’s extensive writing about the make-up of the self, which strikes a chord with these ideas, specifically linking its composition to dialogue. In *Sources of the Self* (1989), Taylor explains the subject as a being that can only be defined within its social conditions:

one cannot be a self on one’s own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way, in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of language and self-understanding—and, of course, these classes may overlap. A self exists only within what I call ‘webs of interlocution’. It is this original situation which gives its sense to our concept of ‘identity,’ offering an answer to the question of who I am through a definition of where I am speaking from and to whom. The full definition of someone’s identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community. (70)

As I do, other investigators affirm Taylor’s discernment regarding the social or dialogical constitution of the self. The role of an “other” in the self’s coming-into-being is crucial and irreplaceable, and the “playing” of this part has to do with the employment of language. Marshall Sahlins, for example, draws from George Herbert Mead, Rousseau, and others, to show this interdependency:

... the “I” of speech necessarily predicates a “you,” and vice versa, even as the two are always reversible. No matter how egocentrically the world is laid out in speech, “I” am never alone in it. In dialogue, “I” and “you” exchange places, referential standpoints are

necessarily reversed – shall we not say – between *us*. This interchangeability is indispensable to interpretation and communication, since without it I could not know that your “here” is my “there.” It must follow that the “you” to whom I speak, and who becomes “I” in speaking to me, is in some fundamental sense like me, namely, in the capacity of social person. (116)

In “The Dialogical Self” (1995), Taylor discusses these ideas again, arguing that we cannot help but engage in interactions of exchange, or “dialogic action,” with others, out of which subjectivity derives, and that “language itself serves to set up spaces of common action, on a number of levels, intimate and public” (63). It follows from these observations that “our identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual properties. It also places us in some social space. We define ourselves partly in terms of what we come to accept as our appropriate place within dialogical actions” (63). A “conversational stance” such as deference to another, for example, “becomes a constituent of my identity” (63-4). Taylor’s view aligns with my understanding of identity as an important, and perhaps the most important, component of subjectivity. His claims here include the important element of power in these social, back-and-forth experiences, and in this he echoes the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault, who has contributed so significantly to the critical conversation; Foucault posits that power is actually constitutive of the world: power “produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (205). In gathering these perspectives together, I arrive at a model of the self as a figure engaged in a process of constant reference to, and confrontation with, others and the discourses produced by the culture in which she is situated, all of which serve to “define” her, and which she has access to in her own speech, and my study proceeds from this frame of reference.

My view of agency involves an understanding of a crucial flexibility in the model of the discursively constructed self. As the place of discourse came to be recognised in the making of the subject, the question arose, problematically, of just how powerfully these forces imposed upon her. Critics who discussed the individual through the lens of postmodernism, in the years immediately after the “linguistic” or “discursive turn”—terms that describe not a single point in time but a change in direction in thought—benefitted from the important insight into the centrality of language or discourse in the constitution of the self, as Bakhtin does—but, as Gabrielle Spiegel writes, underestimated or failed to figure in the possibilities for agency against the control of discourse and the structures in and through which it was at work. Then-current views held that the dominant systems of culture, including discursive forms of communication, constructed the individual through unconscious operations that incorporated those systems. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth notes the importance of *discourse* in this view, and that it came to be understood broadly, as

a term that leads beyond verbal languages to all the differential systems of meaning and value that Saussure identified as constituting the field of semiotic play. The possibilities are infinite, including body languages, garment languages, the languages of international diplomacy, of various nationalisms, of organizations, of political influence, of aesthetic value, of domestic violence, of fashion, of economics, and so on. (102)

As Spiegel says of those writing in her own field, “historians espousing the linguistic turn proclaimed the discursive condition to be a set of available languages, preordained scripts, and semiotic codes that created not only the condition of possibility for all thought and behaviour, but also served as their determining mechanisms of production” (6). The “missing” element in this perspective, she points out, was an opening for the exercising of agency (11). Essentially

caught within this intersection of pre-existing structures, the subject is reduced to “an ‘effect’ of discourse, not an individual, centred, unitary person as humanism had envisaged him/her, so much as a position assigned by and within discursive practices” (11). However, commentators began to point out that individuals can and do act, sometimes directly against the discursive “scripts” that seem to govern a particular area of existence, but often in more subtle ways through the use and adaptation of available cultural forms. Theory was compelled to accommodate these observations.

In my approach, I find common ground with Michel de Certeau, particularly where I find he places emphasis on *practices* in the material world. De Certeau offers a helpful context for understanding agency in his discussion of consumption. Consumers, he says, are “[u]nrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality ... [tracing] ‘indeterminate trajectories’ that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move” (221). He points out that those who use the elements available to them, as consumers do with the products they consume, exercise their wills in doing so, even while they simultaneously obey culturally inscribed demands. He articulates the relative freedom possessed by the “users” or “practitioners” of culture (both my terms, in this context), in explaining those “trajectories” that individuals construct with the objects they take up: “Although they use as their material the vocabularies of established languages ..., although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes ..., these ‘traverses’ remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful ruses of different interests and desires” (221). Here, De Certeau suggests the potential for a movement from the “consumption” of goods to an expanded view of the exercise of agency in the way cultural products can be put to use for the purpose of

“different interests and desires” than those for which they were intended. This is a most useful observation for my study of women’s writing in a patriarchal environment.

I also find useful the ideas of Bourdieu, and I see the women’s writing of the period through the lens of potential that his theories offer for feminine subjectivity. Like De Certeau, Bourdieu articulates the possibilities for the capability of “agents” to act in and on the world. Bourdieu’s well-known concept of *habitus*, for example, conveys the notion that individuals must have competence and comprehension with regard to surrounding systems of which they are a part, and adds that it is out of their abilities simply to function within this environment that they access the means by which to enact a “transformation,” an imposition or change, in these conditions (181), either wilfully or unconsciously. In social interactions, the agent/s can choose from among “strategies” for responding to the other, and the response from that other is likewise not completely predictable. In this sense, we find in the *habitus* “the durably installed generative principle of regulated *improvisations*” (182, emphasis added). We cannot help, then, but to be active participants in the worlds we live in, through our discursive practices:

Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the product of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an “objective intention” ... which always outruns his conscious intentions. (183)

Bourdieu credits the individual with the production of meaning beyond what she intends, and binds that production to the *habitus* of the agent in a reciprocal way; dialogue recreates the social world and its power relations while, at the same time, speakers are not programmed to respond to one another in only one particular way. The “paradoxical” nature of our socially embedded fixity and simultaneous flexibility, while difficult to grasp, as Bourdieu notes, allows for some

creativity even if that has certain bounds, and so for some agency as opposed to the view of the subject as a being whose actions are totally circumscribed and dictated by dominant ideologies. In characterising the *habitus* as “an endless capacity to engender products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production,” Bourdieu concludes that “the conditioned and conditional freedom it secures is as remote from a creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from a simple mechanical reproduction of the initial conditions” (196). We repeat the value-laden discourses and their power dynamics in our social interactions, then, but within these exchanges we have the ability to adapt what is given, to our own purposes. *Subjectivity* involves both the ability to act—as the function of the grammatical *subject* of a sentence suggests—and the condition of being *subject to* forces beyond the self. This idea is imperative to my view of what women writers are doing in the texts under consideration.

This paradoxical term—subjectivity—suggests the complexity of the idea of selfhood, which is both socially constructed and arises from interiority. Scholars of the history of the self invariably mention the early notion of a spirit or soul as analogous terms, and continue to emphasise the inner aspects of our being. Foucault’s “technologies of the self,” for example, consist of activities by which we foster interiority, such as keeping a diary. Judith Butler attempts to interrogate our understanding of the self, and to uncover the assumptions that the term entails, including those involving gender, and for her, interiority is only one aspect of the self. Identity is another, and is, as she describes it, an element most affiliated with others and the external world; identity is “the socially intelligible part of personhood” (*Gender*, 17). Subjectivity is another component, having to do with self-awareness or self-reflexivity, for Taylor, and with agency, but all of these aspects seem to me to have to do with the social world.

My aim is not to have the last word on the definition of the self; rather, my focus is on the grounds for authority that speakers can access in order to put themselves forward, to authenticate their words, and to act in the world, and on the material and figurative shape they are imagining to express their idea of individual embodied existence. These are all aspects of selfhood, and I will use these terms interchangeably at times, and draw on one or another of them as necessary, depending on the context.

My aims in this project are furthered by the nuanced understanding of agency that has been developed in recent criticism, and has contributed to how we approach subjectivity. Referring to Bourdieu's and De Certeau's insights, Spiegel concludes that "at its root, agency refers to the individual's capacity to act, to *do* something (intentionally or otherwise), implying at the very least an agent's practical knowledge and mastery of the common elements or conventions of culture, a form of cultural competency" (15). For the women writers of early modern England, the "capacity to act" came from, and at times was identical with, the capacity to speak. As Catherine Belsey posits, "To speak is to become a subject" (191). Joan Scott gives a fuller description of what early modern writers involved themselves in, if agency is equated with one's efforts "to construct an identity, a life, a set of relationships, a society within certain limits and with language" (1055). This definition deems women's literary output as a self- and culture-shaping activity, but does not necessitate their conscious awareness of each aspect of this list—in fact, these "effects" could come secondarily to the writer's purported aims, which would not make their work any less important. As Ermarth points out, the fact of our position within intersecting (and parallel) discourses does not leave us helpless victims of structure. Rather, we can take part in the making of society and self, using the languages and practices that precede us, in our own way, for our own purposes:

The subjectivity embedded in semiotic systems by no means loses political relevance and responsibility, on the contrary, those are built in and are inevitably part of the process of specifying language. The more experimental the usage, the more potential it has for political and social creativity ... Agency in these contemporary conditions is not a singularity but a process, a happening, a particular expression of systemic value. (104)

The idea of “experimental[ism]” suggests that writing, which we easily associate with creative language use, provides an especially fertile setting for taking an active part in the “process” of subjectivity—not only now, but in other times and places. This is the approach that I take, as well, to build my argument about women’s subjectivity.

My interest in the opportunities for deploying language in creative ways comes in my understanding of self as always interacting with others. Although these things are difficult to trace in literature, which is, by definition, the *spoken* and *written* aspects of experience, part of my goal is to do just that; my project seeks to draw attention to how writers do manage to expose and control the “project[ion]” of self in literature, and the various ways they express connections to, and aversion for, others with whom they engage, using rhetorical strategies for assuming authority over these areas—as Caldwell’s letter demonstrates in such a lively way. Other critics have noted this quality in the literature, as well. Taking up Bourdieu’s idea of the *habitus*, Taylor points to its implications regarding others, and so, regarding the importance of dialogue in the experience of the world and of the self. Referring to the *habitus*, Taylor comments, “one can see right away how the other also figures. Some of [the] practices which encode understanding are not carried out in acts of a single agent ... Deferent and deferred-to play out their social distance in a conversation, often with heavily ritualized elements” (62). Like Bourdieu, I will stress these aspects of power and social interaction in regard to the self. As Bourdieu helpfully states,

In fact it is their present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places, in the form of dispositions⁸ which are so many marks of *social position* and hence of the social distance between objective positions, that is, between social persons conjuncturally brought together (in physical space, which is not the same thing as social space) and correlatively, so many reminders of this distance and of the conduct required in order to ‘keep one’s distance’ or to manipulate it strategically, whether symbolically or actually, to reduce it (easier for the dominant than for the dominated), increase it, or simply maintain it (by not ‘letting oneself go’, not ‘becoming familiar’, in short, ‘standing on one’s dignity’, or on the other hand, refusing to ‘take liberties’ and ‘put oneself forward’, in short ‘knowing one’s place’ and staying there). (185)

Taylor, too, incorporates material and bodily experience into his vision of social interaction and interpersonal dynamics, pointing out the related behaviours that mirror the rhetorical gestures of social deference and dominance, and the importance of what is not said in our explanations of the world, of what is “implicit in our activity” (61). I find his language suggestive on this subject, since it so closely relates to my work:

it is not only my grasp of the inanimate environment which is thus embodied. My sense of myself, of the footing I am on with others, also are (*sic*), in large part. The deference I owe you is carried in the distance I stand from you, in the way I fall silent when you start to speak, in the way I hold myself in your presence ... Indeed, some of the most pervasive features of my attitude toward the world and others is (*sic*) encoded in the way I carry myself and project in public space. (61)

⁸ The translator notes that this term has a wider set of meanings in French, but suggests a number of aspects of its applicability, which are “*the result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure” and “*a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*” (196, n.1, emphasis in original).

My contention is that the early moderns tended to conflate these fields of meaning, allowing for great flexibility in how language could signify.

My argument depends on a view of the power of language, and its “material” effects on the world. This power has been recognised by critics, some of whom contrast early modern attitudes towards language’s function with current, or “modern,” views. Evidence suggests that the division between material and conceptual realms was not experienced as firmly as it was in later periods—despite that, as Catherine Richardson notes, “[t]he dichotomy between the body and the spirit, the earthly and the heavenly, and the material and the immaterial was after all frequently stressed” (5). Douglas Bruster, for example, observes that early modern English society “was a culture that thought almost constantly of the material, even when in the midst of its greatest imaginative leaps” (qtd. in Richardson 204-5). Richardson, too, suggests the significance of “Renaissance culture as material” and of the early moderns’ propensity to “us[e] material goods and products as the basis of explaining the rest of the world.” Richardson asserts, “It was a culture which used material metaphors to govern thinking about immaterial things in ways which made the mundane seem a suitable starting point for deliberation upon the extraordinary” (204). Recent studies of material culture or *materiality* view the concept broadly, taking into account the emotional and ideological features as well as the physical attributes of experience, and seeking all aspects that connect “objects, spaces, and people to one another” (Richardson and Hamling 7). The editors of *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (2010) note a “‘material turn’ – attention to the materiality of things” shared by those in a number of fields (11), that encourages me to approach my selected texts with a concern for the often unnoticed components (in literary studies) of the scenes of dialogic experience—whether actually material items or psychic and imaginative constructs exerting a

“material” presence in the text. In Taylor’s discussion of the self, he claims convincingly that not only do individuals define themselves through association with others, but that they do so with regard to “goods” (“Dialogical,” 58),⁹ as well. My study takes into account both of these implications for materiality in early modern culture: I take note of objects that figure in the scenes taking place in the texts I examine, including clothing and books, for example, and of instances when early modern writers express the relations between individuals or between people and *things*; and I see that they do so with the understanding that words affect the material world and self, often in complex ways as far as where and how a self can be situated.

The early part of my analysis is aided by Magnusson’s investigations into the rules of politeness as a means of speakers’ establishing social authority and distance. Her insightful reading of Shakespeare’s drama through early modern instructional texts for letter-writing provides some useful points in this area, but I apply her observations to a wider array of texts. In *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue*, Magnusson argues that for the linguistic exchanges in the plays, the playwright drew on rhetorical “scripts” such as those found in Erasmus’s instructional tract on epistolary method, “On the Writing of Letters” (*De conscribendis epistolis*). Magnusson explains the close relationship between language and the physical world for people of the era: “the dialogic forms of address developed in the epistolary scripts for various occasions are not just forms in words: they are forms of life, the material substance of relationships” (3). She adds that Erasmus designates the appropriate words and rhetorical forms that should be used in written exchange, which are “always primarily determined by the situated event taken together with the relative positioning of the addressor and the addressee, which is imagined as almost infinitely various, depending on the relative ages, temperaments, moods, wealth, education, and a

⁹ This point comes up in the context of his argument regarding the self as an ethically defined being, in *Sources of the Self*.

multitude of other factors” (3). Hierarchical social structures of relationship are reflected and re-enacted, then, in the cultural discourses like the ones Caldwell uses in her letter, above, and the tangible quality of the “forms of address” and their power in the social world speaks to how significantly they affect the sense of self for early modern people. Magnusson argues that “Erasmus’s teaching about letter-writing presents social relations as not merely expressed in language but actually constructed through language” (12). Her study posits the likelihood that Shakespeare drew on formal prescriptions like these to present “accurate” interpersonal rhetorical modes when writing his plays, and suggests that they appear in other genres, as well; further, Magnusson proposes that viewing or reading the interactions in which these forms are enacted also shapes the self, and she considers how appropriately they might apply to actual situations and relationships, observing that early modern letter-writing practices resonate with broader social contexts.

I also take some of James Kruzner’s points as valid contributions to my argument about the operations of language and its potent power in and on the world, in the early modern understanding. He observes that the prevailing notion of “‘transubstantial’ speech ... could refer to any language that failed to distinguish between word and world, and so displayed a heightened sense as to how words affect things” (7). Kruzner’s own study demonstrates this concept in seventeenth-century literature, in part, through his focus on a “speaker’s world-creating, mosaic language, and of the words that transubstantiate him into objects ...” (7), as well as on texts that portray the speaker as seeking increased “boundedness.” Discussing the early modern sense of the force of language on the individual, Kruzner asserts, “speech does not merely express ... vulnerability but also creates it—communicates it in some literal sense” (125). Kruzner’s idea of early modern “linguistic vulnerability” (125) follows from the view of language as “material.”

He shows the potential for “transubstantial language” to apply not just to “the transformation of bread into the body of Christ but to any utterance aimed at producing direct material effects on the bodies of the world ... [including] human ones” (125). Showing this view of language to be pervasive, Kruzner adds that “believing in transubstantial language often meant living with an intense and expansive sense of the power that words have to penetrate, expand, erode and transform persons” (125). Such an understanding forms part of the groundwork of my study, and suggests the power women could wield when they worked with the “forms” and scripts detailed by Erasmus and other contemporary theorists, as well as how such acts constituted such a threat to the patriarchal order when women dared to take up such a powerful medium. Further, the ability of language to “shape” the boundaries and positioning of the self in powerful ways makes the study of “penetration,” “expan[sion],” “erosion,” and other kinds of “transform[ation]” a potentially rich area of inquiry.

“*A Perfect Method*”

Early modern theorists give me insight into the relationship between language and civil order in the period, which shapes language use and the reception of speech, whether written or spoken. The subtitle of Angel Day’s text *The English Secretorie* (1586), above, suggests its idealised notion of how society should be arranged, a notion conveyed, as in Erasmus’s text, through instructions for proper letter-writing technique, and involving the separation of individuals into compartmentalised units. Day’s manual, with its focus on the language of “relative positioning” or “the social superiority or inferiority of the addressee,” provides a vision of civic structure that, “like the Elizabethan court, is one of vertical relations” (Magnusson 3). Using the proper forms in one’s communication practices is necessary, as Magnusson notes, and reinscribes the social structure; in this society, “one is almost always negotiating one’s position

within a graduated hierarchy, and all the while reproducing the forms of symbolic domination and subordination that reinforce the hierarchy” (3). Peter Womack perhaps more accurately describes the circumstances when he discusses the urban community involved in early church pageants: society was “minutely graded, horizontally and vertically, by occupation, seniority, gender, wealth, and civic position” (102). Attempts to impose and maintain order, like those represented in Day’s and Erasmus’s tracts, reflect a polity that was becoming more complex as new categories or “positions” appeared, with the new social mobility that resulted from economic and political developments. The operations of the actual social body exceeded these models developed to define and contain it, as programs like Day’s and Erasmus’s could not encompass all the possibilities of social relationships, despite their attempts at being comprehensive. We find confirmation in the period’s literature of an impulse to define the individual and his/her borders, and this impetus towards enclosure has a number of implications for early modern subjectivities.

The deepening interiority that is often identified with the era, and the increasing distinction between interior and exterior worlds, and between self and other—often associated with political foes—informed contemporary ideas of the self as an “bounded” entity, and this is a point that I linger on because of its importance to my study. Evidence suggests that during the era the tensions between one’s “inner” and “outer” aspects—as well as the divisions between a number of other “dualisms,” such as those noted above—became increasingly fraught. When Lynn Enterline and David Hill suggest the suitability of psychoanalytic theory for investigating the early modern subject, they point to the prospect that “picturing the body as if it consists of an impenetrable integument is a standing possibility (even temptation) for the human being,” and observe that “this fantasy or nightmare becomes more active or urgent at certain moments (often

of crisis) in an individual's life" (71). One of these collective "moments," their comments imply, occurred with the tumultuous religious and political upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, about which we can learn more, in turn, through "psychoanalytic thinking" (71). As speakers and writers express their awareness of borders, they represent the outline of self and subjectivity in a host of ways.

I take as a starting point the widely accepted supposition that the early modern period saw a movement to consolidate the individual, differentiated self, in many of its discourses and practices. The study of treatises on manners and disciplines of the body by sociologist Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (first published in 1939), draws a trajectory of increasing consciousness of proper comportment of the body and person in social rituals and shared events, for example. Elias calls the emerging subject of his study *homo clausus*, describing a being "severed from all other people and things 'outside' by the 'wall' of the body" (470); the ideal put forward for the early modern subject, as Elias posits, was "a little world unto himself who ultimately exists quite independently of the great world outside" (472), and this description of an individual, separate from others and from his / her surroundings in significant ways, applies to the subject as increasingly depicted in early modern texts.¹⁰ Regarding the movement to see the individual as set apart from others and autonomous, Hillman reflects that "while this notion was of course not shared by all early moderns, the fantasmatic notion of the body as a sealed container does seem to have taken on a life of its own over the course of the Renaissance" (71).

¹⁰ Elias reports on early texts dedicated to the proper practices for sharing beds, for example, which was the usual arrangement in medieval households, and included the convention of residents' sharing occupancy of their beds with visiting strangers; he adds that it was not usual to have clothing dedicated to sleeping, and that wealthier people tended to sleep in their clothes, the less-wealthy without clothes. This striking information regarding the nearness and interactive movement of bodies in the period reminds us of the need to account for how the self was regarded in both its figurative and its material aspects.

Such a process involved a complex negotiation in terms of gender, and my questions concern the nature of this negotiation.

I keep in mind that the “containment” that we see rise in prominence as a pattern of the material and imaginary aspects of the self applies differently to men and women, as noted above. In relation to this development, my interest is with the integrity of the borders of the self in the new forms, how they are constructed rhetorically, and how they enter into the positioning and social interaction between the self and others. In much of the literature produced at this time the grounds for authority over oneself—the power to speak, act, and define oneself, sometimes against prescribed codes—appear to depend on an ability to stake out one’s “territory” to some extent, as distinct from others’. At the same time, cultural anxiety regarding the “containment” of women—often referred to as “the weaker *vessel*”¹¹—remind us of the way enclosure also meant the attempt to control women’s lives, through increased attention to, and patrolling of, their “borders” and through various forms of confinement and suppression of their words and desires. The prevailing humoral or Galenic view held that women’s bodies were “leakier,” and even less stable than men’s. The body itself was associated with femaleness, excessiveness, expansiveness, and openness, with “increase” (Parker 3), and with “otherness,” and, as such, figured in male anxieties over the security of borders. We might see some irony in the early modern impetus to build boundaries around the (male) self, in order to establish independence from others, when in order to do so, to access agency, the subject must link himself to some power “outside” or beyond himself; this reliance is not always acknowledged, but it is an entry point for an exploration into the grounds for establishing authority over the self.

¹¹ Patricia Parker tells us that “[t]he resonant, and often echoed passage from 1 Peter 3, which begins ‘Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands,’ counsels husbands to ‘give honour unto your wife, as unto the *weaker vessel*’ (1 Peter 3:1-7), a phrase in Tyndale’s and later the King James Bible which became a catchphrase for the sex itself” (180 Parker’s emphasis).

My study investigates the tension between competing (and at times synonymous) “uses” of enclosure, the paradoxical nature of the two poles of its application, which can be contextualised further for the period. As Laurie Shannon points out, an early modern commonplace likened the body to the nation, drawing a connection between “the self and the state” (14). Kruzner notes that the ability to shore up and protect one’s boundaries is often linked to the increased access to power for at least a certain segment of the populace, is sometimes associated with early modern republicanism, and is even, for some commentators, the defining characteristic of the modern state, and, by extension, of the modern self, as well (15).¹² The impulse towards establishing an English identity and protecting the nation’s borders—particularly in moments during these centuries when the stresses of the reformed religion and threats from continental enemies were felt most keenly—informed a concomitant sense of urgency to maintain order through containment, particularly, of “others” identified by gender, race or ethnicity, religious denomination, and class, and their subdivisions. The idea of being “bounded” as opposed to “open,” then, carries the same exclusionary and limiting resonances for both personal and political entities, with the relevant “other” against which the state or self is defined changing over the course of the period. Another commonplace—a version of the first—linked geographical territory to women’s bodies, adding the element of sexuality to notions of the vulnerability of state borders, and characterised threats to both kinds of borders in terms of male competition over feminised matter. The need for male control over the boundaries of both played into women’s status and place in society, and thus into their ability to have government of themselves. My examination takes up these ideas as basic to the construction of a rhetoric of embodiment.

¹² Kruzner’s study attempts to complicate this notion, and to find potential models for selfhood in the period’s literature that do not simply present the ideal self as one severed from others in order to secure its survival and sovereignty; I discuss his work further, below.

Sugar and Spice and ... Snails?

I am guided by the ideology conveyed in conduct and advice manuals, which repeatedly use images and metaphors emphasizing that women belong in the enclosed space of the household, and that they must limit their interaction with others in order to insure their virtue. The “snail” image, as I note in the introduction, appears repeatedly in these documents, making it an “emblem” for women, as Patricia Demers points out (48). In the marriage tract *A Happy Husband; or, Directions for a Maide to choose her Mate* (1619), for instance, the writer asserts that the wife is a husband’s “booke,” a “mirror, to reflect / [her] Husband’s mind,” and a “Snaile” who is inseparable from her house (qtd. in Demers 48). Again, in the wedding sermon for Lord and Lady Hay, *The Merchant Royall* (1607), Robert Wilkinson preached that “a goode woman” was “a snaile, not onely for her silence and continuall keeping of her house, but also for a certaine commendable timorousnes of her nature, which at the least shaking of the aire shrinks back into her shell” (qtd. in Demers 50). The sexual component of this formulation is more evident yet in other treatises, such as Barnabe Rich’s *My Ladies Looking Glasse* (1616), which tells its readers that “a womans honestie is pent up in a litle roome, it is still confined, but from her girdle downewards” (qtd. in Parker 105). And the connection between this sexual aspect and personal (male) property comes across in still others; Mordecai Moxon, for instance, “sums up a whole tradition of the link between property and a woman’s private place,” Patricia Parker says, when he writes (in 1708) that a man’s adultery with a married woman constitutes a sin against the other man, “whose hedge we break down, and whose enclosure we lay wast; whilst we do not only purloyn and defile and dishonour that which is his most proper possession ... but we invade and encroach upon his Inheritance also by making our *Bastard* his *Heir*” (qtd. in Parker 105). These examples, in Parker’s astute analysis, “make it clear that a woman must stay within a

private place—the home—because her body contains a private place, a place or ‘enclosure’ that adultery would break into, and make a ‘common’ rather than a particular property” (105). She adds, “The very language translates the older logic of the *hortus conclusus*—and its mystical extensions in the body of the Virgin Mother who contains that by which she is contained—into the ideology and custom of *Oiconomia* or the emerging ‘householde,’ the privatization of the nascent bourgeois family” (105). The spatial language of gendered *territory* invites related terminology, such as *occupy*—which was commonly used with a sexualised meaning (Parker 109)—*invasion*, *trespass*, and similar terms. Such powerful images informed ideas of the gendered self, but against these containing structures, women writers (and male writers, too) cast their own rhetorical constructions, often enlarging the scope within which women could move, and wresting some control of the borders that threatened to cut them off from each other and the wider world. These ideas are encoded into the language of interaction, and my study makes them more visible.

I also bear in mind how this concern for keeping women out of the public or “common” sphere influenced views on what constituted appropriate educational programmes for them, and reflected aims to keep them contained. Whereas men were to be educated in a way that equipped them specifically for public speaking and taking part in political debate, treatises on women’s education consistently stressed virtue, modesty, and their preparedness for marriage, advocating practical skills such as spinning and sewing—appropriate to the confines of the domestic scene—rather than speaking and writing (Demers 31). Analysing treatises from Thomas More and Erasmus to Juan Luis Vives, Demers seems to be accurate in summarising the thrust of many of these documents with the comment that “early humanist beliefs in the value of educating women often represented a closing rather than an opening up of opportunities” (27). Much (but

not all) of this ideology regarding women's education resembled (or condoned) Vives's "insistence on the domestic enclosure of women's bodies and minds" (Demers 30). Heidi Brayman Hackel confirms that the period saw varied attitudes, but notes that Vives's *A Very Frutefull and Pleasant Booke Called the Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1523), the earliest of these tracts, made the strongest impact ("Reading Women" 22-3). If the shoring up of boundaries around the individual meant enabling subjectivity for many educated men, "enclosure" held more problematic implications for women, with its emphasis more on restriction than independence; however, privacy, even if forced, has been identified as contributing to deepening interiority, so that determining the enabling possibilities for women's subjectivity is a complex undertaking, and calls for close examination of women's language to do with borders and spaces, and what might be within them.

My argument also draws on the counter-discourses to this drive for "bounded" selfhood. Cynthia Marshall, for example, challenges the view of an emerging subject driven to realize its autonomy while impeded only by external powers, pointing out the equal if not greater force of resistance to such a drive. As Marshall says, "An emergent sense of the autonomous self, individually operative as never before in the spheres of politics, religion, and commerce, existed in tension with an established popular sense of the self as fluid, unstable, and volatile" (3-4). She connects the political and social instability created by the turbulence of the reformation period to a reluctance to embrace an individualistic selfhood as suggested and defined by humanist writers of the time: "The violence accompanying the establishment of new forms of religious and state authority gives vivid testimony to the uneasiness or even terror with which many people in the early modern era confronted their autonomous existence" (14). Countering the notion of the enclosed subject as an ideal for early modern audiences of literature and theatre, Marshall

demonstrates evidence of the pleasure derived from the sense of “dissolution” of the self achieved through engagement with these art forms. Her research shows that “Renaissance texts support (as, viewed from a different angle, they gave rise to) the psychoanalytic view of the self as paradoxically constituted in a wish for its own dissolution” (53). Supporting this thesis are the discourses of the early modern body, which is understood in humoral terms, as fluid and unstable, and dominated by its susceptibility to external forces of all kinds, as Gail Kern Paster vividly shows in *The Body Embarrassed* (1993) and *Humoring the Body* (2004). As Marshall says, “In the early modern period, dominant psychological and physiological models, derived from Galenic humoralism, fostered a concept of the human person as literally fluid, since the body was understood as porous, volatile, and highly susceptible to outside influences” (14). While Marshall shows where such a desire for dissolution may be operative in the texts she looks at, I find her perspective helpful not in its suggestion of a drive toward self-annihilation, but in the way she shows that individualised identity was not considered optimal; I argue, though, that the options sought, rather than death or self-erasure, included an array of associative or shared subject positions, in which the pleasures of non-individualistic distinction that Marshall talks about can be enjoyed, but that increase the presence and substance of the self.

My view of the self as freely accepting or even pursuing unstable borders, but for self-enhancing reasons, is supported by early modern sources, which I interpret differently from the way Marshall would. The “openness” of the self, varying in degree by nature, appears in Montaigne’s remarks about his own and others’ predisposition to be affected physically and emotionally through suggestion:

I am one of those who are very much influenced by the imagination. Everyone feels its impact, but some are overthrown by it. Its impression on me is piercing ... The sight of

other people's anguish causes very real anguish to me, and my feelings have often usurped the feelings of others. A continual cougher irritates my lungs and throat ... I catch the disease that I study, and lodge it in me. (qtd. in Parker, "Gender Ideology," 341)

The anti-theatricalists, similarly, saw the individual involved in dramatic productions as vulnerable, for a number of reasons. In pamphlets such as Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579), Phillip Stubbes's *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), and William Prynne *Histrio-mastix: The players scourge, or, actors tragedie* (1633), writers express fears about the feminising effects of the male actors dressing as women (Demers 48). Further, observing passionate dramatisations invites invasion by these emotions; an audience member left herself open to contagion associated with others who attended the theatre at the same time. However, as Kruzner points out, this openness made one flexible in a way that allowed others to buoy up the self, as well, and able to enjoy the pleasures not only of dissolution but of border-distending kinds, too, and this is the premise with which I read early modern texts for how the self is "shaped" in connection with others, in images and language of fortification and defence; exposure and protection; space, distance and proximity; borders and boundaries; shoring up and dissolution or effacement; containment and expansion; unity and dispersion.

My study takes as a premise, then, that with such malleable edges, the body's function as a sign of a consistent, unified self was vexed. Its borders, in the Galenic, humoral view, did not offer or represent security of protection from the "outside" world. The difficulty with the early modern maintenance of secure bodily borders—maintenance that typifies the "modern" self—has been identified and discussed in detail by scholars, such as Kruzner in *Open Subjects* (2011). Kruzner looks with a creative eye at early modern texts for their rhetorical constructions of subjectivities that create either ever-firmer boundaries, against the onslaughts of harmful others,

or less-rigidly maintained borders, both of which, he shows, are presented with ambivalence in early modern literature. Leaving one's borders open, allowing oneself to be vulnerable to interaction with features and persons of the external world, offers opportunities for pleasure in quite different ways than the "dissolution" or loss that Marshall studies. Kruzner demonstrates instances of penetration of the self by other individuals and by language, where the results are self-enhancing or salutary in unexpected ways, and, conversely, where solidity of the self's bounds brings isolation and alienation. When he moves beyond models of selfhood based on an "either/or" view of the self as solid and autonomous or completely effaced, his work comes in line with my own methodology; I approach the texts I have selected with a view to locate possibilities for compromise, for shared agency, or empowered selves through identification and alignment with others of various kinds.

The hesitancy with which people might have viewed the "enclosed" self can also be understood through powerful and sometimes positive models put forward to them involving ways of being-together with others or another, and this idea informs my view. One ideal came from the idea of the mutual sharing of self with another of equal rank and qualities, as Shannon shows in her discussion of (same-sex) friendship in *Sovereign Amity*. In its ability to enhance the self through "doubling," as Shannon demonstrates, and allow for "trespass" of the self by the other, friendship constituted "an intersubjective paradigm" in the era (14). Discussing the "one soul in two bodies" motif, Shannon argues for its force as an "experimental generation of bodies, at one time both reconfiguring the bodies of individual subjects and forming a 'corporate' body or micropolity with complex relations to the state" (17). Friendship as it was construed at the time presented a "thought experiment generating new positions and modalities for both the formation of persons and the public institutions of government, [and it] operates rhetorically to

construct agentive subjects and respondent kings” (22). The empowerment offered by friendship appears in its discourses as an act of one’s merging with another, and as spatially enlarging and enhancing the self, in the kind of material conceptualisation typical of the period, as discussed above. I attempt to locate where this kind of sharing of subjectivity is occurring, as writers write their experiences of self and other.

Other “distortions” of the body denote its domination or substantiation through the individual’s relationship with another unequal in status, which I find is another compelling pattern that conveys ideas about the self. Shannon argues that heterosexual love could not be figured as equivalent to (male) same-sex friendship, as a connection between equals, because of the disparity between the sexes in terms of value and characterisation. However, I find that desire for the female beloved and intense emotional connection to her does appear to be expressed, at times, in similar terms—as a transference or displacement of the self into another, as an experience of the “two-in-one” relationship, in the images in use during the period. Early modern speakers use the language of shared subjectivity, describing the beloved as their “other self,” for example, as Antonie and Cleopatra do in Mary Sidney’s play *The Tragedy of Antonie*. Love is unsettling, akin to the threats of violence or the use of physical or political force against the self, and those who experience it might speak of a self that is trapped, like Sidney’s Antonie, caught in “a web of allurements,” and so, deprived of sovereignty over himself. The Petrarchan lover, too, uses the terminology of subjection, of slavery, to characterise his experience of himself in relation to the female other, or, as in Wroth’s sonnet sequence, the reversal of these gendered positions. One’s borders are destabilised in these visions of loss of self-definition and autonomy, but not always with ultimately debilitating results.

Other boundary-bending experiences are inscribed in understandings of formal relationships of inequality such as the one between husband and wife, or between mistress/master and servant. In these cases, the dominant person subsumes the other, as the law of “coverture” expressed and biblical precedent set out for the marital arrangement, as Frances Dolan shows in *Marriage and Violence* (2008). Servants, too, were encouraged to direct themselves according to the wishes and opinions of their social superiors. George Pettie’s translation of Steven Guazzo, for example, reads as follows: “Let the servaunte also conforme all his thoughtes and doinges to the will and pleasure of his Mayster, and to tie the Asse (as they say) where his maister will have him tyed, without any contradiction” (qtd. in Magnusson 56). In both these cases, the subservient party (those *subordinate* or *subject* to others, according to the *OED*, 1.b) remained “open” to the power of the dominant, but it was also understood that he or she could be bolstered and empowered through association with one holding more authority. James Knowles discusses this dynamic in the scope of political relations in the monarch’s circle of advisors: Knowles points to the ever-smaller, ever-more-distantly interior rooms or “closets” of the royal household in which the monarch could withdraw for “privacy,” a term which often meant speaking with an intimate other, such as a secretary or counsellor (11). Knowles explains the effects of new architectural practices that allowed for further development of interior spaces:

The royal closet carried particular resonances since it represented the pinnacle of power. During the Tudor period the separation of Chamber and Privy chamber created a withdrawn space in which the monarch lived, surrounded by nobles who acted as personal servants and who, by virtue of their propinquity to the monarch’s semi-divine aura, acted as royal substitutes on diplomatic missions and state business ... Royal palaces were

constructed with a hierarchy of rooms, which required the gradual exclusion of larger numbers of people the closer to the monarch they were. (11)

As Knowles points out, in the “politics of intimacy, where closeness marked favour,” these rooms corresponded to the degree of authority one could access, through one’s relation to the monarch. The material and representational blend together, as they so often do in early modern culture: in the royal household, “[p]roximity symbolised power: proximity was power” (11). The monarch and the members of his or her administration comprised a model that could figure in other relationships beyond the “rooms” of the monarch’s purview.

My study relies on an awareness of the common early modern practice of intertwining or multiplying levels of meaning, and obscuring the division between imagined and material space, of which Knowles’s discussion gives a meaningful example. Just as we see with the links between the home and the female body, above, or the nation and the body—again, particularly the female body—and those between the “closet” and the locus of political power, the term *privacy* was used in the era to indicate the interiors or inside of both the architectural, physical world and the mental or spiritual self, as Hackel explains in her investigation of women’s reading practices: “‘Private’ is opposed to ‘public’ in this discussion, but ‘private’ doubles as a signifier of both the inner self and the domestic sphere” (*Reading Material* 36). As opposed to the public, politically active citizen, the “private subject” was “anyone not occupying a place or room in the architecture of offices understood to embody government” (22). In Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke Named the Governour*, Shannon notes, the holding of public office conferred a status that “takes various names: honor, worship, *office*, greatness, ‘*room*,’ or *place*” (10, emphasis added). This was an important distinction in a culture whose concern with “place” provoked a proliferation of books and tracts that attempted taxonomies to sort out relationships and to offer advice for

appropriate behaviour between individuals in various positions—in addition to the letter-writing treatises mentioned above. Elyot's was one, as was Barnabe Barnes's *Four Bookes of Offices* (1606), amid many others that counselled servants, women, and ambitious men on deportment and manners suited to particular occasions. Indeed, we read in these texts the blending of symbolic and material in the numerous terms denoting size, position, and space, which both of these titles suggest, so that it was understood that language describing one area translated the concerns of another. This idea informs my argument that women's writing about space and place was also about the self, and had the power to position and put forward the self in important ways.

My premise is not that women consciously set out to establish their subjectivity through their writing, but that the textual material by, or attributed to, women can tell us about the subjectivities that were emerging with the changing social, economic, and political conditions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Such a view does not preclude the notion, however, that they were motivated by a self-conscious desire to assert themselves as individuals and creators, or that perhaps they felt impelled to do so by a sense of the power of cultural discourses to prevent their accessing "selves," and they resisted these limitations. What led them to write, and to share their work—whether in letters, or in manuscript form to circulate among their peers and families, or in print, on the "open" market—is suggested in their writing itself, and their stated purposes include the sense of responsibility to others, the desire to take part in political affairs and to connect with their peers, the pleasure they derived from artistic production, and the desire to defend themselves and others from perceived threats of various kinds. But the social conditions of textual production meant that many of their efforts—although not all—would invite censure, because of the connection between speech and a woman's virtue. The idea of a woman speaking or moving freely in social spaces invited the view of her body as shared with

others, as “commonly held”; indeed, the words of the chorus in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* could apply to an early modern woman as easily as to one in the era of Caesar Augustus: “in a wife it is no worse to finde / A common body, then a common mind” (3.3.1248-9). While I am not claiming that women set about in their writing at this point with the intention of constructing their own subjectivities, I do argue that they sought ways of adding “weight,” another term of space and substance, to their words, to persuade others of what they said.

When we employ the term “woman” we invoke a category we now understand as fraught with difficulties. Judith Butler helpfully gives an overview of the problems that have arisen over defining women and gender since Simone de Beauvoir first pointed out the myth that sex and gender roles are “natural” (Butler 8-11). Subsequent arguments have problematized the assumption that women can speak in the signifying economy that is defined by and representative of men only. De Beauvoir puts forward the idea of woman as traditionally conceived as the “other” of masculine identity, and representative not of woman’s sex or gender as it (or she) really is; by default, woman is a category of lack and alterity. Butler reminds us of Luce Irigaray’s argument that women actually fall outside of the symbolic economy or the phallogocentrism that describes the language and culture. In this system, the masculine is defined as a unified subject, standing out against the feminine, which, Irigaray contends, is the sex that “is not one” but many (Irigaray 26); but this view calls for a critique in its blindness to the possibilities that multiplicity offers for the speaking subject. Rather than seeing woman always as lack, or even as complete absence, unable to represent herself in writing, my view of women and writing allows for multiplicity in terms of voice, and for nuanced responses, and lets me qualify parts of the psychological view that distinguishes male subjectivity so strikingly from that of the female. Thus, the psychic manoeuvres traceable in the texts written by or associated

with women must not always be read as a compensation, written from the position of “other.” This latter category proves too polarized, while a more complex model offers a broader understanding of the degrees and varieties of relations between the speaker and those she speaks both of and to. My study takes up the possibilities for selves and positions those writers—designated women and so treated by their societies—experience and occupy by dint of their assigned sex, which involve a response to the forms of oppression that circumscribed their lives.

Butler points out further problematic aspects of the category of “woman,” because of the diversity that must be encompassed within it. As she says,

If one ‘is’ a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered ‘person’ transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (3)

We could add literacy, as another component exemplifying the obvious existence of other “divisions” between women. Butler shows the unfittingness of the term “woman” to represent radically different positions, but also the political futility of attempting to represent “women,” when a necessarily exclusionary process of identification takes place in order to do so.

Importantly, women are also distinguished from one another by the diversity they demonstrate as far as their possession of “feminine” traits and a uniquely and unified feminine subjectivity; as Roxanne J. Fand notes of developments in feminist criticism, in the celebration of characteristics judged to be feminine,

[feminist critics] have failed to make them available to men or to claim masculine virtues for women. Furthermore, it seems that fixed gender identities, even if assigned equal values, are becoming increasingly untenable since “essential” traits of one gender or the other are readily observed in individual persons of both sexes, deconstructing any unified gender subject-positions in them. (22)

But again, I proceed with the assumption that to the extent that women are treated as a category, and assigned a role and identity, their designation as “women” indicates a similarity, to at least some extent, in the set of conditions under which they must operate, and therefore in the limits and possibilities for how they might find access to authority.¹³

Recent approaches to early modern women’s writing take into account these complexities in terms of gender categories and subjectivity, and also encourage me to recognise new insights into ideas about authorship and writing itself. Jennifer Summit’s *Lost Property* (2000), for example, dissects the notion of a “lack” of women’s writing in the English literary canon, and argues that the criteria for the assessment of texts has privileged male writers, at the historical moments—the nineteenth century, an important one of these—when the creation of that canon became an urgent, cultural concern. Further, the existence of texts by “women writers”—as complex as that category is now understood to be—is never in doubt during the early modern period, but, as she shows, male editors and commentators attempted to assume control over it for cultural reasons; Richard Braithwaite, for example, acknowledges in the seventeenth century that women write, and withholds judgment of the content of their writing but credits their modesty with keeping these materials out of the hands of the public (2). Autobiographical narratives of

¹³ Toril Moi argues for this stance in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (13). Similarly, Rita Felski points to the importance of the subject in feminist criticism, “not in terms of an appeal to an essential female self, but in the recognition that women’s positioning within existing social, familiar, and ideological structures differs fundamentally from that of men in distinct although often varied ways, and that emancipation of women requires an examination of the nature and implications of such differences” (qtd. in Fand 24).

religious women such as Margery Kempe and the Protestant women martyrs that Anne Askew numbers among were appropriated and shaped by editors and commentators to suit the purposes of these men's religious aims and political exigencies (139). Summit's study casts the status of women's writing as the outcome of a struggle for authority over cultural definition, and seeks out women's relationships to the material conditions under which many texts were produced, to redefine their roles as participants in literary culture. With her observations in mind, we can read any continued appraisals of women's writing as "marginal"—even in well-meaning attempts to critique their texts for some merit—as keeping up a tradition of devaluing their work, as Suzanne Trill argues (195-201). Editors Caroline Bicks and Jennifer Summit, for example, begin their recent essay collection *The History of British Women's Writing, 1500-1610* (2013) by stating their intent to discover the multiple ways women took part in literary culture, not only as writers, but as readers, printers, booksellers, patrons, and collaborators, among others. At this point, scholars like Bicks and Summit are able to extend their view of the various ways women could be involved in textual production and consumption because of new information becoming available through digitalised archival material and research, including the "recovery" of many texts of all kinds by women, including household accounts, lists, diaries, and letters, and because of changing attitudes about the kinds of documents and practices that constitute "reading," "writing," and literacy (1). This array of representational forms available to early modern "consumers" (of all kinds) reminds me, as well, to consider questions of audience expectation according to genre; how early modern people might have distinguished between these forms adds suggestively to how meaning is produced in each piece I examine. The voices in the texts I selected for close examination express resistance to, or the desire to reshape, social formations that affect them, but my choices are not meant to devalue the contributions to the period's

culture by writers less interested in dissent; women's writing on domestic matters, such as "Mother's Advice Books," as Trill points out, must be included in any project aiming to restore women's voices of the era. With this helpful perspective in mind, I situate the texts in my study and the women associated with them in the wider culture of literary practices, and "writing as a broad social field" (Bicks and Summit 1). In doing so, I find support for my focus on the social, dialogic aspects of the literature, and I read these women's texts within and amid the often busy, populated cultural "spaces" of literary culture, sacred and profane, public and private, including the street and the market, the closets and quarters of the household, the church and its extended "playing stages," and the other "theatres" in which their work and their lives took place.

Recent studies like Bicks' and Summit's *History* allow us to see various kinds of involvement women could have with the written word, and point to one aspect of the idea of "writing back" in this chapter's title. Resonating with my themes, and helpfully suggesting women's propensity to respond to cultural discourses on a variety of issues, is the orientation of early modern readers towards critical engagement with their texts. Scholarship on Renaissance reading practices shows that these were dialogic in nature, making the text a site of exchange and debate in the construction of culture and those who "made it up," in the sense that readers and writers both created it and were its constituents. In *Textual Conversations in the Renaissance* (2006), for example, Zachary Lesser and Benedict Robinson note the "two-way" conversations that took place between text and reader:

... the humanists did not merely read the ancients, they responded to them—sometimes, as in Petrarch's case, quite literally [in his letters addressed to writers of the classical era].

And, as anyone who has glanced at the margins of early modern books sees immediately, Petrarch was far from the only reader who "wrote back" to his authors; indeed, humanist

educational principles and philological techniques provided readers with a complex set of tools—annotation, commonplacing, glossing, cross-referencing—for enabling conversations with texts. (1-2)

Discourse offered—and at times forcefully insisted on—versions of who women were, and access to the authority over those discourses was difficult for women to wrest control of; but perhaps encouraged by the interactive nature of textual involvement, women used the education they had—formal and otherwise—to engage with texts, and so to “write back” to them, expanding and commenting on them, drawing attention to certain points and marking passages for future reference, and potentially adding their interpretations and revisions to the original version. In the sense that she might amend the view of women, as a corrective measure, the woman writer also “wrote back to” the women who were represented in the texts by men, with the potentially salutary effect of enlarging the space it was possible for real women to occupy.

My title is a nod, as well, to the project undertaken by scholars of post-colonialism in *The Empire Writes Back*, who also draw on Salman Rushdie’s phrase, to enact resistance to and *revisioning* (to borrow Adrienne Rich’s term) of the misrepresentation and negation of the other in a different context. Women learned who they were, or who they were imagined to be, in relation to others, not only through written text but through the orally transmitted discourse they were exposed to in various typical settings, such as sermons in church, songs and other street performances, political propaganda and advertisements in the marketplace, shared Bible readings in the household, and other entertainments in their social gatherings. These real-world transmissions of value-laden communication not only acted to subject them through often-misogynist directives, but allowed them to pick up on the rhetorical possibilities open to them in critically engaging with social strictures.

The study of background material in the form of historical documents and artefacts expands our knowledge of the early modern period, as does contextualizing literary texts by linking them to each other and to other documents and practices, such as theoretical tracts, sermons, and educational and conduct literature. I draw on some of this material and observations coming out of it, in the manner of the “textual conversations” that take place between particular literary pieces in Lesser and Robinson’s anthology. Katherine Larson’s exploration of the gendering of conversation during the period and the way writers drew on the conventions and expectations of homosocial and cross-gendered verbal exchange informs my study, as well; but while Larson focuses on the “safety” of private spaces—materially or imaginatively created—for conversing, I maintain a view of the feminine subject at times in alliance with her interlocutor, as Larson does, but at other times in unsafe, even hostile relation to him. While some women writers, such as Mary Sidney, may have anticipated a favourable response for their work, others, such as Elizabeth Cary, appealed to their audience, but could not be sure of the reception they would find—and had to expect a mixed reaction. Others are distanced from the texts associated with them to the extent that the idea of “authorial intention” is severely complicated by questions of editorial and cultural positioning, such as Anne Askew’s testimony, encompassed within the male-conceived collection that was so consciously shaped for particular political ends; or the circulation of a pamphlet in a marketplace wide enough to elicit a variety of responses and interpretations among the diversity of its readers. The depictions of interaction among speakers in these early modern texts present rhetorical dynamics, as well as the “extra-textual” dialogues that take place between writer and audience, suggesting that we have more to learn about the self “in conversation” with a diverse set of possible “others,” and how women might deal with these in strategic ways.

I began my project by putting together for my purposes a kind of *miscellany*—like the published collections of sonnets, songs, poems or sayings popular in early modern England, such as *Songes and Sonnettes* (1557), otherwise known as (Richard) *Tottel's Miscellany*, *A Mirrour for Magistrates* (1559), and *The Monument of Matrons* (1582), an anthology constructed by Thomas Bentley for the stated purpose of fostering virtue and devotion in women, especially.¹⁴ With this collection of texts and the critical background I outline above, I examine, through close readings, the ways in which gendered bodies and voices are represented across the genres. As noted in the introduction, my first text under consideration is Anne Askew's autobiographical account, or what can be termed her *memoir* according to the distinctions Peter Heehs's makes among first-person narrative forms;¹⁵ reproducing a dialogue, recalled by the narrator, between distinct, situated speakers, the *Examinations* offer a fruitful place to start in an analysis of the discourses at the disposal of the writer, and the way these are used along with the spaces and objects incorporated into the scenes of rhetorical exchange. Likewise, the issues involved in the construction of subjectivity and its relation to bodily space and boundaries come across vividly in the defences of women published as commercial pamphlets. Among the concerns that appear in these documents, these speakers challenge men's assumed right to physical control of women's bodies—whether through sexual dominance or through men's control of the space women could occupy, or through textual “possession.” A different set of readers, but one nevertheless potentially diverse in their responses, could be expected for the more personal and private realm of women's lives depicted in lyric poetry by women. Lady Mary Wroth and

¹⁴ In his dedication, Bentley makes this intent clear, claiming his aim to relate the histories of exemplary figures “for to register their so rare and excellent monuments, of good record, as perfect presidents of pietie and godlinesse in woman kind to all posteritie” (qtd. in Demers 6).

¹⁵ Heehs sets out some interesting definitions for the purposes of clarity, noting the difference between a diary, which consists of “separate entries retelling recent events and relating the person's opinions and emotions and often organized by dates,” a memoir, “a retrospective narrative about a portion of the subject's life up to the time of writing,” and autobiography, which is “a long memoir, covering most of the writer's life” (6).

Aemelia Lanyer substantiate their subjectivity using particular strategies in the way they address specific others. Lanyer's tribute to her employer and companion, Margaret Clifford, invites examination of the relationship she evokes in the piece, through her language of praise and deference, relation and proximity. Wroth's lengthy and artistically resplendent rendering of her speaker's immersion in lovesickness and despair offers a unique and clever response—a "writing back," we might say—to the mostly male sonneteers who had written so prolifically two and three decades before, when the Petrarchan-inspired sonnet had been in fashion. The organising topos of the labyrinth calls up issues of space and place in the sonnet sequence, and the many questionably present features, beings, and objects offer intriguing suggestions about the subjectivities she is constructing in the poem. The concern with subjectivity, with self and other, appears strikingly in women's closet drama of the period, as well. The genre allowed women writers to present different perspectives through their characters, and to show how relationships shape the selves who occupy the stage—actual or mentally conjectured. Mary Sidney Herbert and Elizabeth Cary both took up Senecan drama, which features questions of how the self can be defined. Mary Wroth's pastoral drama and Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley's Civil War-era play balance out this section with comedic treatments of characters in conflict with potential romantic partners. In all of these pieces, the conflict is directly linked with liaisons and mistrust, to how the characters deal with their anxieties about their romantically designated other, with whom they would share intimate space, and the boundaries around themselves as individuals as well as within close relationships of love and friendship.

In all of these texts, women—as writers, speakers, and created personae—actively engage the discursive tools at hand, rendering, consciously or otherwise, self and other in rhetorically and psychically constructed space. The creation of intimacy or distance, through the tools of

objects, space, and language together, offers an important testimony to the writers' ability to forge and shape interpersonal connections and, at the same time, build and substantiate the self through their relations with the other. The letter penned by Elizabeth Caldwell at the start of this introduction is one example of such negotiation with these boundaries. Knowing that her letter could be read not just by her husband, Elizabeth Caldwell took the opportunity to turn public opinion in her favour, despite her acknowledgement of guilt. And like Caldwell, these other writers address an audience greater in number than the sometimes-single addressee whom they name or imply, because of the complex network of discourses and textual consumption practices in which their writing is embedded. The dialogic elements of writing allowed women, whether their texts portray two or more speakers or remains focused on a single subject, the opportunity to communicate with others, to depict ideal conditions, to protest against unjust arrangements, and to "write themselves" through the manipulation of cultural and rhetorical codes and spaces. Language had real, "material" effects in early modern culture, and because words were situated firmly within the material world, and were so closely related to social order, as Parker makes clear, writers dealt with the material spaces and objects through which individuals were defined, in order to access agency for themselves and their personae.

Chapter Two

“Centered on the Word”: Reading, Writing, and “Re-forming” the Subject

Through a Pious Woman’s Body and Speech

The first-person account of Anne Askew’s interrogations and torture on the rack, before her execution at the stake for her reformed beliefs, very near the end of Henry VIII’s reign, offers readers a text striking for its strong female voice and the confident, devout persona who inhabits the narrative. Indeed, the young gentlewoman who ostensibly writes the tracts comprising the *Examinations*—the *First* and the *Latter*, published together—and two poems in connection to her persecutions, in the early days of the Protestant movement, comes across as an authentic-sounding and indefatigable presence. Yet, the strategies represented through Askew’s exchanges with the powerful men of London, which convey the impression of her firm sense of her subjectivity, must be studied with the knowledge of the processes of intervention and negotiation contributing to the text’s production, as critics have recently pointed out; we must note the conflicting forces involved in the publication of her text, and the political wills at work to shape both its contents and its reception.

I begin by situating her text in historical, editorial, and generic terms, and then turn, with this framework in mind, to the rhetorical interaction between Askew and her interlocutors, and its representation of the (gendered) struggle for authority that is presented in the text. The speakers’ “positioning” of themselves is an important part of the message of the text, and I also consider the spaces and objects involved in the scenes of dialogue, as well as those outside, but relevant to, the text, seeing the expedience of reading the discursive in conjunction with the material details, for discovering how particular kinds of subjectivity are being limned.

In this aim, I include in my discussion a number of sites of action and features of the material world that figure significantly in the *Examinations*.¹⁶ I find it worthwhile to look at how “the book” resonates in different contexts: within (and beyond) Askew’s narrative is the Bible and its disputed meanings, the book by John Frith that changes hands between Askew and her questioner during the interrogations, and “extra-textually” is the *Book of Martyrs*, in which her account is printed. Within this last book, the woodcuts that belong to her narrative—the robed image of her alone, holding a Bible, and the crowded scene of her execution—provide signs, to readers, of a newly forming Protestant subject. Especially significant is the object at the centre of Askew’s clash with the orthodox authorities: the bread of the sacrament of the Eucharist. As the “body” of Christ, it figures into my investigation of body and object, as do the locations at which “bodies”—sites of meaning-making themselves—are active. Indeed, the female body figures importantly as a sign of the church, the Bride of Christ and the community of His followers, set against the unchaste female body of the “papist” religion, and the problematic boundaries of the body signal importantly in the definition of the subject. Also significant is the “space” of Foxe’s collection, in which Askew was “placed” between and among *others*—in dialogue with them—and her location in Bale’s own canonical writings, as one of his gendered prototypes for the emerging Protestant subject. Such placement gives the woman martyr the authority to speak, and write, which were fraught undertakings in a culture in which notions of feminine identity were bound up with silence. Summit argues, for example, in looking at Bale’s investment and interest in Askew’s case, that the text participates in his “task of fashioning ‘the woman writer’ and that

¹⁶ I am taking a slightly different direction in the study of “material culture” than scholars like Catherine Richardson and Tara Hamling and the contributors to their anthology *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Culture and Its Meanings* (2010). My interest is in the material contents and scenes of production of the text; in their work, they begin with artefacts and the preserved items from the past rather than texts.

of fashioning English literary history [which] came together as preeminent sites for the Protestant redefinition of the English past” (*Lost Property* 140). These are all areas where subjectivity and authority are being negotiated, and where numerous voices are in dialogue. When considered with the editorial process, the ideas and details of body and space help to situate the *Examinations* suggestively in wider social developments, in connection with the religious movement in which they take part.

“*Is not the name of Christe as precious nowe as then?*” (Foxe 6)

We can understand these grand-scale undertakings in observing the history and ideologies of the men involved in publicising Askew’s testimony. Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman trace the careers of Bale and Foxe, and the beginning of their relationship as comrades and collaborators after they met in the household of an aristocratic Protestant sympathiser, the Duchess of Richmond. Bale had returned from his first of two exiles on the Continent, upon Edward VI’s succession to the throne, with his completed texts, the *Image of Both Churches* and two martyrologies—the narratives of Askew and the early fifteenth-century Lollard knight Sir John Oldcastle. Foxe drew on these works to shape his Protestant view and the *Book of Martyrs*—its first edition in 1563 and the much-expanded versions of 1570, 1576 and 1583. A significant point put forward by Bale and picked up and developed by Foxe, Megan Hickerson shows, is the notion of rewriting religious history according to a new vision, and the *Book of Martyrs* was the major text in this project. Indeed, Foxe is quite clear about his intentions, as one sees immediately upon opening the *Acts and Monuments*. In the first pages (after the Latin Preface), he explains his purpose and method, framing his comments in a Preface addressed to reigning Queen Elizabeth: he models himself on the Roman Eusebius, bishop under Constantine, who sought out “the names, sufferinges, and actes, of all such as suffered in al that

time of persecution before, for the testimonie and faith of Christ Iesus” (5).¹⁷ He tells her he intends to “compare tyme with tyme, place with place,” and suggests she has been sent by God to end the suffering of the persecuted Protestants, in the same way the earlier Emperor was (6). In the manner characteristic of reformers, Foxe, as a teller of this new history, consults the scriptures directly for his overview, particularly *The Book of Revelation* and its prophecies, as “an outline of church history” (Hickerson 18). The trajectory culminates with the overthrow of the old, “false” institution and the victory of the true church. Bale’s *Image*, printed in parts just around the time of Askew’s trials, gives a version of such a revision, presenting the two churches—the old and the new—in stark contrast, in the gendered bodies of the Virgin and Whore, the latter representing the Antichrist (24). Hickerson emphasises the early modern propensity to explain the world and accredit the things in it with value through examples of what these things were *not*, through “inversion, contrariety, and opposition” (25), and it is through representations of women, whose bodies were so strongly marked for virtue or sin, that Bale could convey the disparity between the true and the false religions. To have virtuous women among the writers and martyrs of the persecuted church was particularly efficacious and necessary, even, because of the way gender is implicated in its representation.

The integral role someone like Askew could play in Bale and Foxe’s aims suggests their motivations in including and—perhaps or perhaps not importantly—in amending her text to suit the purpose at hand. Thomas Freeman and Sarah Wall’s work on the piece and its early modern editors call into question the viability of taking it as a simple transliteration of Askew’s written testimony into print. Freeman and Wall argue, for a number of reasons, that Foxe moulded and cast the *Examinations* in particular ways, despite his publication of the text without the copious annotations Bale had woven into it, and they believe Foxe should be considered “her

¹⁷ I refer here and elsewhere to the 1563 version.

collaborator, her mediator, her shaper” (1168). Among these reasons, the absence of a surviving copy of Askew’s original, hand-written document is significant for Freeman and Wall (1169). They also cite Bale’s emphatic and repeated insistence on the authenticity of Askew’s writing of the text as suspicious, and note the criticism of bishop Stephen Gardiner—who took part in Askew’s interrogations—regarding the accuracy of the account. The critics point to discrepancies between probable sources (Bale’s, for one) and Foxe’s version to suggest that Foxe had a heavy hand in the production of the *Examinations* (1170).

Other critics contribute to this perspective, as well. Hickerson, too, suggests Foxe’s “creativity” in presenting the experiences of his personae, and she gives the example of his “dramatization” of an episode involving Henry and Katherine Parr; here, Foxe “describes a series of events and a long dialogue” between them, which, Hickerson sees, “is surely an invention” (14). Ross Bartlett notes the “monotonous” repetition of the same verbal and dramatic patterns in Foxe’s accounts in the martyrology (721), which adds to the idea that Askew’s voice reaches us only indirectly: we can speculate that the “dialogue” she reports could have been greatly embellished, or even completely fabricated, or that Askew was so familiar with the reformed “scripts” that she put them into play with alacrity during her trials or later, when she recounted the proceedings; her likely connections at court suggest that she was well aware of an overarching vision and what political elements were involved in its dissemination. While the events of her life that the *Examinations* trace are verified by historical record, the details of her interrogations remain in dispute.

However, if we no longer seek a pure, unadulterated, “intentional” statement from a clearly identified, autonomous individual, neither do we want to deny the historical Askew the degree of agency and volition that she was able to exercise, however impossible that is to

determine. One way of viewing these difficulties is Lynn Staley's approach to the well-known earlier figure of Margery Kempe, in which Staley divides the historical, authorial "Kempe" from "Margery," the constructed "subject" of her text (3). While the idea of the separation between historical and textual women is helpful to keep in mind for Askew's text, too, I do so but avoid the distinguishing monikers, as I think they create the impression of too neat a split; the coincidence of self and text may be fleeting or sporadic, even nonexistent, but I think it should be kept in view. Further, the idea of the two distinct women suggests that only one is constructed, while the "real" person "behind" the text can be identified as an autonomous, unified individual.¹⁸ Instead, we can approach the *Examinations* with this shaping process in mind, for the model the text offers for a (female) Protestant subject. Even if her readers, as Hickerson points out, sought out her text "for her *confession*, not her gendered subjectivity" (56), it simultaneously provided them with the material for an identity strengthened—and expressing itself in particular ways—against adversity and effacement, in Christ. When we talk about "Askew," then, it is with the understanding that she and her text are the products of much shaping by cultural and editorial forces.

Bartlett's point about the similarity of rhetorical scripts and maneuvers contained in the martyrology is an intriguing one. As Hickerson notes, the repetition in the accounts of the martyrs is part of the project of constructing the new Protestant community, and in this process, the *Book of Martyrs* provides "through its presentation of the martyrs as well as the variety of documents linked to them – letters, articles, interrogations – an extensive 'dialogue' among those inside the community and against those outside" (6). The potential of this dialogue—which

¹⁸ I understand that this is not Staley's intention, nor does she understand Margery Kempe the way I describe as problematic. However, one difference, of many, between Askew's and Kempe's texts is that Askew uses the first-person point of view and Kempe the third-, which, to me, makes the distinction between narrator and "author" less-obviously efficacious.

figures into my concerns in helpful ways—depended upon some repetition in aspects of the martyrs’ experiences, if it played a significant part in constructing the individuals that comprised that community, as Hickerson and others attest (6). Bartlett observes the consistency of the accounts in the *Acts and Monuments*, which take up “the finer points of doctrine and belief, not once but many times” (777). The purpose is “to anchor those doctrinal points firmly in the believer’s mind,” Bartlett speculates, adding the possibility that “a Tudor audience enjoyed the working out of theological and legal questions” (777). The materials thus available “form a ready reference or commonplace book for the reader who can claim no theological sophistication yet can find there, in clear and eloquent terms, the scriptural and historical grounds for his or her faith” (777). His remarks suggest a connection to the building of a Protestant subject through the details of the text, which offered the theoretical scripts to describe that subject. Her memoir fits into this set of models available for self-construction.

Repetition of other aspects, besides the points of scriptural interpretation, serves a deeper purpose, in Marshall’s analysis of the possible effects of the martyrology on its readers. Prefacing her conclusions with an in-depth explanation of the innate masochism in the human psyche, she shows that audiences seek out dramatisations and artistic depictions of suffering and annihilation, and that these experiences are formative of the subject. Exposure to the accounts of violence and the destruction of the person instigate a similar process of dissolution in the audience, according to Marshall’s psychoanalytic investigation. She argues that the portrayals of terrible pain actually keep readers returning to the text, and she arrives at the conclusion that “Foxe’s text offers a form of sadism *avant la lettre*—a pleasure derived from the three interlocking dialectics of (de)valuing the flesh, promoting/erasing individuality, and strategically collapsing the domains of word and deed” (102). Connecting the experience of reading and that

of actually going through the horrific torments of the martyrs, the idea of the porosity of the body contributes to the notion that readers went through a matching process of un-making, and a subsequent re-making, in their resort to the Protestant community (and its newly understood relationship to divine power) for their new self-definition. As Marshall asserts, “devotion could provide a necessary defense against the horrific spectacle of individual disintegration. Foxe, in other words, sought to shatter readers” in offering them intense confrontation with the spectacle of pain and the suffering body of the martyr, thereby “motivating their embrace of the protective identity of Christian faith” (99). The nature of the “new” identity was conveyed in Foxe’s numerous narratives, which resembled one another in crucial ways, including their subjects’ demonstrations of obedience and disobedience to specific authoritative “others,” and the verbal dexterity of some of the victims, including the speaker in the *Examinations*. Marshall offers a compelling explanation for the popularity of the martyrology, although I suspect perhaps not all of her readers were drawn equally enthusiastically to the breaking-down of identity that she dwells on. That the collective identity offered in the “new” religion—a different collective or communal identity than that provided by Catholic tradition—appealed to followers is clear, and Marshall helps us understand why that is; but in a system that also appealed to believers for its emphasis on individual interpretation, surely the heroism and possibly even the individualism of a figure like Askew would offer a role model who went to her death only reluctantly. As Knott notes, above, there are other aspects of the text that people could “enjoy,” so that people did not necessarily focus on the gruesome aspect that concerns Marshall.

The pattern that makes these speakers stand out significantly against the often-passive and unlearned saints of Catholic martyrology, according to Knott, is the erudition with which they dispatch the challenges to their beliefs (723). Askew’s report is no exception in this respect,

and may strike us as astonishing for the female speaker's boldness in the face of the danger her opponents pose. Her educated ripostes and handling of her interlocutors' questions illustrate the extent to which the Reformation was a shaking-up of the established order, and an analysis of her dialogue shows a negotiation of positioning and spatial manipulation, that brings across the shape and nature of the agentive Protestant subject.

The contributing forces coming together in the publication of the *Examinations* colour our interpretation of certain facts of the narrative. Askew's biographical sketch helps to shed light on the part her text plays in the crucial developments of the Reformation. In this setting of political and cultural crisis, the historical Askew was born into a prominent family in the troublesome Lincolnshire district—an area notable for its resistance to Henry's policies involving both religious and political points of contention. Her father, a knight and Member of Parliament, had taken part in acts of protest against some of these points, and her brother and other relatives had positions within the administration aligning them with the reformed faction. When the tensions involving Askew's reformed beliefs began to come to a head, she was a twenty-five-year-old mother, unhappily married to William Kyme, to whom she had been coerced into marrying. Askew's arraignment and torture are obviously linked to her alleged affiliations with the ladies in the inner circle of Katherine Parr, who was known to have leanings towards the reformed line of thought, and the instability of the divided royal administration in Henry's last years. David Loewenstein locates Askew's narrative in the "culture of heresy-hunting" (70) that he says characterised the years surrounding her persecution: her treatment at the hands of the authorities centred on disputed views regarding the "real presence" in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and with her racking, her interrogators hoped to extract the names of

those in the court with whom she associated through the new religion—those who held similar interpretations of this and other key points.

The events of the last part of her life are documented in a number of official sources, biographer Elaine Beilin confirms, and they come across in the writing Askew left behind. Expelled “vyolently” from her home by her husband (Beilin xix) for her acceptance of reformed beliefs, she travelled to London, where she was easily accessible to authorities who suspected her of heresy. The fact of her separation from her husband, even though it was instigated by Kyme, put her at a political and social disadvantage, with the anxieties women produced when not under the control of an appropriately designated male, and even in terms of the new ideology, with its onus on marriage as compulsory; indeed, the incidence of women “disobeying” their husbands, and leaving them over the differences in their spiritual affiliations was common enough to attract concern and comment from Foxe and Bale, as Freeman and Wall note. According to Beilin, although there is some difficulty dating the events of her narrative and the text, her interrogations seem to have taken place over the course of 1545 and ’46 (xx). The *First Examination* covers Askew’s arrest and questioning by a “quest” or official council at the Guildhall (Saddlers’) by the lord mayor and ecclesiastic officials of London, her imprisonment in the Counter (a prison under city governance), the attempts by her cousin Brittain to obtain her release through providing bail, then her further interrogation, her forced recantation, and her subsequent release. The *Latter Examination* relates her experience of re-arrest, two days of questioning by the King’s council at Greenwich, her imprisonment at Newgate, her racking in the Tower of London, and conversations she has with some of the authorities between periods of active torture. Closing out the narrative, Foxe supplies readers with information about her execution, at Smithfield, on July 16 of that year. She was burned at the stake along with three others—John Lassells, John

Hemley (a priest), and John Hadham—who were likewise condemned for their “heretical” beliefs. The interactions recorded as Askew’s experiences are situated in this political and textual context.

Because the rhetorical tactics displayed in the interrogations have been analysed at length by a number of critics (Beilin and Sonderberg, among others), I select a few key instances of exchange rather than giving a full reading of every detail. In doing so, I avoid repeating what they have observed, and instead bring into view some of the intricacies of politeness and its spatial effects on positioning, the “others” that are evoked and brought into play, and what and how these exchanges and their contexts signal to readers. Askew’s first words put her in a situation with Christopher Dare, her first examiner and a member of the “quest,” and set out some of the parameters and positioning of their relationship. The circumstances place her under duress, as she must answer to reports of her misbehaviour under the dictates of the ecclesiastic bodies, which have come down from Henry’s court. As a representative of the highest earthly power, he also has claims to divine authority. The history of religious precedent and discourse *backs him*, as it does the group of educated men who hold sway in the court’s administration, and who also contribute to the weight of his word and his presence.

We can draw on the politeness theory that animates letter-writing culture of the day, as Magnusson illustrates, to explicate these rhetorical tactics in the situations that Askew finds herself in. In the system characterised by “vertical relations” in formal descriptions of its power structure, as Angel Day’s and Erasmus’s letter-writing tracts show, for example, one who was highly positioned was accorded access to those “below” him, and the power to impose on them, to “trespass” over their borders (this dynamic is perhaps most graphically exemplified in upper-class men’s sexual access to the bodies of lower-class women—qualified, as that is, in a number

of ways—which I discuss further in the next chapter). Just as formalised relations set out that a dominant person (of a certain gender and class) “subsumed” particular subordinates (such as wives and servants), an idea akin to the absorption of one part into a larger whole, so the subordinate was understood to be “open” to the dominant other, and under the compulsion to obey one socially and politically dominant, to dispose herself to the same views as one who “contained” her. An erasure of borders takes place, in Kruzner’s terms, to allow for the functioning of power at the level of individuals. This fundamental understanding of hierarchical, patriarchal power and precedent sets up an expectation that Askew’s interaction with Dare will involve the conventions of address and deference that accompany the enactment of this dynamic, specifically the acknowledgement of their respective places within these structures. Where these expectations are not fulfilled, they demonstrate for Foxe’s readers the patterns of righteous disobedience to “false” authorities, and resistance to the attempts by these authorities at trespass, that the Protestant subject can follow.

Askew’s introduction shows how she immediately takes control of the exchange that is initiated by Dare (as other critics have noted), and keeps a firm grip on her own boundaries and those between them: Dare, she says in her first sentence,

... asked if I did not beleve that the sacrament hanginge over the alttar was the very body of Christ really. Then I demaunded this question of him.

Wherefore S. Steven was stoned to death. And he sayde, he coulde not tell. Then I aunswered, that no more wolde I assoyle [settle or resolve] his vain question. (165)¹⁹

When Dare asks Askew this first question, one central to the debates of the day over biblical interpretation, he assumes the position of her superior, and posing the question carries the weight

¹⁹ I use Foxe’s version of the text as presented in Beilin’s edition of *The Examinations* (1996) unless otherwise specified.

of potential punishment, which both of them would surely have in mind; but beyond this shared understanding of the risks associated with her answer—whatever it will be—is the probing by Dare of the other’s boundaries. She defines herself as a reformed Catholic, and as such must be able to persist in her beliefs in order to maintain this self-definition. The question, then, attempts to breach the bounds of the self she has constructed; he wants access to her interior, to “see” inside her personal boundaries, to detect signs of heresy. And because of the knowledge they both share about the answer he requires, simply by asking he is exerting pressure on her to answer him a particular way, to change her inner thoughts, if necessary. If she forms her reply in accordance with the political demands of the situation, he will have impinged on her inner narrative and taken part in composing or re-asserting it according to orthodox ideology, through his imposition of ideas she does not accept. In this instance, he begins with confidence in his own boundaries of definition, and these would be reinforced through his ability to make her speech correspond with his version of the world.

Invoking the memory of the early Christian martyr,²⁰ the speaker in Askew’s narrative draws several points of the contemporary conflict together, making this exchange with her interlocutors resonate with the additional historical dimension. The introduction of this “other” into the dialogue brings another presence into the dynamics of positioning. She can substantiate herself through her connection to Saint Stephen in several ways. First, the violence of Saint Stephen’s end came about in the context of his speaking against the Jews, an “other” that Catholic tradition had utilised to a great extent in *exempla* and other writing, particularly since the “Renaissance” of the twelfth century, for self-definition (Rubin 53-7); like other elements of the competing system, such as the printing press (Summit 122), Catholic signs and technologies could be adapted for the Protestant cause, their effectiveness deriving in part from their efficacy

²⁰ The details I include about Saint Stephen’s life in this paragraph I draw from the Souvay, 2012.

in the established tradition. Catholics and Protestants alike could count Jews as convenient “others” against whom to identify themselves, with Protestants able, further, to allegorise Catholics as the despised and sinful race. Like Stephen, the one who answers Dare here is not a lone victim against powerful authorities, but a representative of another large and weighty group, elevated by the divine hand of God. Second, of helpful connotative value are Saint Stephen’s status as the first martyr and his asserting of a revised history—an alternative view, reaching back to the prominent figures of biblical history, and showing that present authorities—those in his time—are false and will be overthrown. These elements make him make him an ideal touchstone for Foxe’s project of recasting history to reflect reformed views. In addition, the criticism Stephen drew for tampering with established customs could be suggestive for Foxe and the reformers, as well: Stephen argued that his changes were actually the proper fulfillment of biblical command, and this is certainly the process with which Foxe was involved. Saint Stephen had also famously overcome his interrogators—elders of various synagogues—in debate. Calling his question “vayne,” Askew draws on the Christian discourse that she and Dare share, to accuse him of violating the sacred laws of that discourse, and he seems to have to bear the brunt of this attack (in other words, he has no quick or effective riposte). On one hand, she brings him closer by using this discourse because it is one they both know. On the other, by refusing to answer his question, she keeps him out, beyond the walls of her person; she fends off his “attack” on her boundaries. Her reference to the stoning of Saint Stephen, as Sidney Sonderberg notes, not only points out a flaw in his position (as one less sturdy than hers), but also hints at the potential violence that Dare may resort to (56)—Askew is indirectly chastising him, accusing him of using force rather than truth to determine her (and other reformers’) fate. In so doing, she makes jabs at his boundaries of definition as an agent of God, which were under threat, as Miri Rubin shows;

Rubin calls attention to the way the identity of the clergy was invested in the elevation of their office and Catholic practices that had been built up in importance over the preceding three centuries (56), which plays into the emerging subjectivity of the speaker in this context. Thus Askew's defence against Dare voices important tenets of Foxe's project, creating a multipronged defence summed up in a few short "signal" phrases, which adds weight to her story, the suggestion of "weighty" others and their righteous words helping to maintain a protective structure around her.

The social dynamics of this dialogue can be examined for how the subject of the discourse—its narrative "I"—negotiates to change the allocation of power between herself and her interlocutor, and to manage their positioning. As Magnusson explains, theories of politeness show us that speakers use conventional verbal strategies to correct and maintain the power discrepancy in interactions, using what we can term "positive" and "negative" rhetorical forms of politeness:

While positive politeness asserts or suggests identification between participants, negative politeness puts distance between participants through strategies conveying the speaker's effort to avoid assumptions about the hearer's condition or volition, to avoid coercion, to communicate the wish not to impinge, or to impersonalize the threat. Positive politeness is basically a rhetoric of identification. Negative politeness is basically a rhetoric of dissociation. (21)

Magnusson qualifies her explanation further, with the addition of how power typically works in verbal exchange: "Whereas positive politeness associates the speaker with the hearer, the negative politeness of deference behaviour – either the raising of the other or the lowering of oneself – dissociates the speaker from the hearer. By making explicit the magnitude of a power

difference obtaining, a speaker can signal the hearer's immunity from imposition" (25). Ways of "signalling" this disparity include "[r]espectful titles of address and humbling self-representations" (25). In relationships of inequality, the onus is on the subordinate speaker to deploy appropriate politeness. In that position, Askew's speaker works with these types of address in creative ways, to show a subject able to withstand the pressure from "above" in maintaining her stance and evading domination.

When Dare asks Askew the first question, it appears as if he is giving her the opportunity to put forward an acceptable answer, and to obey him by answering, maintaining their positions. But it becomes, rather, an opportunity for her to voice (for readers) the reformed line on the first of the several key points by which conservatives and reformers distinguished and defined themselves. In replying by "demaunding" an answer to her own question, she declines to offer the acknowledgement of his position relative to hers, and goes further, reversing their positions; when he cannot answer, she is shown to be above him, in a position of greater knowledge. She takes the higher place in a field—scriptural debate and interpretation—that has only recently become accessible to women, and is considered primarily the purview of men, so that her repositioning involves gender, as well. Here, Foxe can capitalise on the idea of the elevation of the "lowly" to link his work with Christ's teaching, as well as the potential that an educated woman holds for triumphing, through rhetorical means, over those near the top of the political structure, the apex of the hierarchy. He can put forward a virtuous, pious, and heroically appealing young woman as a model for the new Protestant believer. Her refusal to "assoyle" Dare's "vain question" draws on precedent for martyr dialogue, putting the speaker—or the *non-speaker*—*above* answering, as we still colloquially term it. As critics have noted, she manages to

avoid incriminating herself with these questions and silences, but they also have an effect on the relationship between her and the authorities, which is surely part of the reformers' intent.

Next, in response to the accusation, allegedly made by a witness, that Askew had declared that "god was not in temples made with hands" (166), she reports that she "shewed him" the significant text in the book of Acts, again demonstrating her expertise in recalling the Bible, and implying that Dare is not familiar with it himself. The narrator presents an image of the two interlocutors in close physical proximity—the "shewing" of a particular passage seeming to necessitate these close quarters, and even if there were a more "distant" way of "shewing," readers and less-literate listeners are not directed to think of it. Perhaps even with their bodies in contact, possibly pressed together, their arms brushing, or just with their hands holding and sharing the same object—separately or simultaneously, the speaker and her inquisitor are brought together in a scene significant in its placing the speaker with her questioner, and in an exchange that has elements of cooperation and the sharing of mutual "space" or "ground." The reformed theology is shown to have made its way into the inner recesses of the structures of power and obtained access to authority. This biblical passage is another significant one for reformers, and with her reference to it, she avers to readers her refusal to practice idolatry, in the code of reformed theology, and draws members of the community close to her, in their sharing of this view. Again, she is superior to Dare through her knowledge, and backed by the other believers that are evoked by the signal phrase. Her use of an object familiar to both Dare and herself—the Bible—as a shared reference, when she "shewed him" the passage, indicates a gesture of intimacy and moving closer together—of the politeness of "identification" as Magnusson suggests. When Dare asks for her interpretation, however, and she answers that she "woulde not throwe pearles amonge swine, for accornes were good inough" (166), she refers to

that same source, but uses it to alienate him (and lower him), placing herself comfortably with supportive others, with her community of believers as distinct from Dare—who must be associated with the “swine.” The space in which their dialogue takes place—one evoked in the narrative—is one that imaginatively condenses groups of others and the forces of authority into it, and that provides a site for the dramatisation of the two theologies in intimate encounter. Readers see a demonstration of the reformer representatives consistently trespassing over the borders of the other, and the political effect is the denigrating of the representatives of established tradition and the raising up of those below them.

Deference, it seems to me, indicates the granting of space around the other, the standing—physically and rhetorically—at a distance so that the other is aware of the protectiveness of space around him. Answering Dare, however, Askew asserts, instead, an insult—an aggressive gesture of trespass—rather than showing the deference required of her position as a subordinate. As Butler points out in *Excitable Speech* (1997), one who insults another raises his or her own status; the speaker in this case moves in more ways than one, in relation to the “other.” The two interlocutors are brought close together in that they must each take the step to interpret the analogy she is making in her reference to “pearls before swine,” and to recognize its implications. The things that are unsaid, or referred to only, bring speakers into the same space, we might say, but although they are in close proximity to one another, that space is a dangerous and sometimes hostile one.

Simply by posing the series of questions to Askew over the course of the *Examinations*, Dare, the Lord Mayor, the bishops and the other officials make themselves “open” to the speaker’s answer, and this framework operates perfectly for Foxe’s aims. By *asking* a question, the interlocutor shows that he does not control the outcome, and grants the possibility that her

answer will be different from what he demands. Askew's apparently unexpected rejoinders to the questions of Dare and the others "put them on the defensive"—in a position of having to defend their own borders—from the beginning, as this first exchange in the *Examination* shows. They have to think on their feet, and often show their lack of comparative skill in these interactions and their ignorance of scriptural source material, which diminishes them as speakers, to those reading the narrative. In the appeal to higher authority that both "sides" in the interrogations must make for their own positions, the sources of reformed theology that Askew's speaker presents for Foxe's readers are solid against her persecutors, whose own line was known to have changed with Henry's wavering on doctrinal points, and may even have conveyed to readers the anxiety of these ministers, who had to tread carefully themselves for fear of losing their "positions" in his government. Rhetorical signals indicate that Askew's boundaries—exemplifying those of the emergent Protestant subject—are firm in this exchange, while theirs (Dare's, here) are in doubt.

It must be acknowledged here that the status of both the insulted person and she who insults him is significant in determining the effects of an insult on its object; however, it is not the only aspect of an exchange to do so. We can recall J.L. Austin's observation that in order to "do things" with our words (he gives the examples of marrying someone and christening a ship), we must have the appropriate conventions in place (1433). That is, the force of injurious language depends on a number of elements of the situation in which the words are delivered. Butler's discussion of how words act on and in the insulted person has in common with an early modern perspective the view of the body as "linguistically vulnerable," in Kruzner's terms, and she argues that the bodily effects of insults, in particular circumstances, are traceable: "the [insulting] words enter the limbs, craft the gesture, bend the spine ... [and] live and thrive in and

as the flesh of the addressee” (*Excitable Speech* 159). Taking up this position as well, Kruzner notes that “another’s words can deprive subjects of a sense of self-sovereignty, breaking down their defences in a way that is felt as directly physical” (128). While status may give individuals an advantage as far as arming them against injurious words—first in making it less likely that injurious words will be aimed at them—status alone does not guarantee immunity from these words. Neither status (position) nor any other structural feature of society can protect us from such words completely; for although the power of the state protects to a certain extent (both the powerful and those more subject to its restrictions), Kruzner argues, “no extremity of self-discipline, no extent of state regulation, could ever fully inoculate us against linguistic openness” (127). Readers of the episode would surely see that Dare’s boundaries are not entirely impermeable, in the course of his dialogue with Askew, despite the disparity in their social positions. Competing theology and political streams opened up—or widened—cracks in the edifice of the conservative establishment, and that process is represented on an individual level in the rhetorical exchange between Askew and Dare.

Askew’s “overcoming” of Dare shows the struggle for authority and positioning in relief. The stability of the hierarchical structure that Dare identifies himself with was under threat from the “heresies” that countered tradition. He should have been in a position of security because of Henry’s power, but because of the “crisis of authority” that was taking place in the realm, the clerical representatives were put on the defensive, and Dare’s insecurity can be read in his interview with Askew. Barbara Lewalski observes that, in fact, the changes that began to sweep through the nation at this time included the notion of “authority from knowledge rather than status” (32). When Askew corrects Dare, she is taking part in a renegotiation of identity and of position, made possible through the “new” teaching. When she moves to deflect his questions,

maintaining her own boundaries, she subverts his position, working against her questioner's boundaries. She takes aim at the claims and cultural assumptions that define him; he is not worthy of his office, in the reformed view (speaking the truth to him would be like throwing pearls before swine), and further, he is capable of violence and deceit to achieve his goals—actions of the enemies of Christ, not his followers.

Her allusive use of the biblical passage, so fitting in the circumstances because of the threat of violence it suggests (the swine might turn on and assault one, in Matthew 7.6), makes plain why Henry was concerned with the notion of the free or creative use of interpretation. Her answers are shaped to respond to the legislation passed to stop just such deployment of sacred text. Like each of the points in Askew's interrogations, the preference for reading scripture and interpreting it for oneself over clerical instruction or "hearing masses" in church, which Askew asserts next, and was one of the "heresies" that had inflamed Henry and impelled him to pass the Act of Six Articles (1539) or the "Whip with Six Strings"—a clarification and restatement of catholic points of doctrine (Loewenstein 78). She repeatedly uses allusive and other evasive strategies, as ways to signal ironic obedience to the requirement that she not expound or "teach" from the Bible, for example—"showing" Dare the place she means in the scriptures, and working in the reference to "swine" indirectly.

In efforts to defend against the heresy, the interviewers' techniques include their invitation to Askew to let down the boundaries that separate them in the context of the political and social situation. In the *First Examination* Askew's text moves to an episode in which a priest is sent to examine her and to "geve [her] good counsell" (167); rather than attacking her in the manner of her previous interrogators, he tries to create a conversational space of comfort and social ease, appearing to let down his own boundaries in order to have her do the same, and align

herself with him. When she cannot tell him why she has been imprisoned, “he sayd, it was great pytie that I shulde be there without cause, and concluded that he was verye sorye for me” (167-8). The priest’s friendly, sympathetic manner signals connection and mutual identification rather than dissociation and alienation, in the terms that Magnusson uses to describe possible social dynamics. At the offer for another priest to be brought for the purposes of confession, which, if she accepted, would be a sign of her obedience, she asks for one of a few certain men she trusts, Crome, Gillam, or Huntington, suggesting the importance of alliances among reformed community.

The attempt to move towards the other in order to effect mutual agreement through letting down of boundaries is typical of interviewing techniques that the martyrs often encounter. Askew uses the conventions of polite address in the same kind of gesture of intimacy or accord as the priest employs, responding appropriately and strategically; but she does so ironically, recognising her interlocutor’s similar feigning. She explains her preference for certain men to advise her as not intending to lower the one she speaks with: she does not “dysprays” her interlocutor, for she does not know him well enough to do so (168). This polite wording presents a double message, both an attack on, and a bolstering of, his boundaries. The addressee moves to substantiate himself, pointing out that the King’s approval is needed in order for him to preach. He does not allow the opportunity for doubt in his credibility and his self-definition to lie unchallenged, just as readers would likely expect, in interactions involving position and contested authority. Through this exchange he also reminds his listener of his affiliation with the official legitimizing body. In response, as if she cannot leave this assertion of his position alone, Askew adds, drawing from Solomon, that she will “lerne wysdome” from those who are wise, and “take skathe [harm]” from fools; this seems like a bold provocation and, again, either an

attack on, or potential acceptance of, the priest's definition as a spiritual leader and representative. By creating distance through its reference to a third person (a fool) rather than the priest ("impersonalising" the criticism, Magnusson would say) Askew avoids directly insulting the priest, and makes interpretation necessary—giving herself room for self-defense if she requires it. Her subsequent smile and her silence indicate her constancy in maintaining the ambiguity of social space and position, through both rhetorical "discretion" (Hickerson 58) and politeness tactics. These details of social interaction and verbal dexterity with socially prescribed scripts, including bodily gestures, make Foxe's martyrs seem realistic, surely add to the entertainment value of the text, and allow readers to read into a social code, seeing how language can be used to upset positioning, while the speaker seemingly obeys the social codes.

"[L]et euery Christian reader iudge, whether is more to be credited of these two, she that was persecuted, or he that was þ^e persecuter."

(Foxe 806)

Loewenstein illustrates the breadth of official measures towards (and against) which the words of the speaker in Askew's text are directed:

In a draft proclamation dating from April 1539 limiting the exposition and reading of Scripture, the king expressed concern for the "great murmur, malice and malignity" and "diversities of opinions" among his subjects provoked not only by preaching and teaching supporting "the old devotion to the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome," but encouraged by unfettered Bible-reading which, it was widely suspected, led to heresy since "taking and gathering divers Holy Scriptures to contrary senses and understanding" was generating interpretations and arguments that "subvert and overturn as well the sacraments of Holy Church as the power and authority of princes and magistrates, and in effect generally all laws and common justice. (79-80)

Askew's preference for the written word over clerical representatives, when she says that she "had rather to reade five lines in the Bible, than to heare five masses in the temple" (166) makes her avid pursuance of personal interpretation more explicit yet. She explains that reading for herself is a more effective means to "edify" her. Quoting Saint Paul, she underscores the point that the clergy are inadequate for the job they are in place to perform, and this idea she suggests through analogy, referring again to the text she shares with Dare and the others in his station: according to Saint Paul, she says, giving the exact chapter and verse, "if the trumpet geveth an uncertaine sounde, who wil prepare him selfe to the battaile?" (166). This conventional imagery of martial conflict to characterise the competition between God and Satan slips into the "battle" between the two ideologies, and is echoed in her "Ballad" appended to the account of the interrogations, when she writes, "Lyke as an armed knight / Appoynted to the fielde / With this world will I fight / And faith shall be my shield" (149). Referring to the protective boundaries of the person, she is acknowledging the necessity of the individual to connect herself to an authority, in order to fortify herself spiritually for salvation (and against the enemies of God); the knight's rank works with social positioning to elevate her as well as to fortify her. She uses the tools Henry's proclamation would keep from her, to show the error of his laws, putting herself above them as well as above "princes and magistrates."

Henry's Act of Six Articles makes apparent the newness of, and controversy over, access to the scriptures by the lay community and women in particular, and helps to explain the unusual steps taken by the administration in illegally racking and executing Askew. According to Loewenstein, the Act gave the bishops "new powers to initiate inquisitions, trials, and punishment for heresy, especially disputing transubstantiation by preaching, teaching, or writing, and thereby leading to burnings at the stake" (78). Askew's astute use of the Bible as text and

object in the examinations suggests that the audience would have expected the ire that was aroused in her interrogators at her demonstration of skills that could—and do—elevate her through rhetorical means, and that vivify the reason why the proclamation was passed. Women’s association with books was part of religious and secular culture only in very particular ways, and only for women who had sufficient social status; Askew had the requisite position and education, but Henry’s declarations attest to ongoing patriarchal attempts to keep women and words apart—and the way he had stepped up these efforts at the point Askew appeared on the scene.

“... to haue continually in her hands ... some booke of holye Scripture matiers”
(Nicholas Udall, 1545)

Despite the licensing of the English Litany for all churches by 1544—or maybe in part because of that—there was resistance to women’s connection to books, especially, even though in some contexts it was beginning to be the norm, and the controversy over interpretation generated by this access played into Askew’s experience with the bishops. The comments of educator Nicholas Udall on women’s habits at court (he tutored Mary Tudor) suggest that the propensity of women to have and use books had only recently become a favourite activity with the ladies. Udall delights in the way ladies of the court study and translate materials, saying, “It is *nowe no newes* in Englande to see young damisels in nobles houses and in the Courtes of Princes, [to engage with books] in stede of cardes and other instrumentes of idle trifleyng” (qtd. in Demers 32, emphasis added). These comments suggest that these activities had changed during the course of Udall’s life, and within his memory. Heidi Brayman Hackel presents valuable research into the history of women’s owning and interaction with books, in her book-length study (2005); however, in places she discusses the situation of readership practices from the first half of the sixteenth century—Askew’s period of violent struggle over the interpretation of the word—as if it were the same as reading and book ownership in the seventeenth, when the

conditions under which publication took place and the way in which books and printed material were “consumed” were significantly different. For example, Hackel obfuscates what seem to me crucial differences between attitudes towards and consequences of women’s passion for books when she mentions examples of women who lived one hundred years apart as if they all belonged to a homogenous group: in quick succession: Hackel lists Frances Bridegwater, Anne Clifford, Anne Bolyn, Elizabeth Tudor, and Frances Wolfreton, linking them with one detail, in each case, having to do with their connection to books. But I think we should note the difference between the fact that Anne Bolyn “dinted a copy of Tyndale’s devotional work and gave it to the king” (254) and the degree of comfort with personal ownership of books that women became accustomed to in the seventeenth century. Hackel conflates the time periods in which women had a different—and more limited, I suggest—engagement with these activities, verified by some significant accounts, and the period that followed, in which reading and book possession seemed to become “natural” for well-to-do women. My aim is not to deprive women of their history with books, as Hackel’s thorough study shows they did have; my observation is that Askew’s particular moment made book ownership, readership, and quotation a radical business, and so also risky and potentially deadly. Numerous studies of reading as a private and social activity, into life-writing, and into book ownership offer evidence of a culture imbued with textual practices and impassioned with love of words, and encouraged by the “religion of the book” as Protestantism took hold. However, many investigations take as a significant point of reference sometime in the mid-sixteenth century, with the vast majority focusing on seventeenth-century diaries and commonplace books; the authors of these studies play down such a point, surely for fear of overemphasizing or suggesting a “divide” between older and more modern self-experience, which, indeed, we must take care not to stress, but their research indicates the

problematics associated with a cultural change involving reading, and by extension, writing as well. In addition to Hackel's work, other recent studies convince us that early modern society was "textual" in ways that went beyond the private ownership and consumption of books. Pamela Allen Brown's essay "The Street," for example, draws attention to the ubiquitous nature of "verbal commerce" in the lives of women even with little or no education (156), and details their exposure to and participation in the numerous and varied kinds of printed, written, remembered, sung, and spoken "text." However, I argue that although this scene that Brown describes may have been vital even in Askew's day, official access to scripture just at Askew's moment, as the Acts to suppress it attest, posed such a significant challenge to authority because not only did it threaten to refigure the hierarchy, in which women were beneath men, but it was a means by which women would become less differentiated from men, and less identifiable as an "other" through which men identified themselves.

The need to preserve the genders as distinct was a pressing one, as the upheavals and uncertainties of Henry's reign fostered an environment of insecurity. These tensions were felt at the local and domestic levels of society, as well, even before—and perhaps especially when—Mary and Elizabeth Tudor upended the tradition of an almost-exclusively male monarchy. The pamphlets published nearer to the end of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, castigating women for adopting even small details of dress that mimicked men's fashion too closely, attest to the strength of the opposition, even during Elizabeth's reign and after, against any degree of gender ambiguity (Henderson and McManus 18). As Beilin says, "Almost every aspect of Renaissance society distinguished between the characteristics, the abilities, the essential nature of men and women" (*Examinations* xx). The material trappings of gender identification were crucial enough to be entrenched in the law. Askew's predicament and the

dialogue she took part in were shaped in key ways by the fact that she violated important parts of the gender codes, not only through her behaviour—her assertion of ideas that were not held by her husband, and her argument with, and on the level of, educated men—but also through her possession and interpretation of the tools of learning: books and the pen. She and Foxe had to cast her use of them in a particular way in order to make them advantageous to the movement.

My contention is that one of the reasons Askew was an icon of the reform movement is this association she has with the word, because she is a woman, and that this new coding of books as part of every believer's practice of worship (although it was still limited by class, education, and other elements) upset religious conservatives because the sight of women holding, reading, and particularly discussing books represented the overthrow of the establishment so vividly. Their possession of books not only gave them the political tools to rise above men, but indicated the loss of an identifying feature for the clergy. As Will Fisher explains in *Materializing Gender in Early Modern Literature and Culture*, one's gender was determined not only by biological features, such as hair growth and type, and genital shape and function, but also by behavioural attributes—those features that no longer figure as reliable, or even relevant, to the discussion of gender in our own day (3). Fisher discusses the key aspects or "parts" indicative of gender in the period, including those we might not generally think of in those terms: in addition to sex traits, and the shape of the body, and so on, he includes handkerchiefs and codpieces, and "things like swords, thighs, daggers, wigs, hands, cosmetics, and farthingales" (4). Excluding hands and thighs, the items Fisher lists all have to do with use and external body wear. And in the model of "prosthetic gender" that Fisher gives, "things like" those accoutrements of fashion and utility that he mentions are as determinative, and normative, of gender as the biological body parts. Although today we do not associate books with gender, this

object was in a new enough context when utilized by women that it unsettled established authorities and, it seems, positively fuelled the excitement of reformers. When a woman appeared with a book, handling it and drawing from the Bible and other publications, it was as if she had “worn” or wielded a sword, grown hair on her face, or donned a codpiece over her gown.

Leading up to the Act of Six Articles, Henry’s attitude to the laity’s access to books was coded in extreme terms, and became more directly aimed at women after the Act was passed. As Loewenstein reports, the court placed particular stress on printed material, recognizing its power to widely convey the new ideas, which involved a more autonomous subjecthood. Loewenstein states the following:

The Henrician revolution of the 1530s had been preceded and followed by a vigorous political drive to exterminate the spread of “venomous heresies” and “pestiferous English” books, including those in later Lollard and newer Lutheran forms, for heresy was now perceived not simply in terms of evangelical individuals, but in terms of proliferating texts (including annotated vernacular Bibles) capable of quickly disseminating dangerous unorthodox doctrine and seditious opinions to the people. (71)

A few years further into the religious struggle, the court’s establishment of the Act for the Advancement of True Religion in 1543 was a more decisive attempt to quash women’s access to the Bible, limiting their right to read it, and discouraging their participation in its interpretation. Loewenstein reiterates the idea that women’s close familiarity with the scriptures and other printed ecclesiastic texts profoundly threatened the traditional system of power relations, so that the idea of lowly women’s engagement with these materials “horrified ecclesiastical authorities suspicious of ‘the New Learning’ associated with evangelicals and their alarming preachers who, [Bishop] Gardiner complained in 1546, were giving ‘women courage and libertie to talke at their

pleasure . . . and of gods worde” (79). The inclusion of episodes directly involving Askew’s handling of books and teaching from her knowledge makes her text a powerful response to these suppressions, and firmly entrenches “the Word” as part of Protestant identity.

Self-assertiveness—or “courage and libertie” for Gardiner, above—as opposed to timidity, was also assumed to be the purview of the male in early modern culture, and so to exercise this trait was to add to the discomfort, for the bishops, that Askew was already causing with her actions, some of which also violated expectations of the female role; it was also potentially off-putting to her readers. Fisher quotes early modern anatomical discourse to illustrate the division of the sexes and the genders by their behaviour. In a French tract published by Ambroise Paré, 1573, an individual is defined as either male or female, in one of several telling details, by whether he/she is “bold or fearful” (2). At this point in our critical history (thanks to Michel Foucault and others), we recognize this kind of discourse as one that ascribes traits to the genders arbitrarily, for reasons of granting and maintaining power to some members of society and not others. The characteristics attributed to the genders, such as strength and “boldness” for men, for instance, and their opposites for women, are established in order to justify the continued submission of one gender to the other. Indeed, not even Bale, Askew’s champion, would attempt his construction of her as anything but the embodiment of feminine traits, describing her as “yonge, daynty, and tender” (Beilin, *Examinations* 7). In this language, clearly hoping to find a favourable reception with his audience, he follows convention—despite the fact that, or perhaps particularly because, he puts forward her written text, for which she must appropriate the male tool of the pen, the male resource of the scriptures, and the male prerogative to speak boldly. Megan Little, too, notes the situation for women in Askew’s time: “In order to be persuasive to audiences, an early modern woman had to strike a careful compromise between

the agency she assumed as a speaker and traditional roles which mandate that she remain silent” (84). But for the reformers, female agency is acceptable because it comes from God, and it represents the new church (or the re-establishment of the old, or “true” church) as a virtuous female countering the “whore” of the papal establishment.

A more direct episode with a book, later in the first examination, places it front and centre for the reader of the martyrology. Describing the moments pertaining to John Frith’s book, the narrator casts the relationship between “my lorde of London,” or Bishop Edmund Bonner and herself as one of teacher and pupil—with Bonner first in the dominant position, and then in the subordinate position. This interaction she presents as one of mutuality and harmony—derived in part through her helpful correction of his erroneous reading of the scriptural text. Her possession of the book puts her in a dangerous position, but she makes no attempt to hide her association with it. In the *Examinations*, Askew embodies the elements of the reform movement that were most unwelcome in the eyes of her political and religious superiors, and most efficacious for the new subject of Protestantism, and the freedom with which she handles her books in the interrogation room underscores this idea. While Bishop Bonner draws attention to the controversial nature of Askew’s association with the book, the conversation takes a turn, which fortifies her rather than putting her at a disadvantage. When she claims she does not know why she is being questioned, she reports that “toke he my boke out of my hande, and sayd. Soche bokes as thys is, hath brought yow to the trouble ye are in. Be ware (sayth he) be ware, for he that made it, was brent in Smythfelde” (170). She asks, first, whether he is sure of his facts; when he assents, she scolds him for judging with inadequate diligence, saying he should be “ashamed” for “soche unadvised and hastye judgement” (170-71). Just as he had taken the book from her, she then takes it back from him and opens it so that he can see his error. Either the book is not

Frith's, as most commentators think the passage indicates, or it simply does not contain any damning statements; Bonner had thought it was *another*, but "he coulde fynde no faulte therin" (171), she says. She ends the exchange by exhorting him "nomore to be so swift in judgement, tyll he throughlye knewe the truthe" (171). Criticism like this represents, for Magnusson, a "trespass" on the self of the other, as he has had to submit to the truth of the critical speaker's words. Bonner exits after these words, seemingly chastened, in the narrative. Her discussion of the book with Bonner shows her readiness to enter into the role of teacher—a position that strengthens her selfhood, through the authority she appropriates for herself. Ideally, teaching should occur this way: the teacher molds or reshapes the student, who has opened himself to the process. The pupil allows trespass by the teacher, entering freely into a relationship of safe and intimate exchange, and rather than suffering in the course of imposition, his borders are reshaped in his interaction with both the teacher and the book, as he incorporates the new knowledge into himself. His boundaries are crossed, but he is unharmed, except that he is redefined as one who has been mistaken and is now corrected. Askew's closeness to the book suggests its significance as an object—of one of the "goods," Taylor would say—by which one defines oneself. Bale's and Foxe's focus on Askew as a spokeswoman for Protestantism has much to do with the printed text, then, and her own text, which, they repeat, is "of her owne penning" (Foxe, marginalia 806).

The function of books in this respect comes across in the woodcut prefacing her account in many of its printed versions, beginning with Bale's in 1546. Aligning herself *with* the larger body or community, and locating herself *within* it, Askew also functions *as* the body of the church—the mother of the church—as the woodcut tells its viewers. This object, as part of the text, offers early Protestants the emblematic indications that help them define themselves

according to the Word. In this image of Askew that is so often reproduced in critical work in the area, she is dressed in flowing robes and holds a book in one hand, with the word BIBLIA easily legible on its cover, and a palm frond—typically associated with saints—in the other; indeed, images of Saint Stephen typically portray him with the palm in one hand. She is set against a wall in the process of being erected, with the heavenly sky visible and the rays of the sun spreading out from her head. She stands triumphantly over the dragon representing Satan from the biblical source, the reformed symbol—with its papal crown—of the pope as Antichrist. Critics often identify this depiction with the pregnant woman of Revelation, mother of the church, the woman “clothed with the sun,” and, indeed, the link suits Foxe and Bale’s project of presenting a history of the church—in association with that described in the biblical text—in which the Protestant reforms play such an important role. The spaces and borders represented help to give shape to the subject, with the stability of the wall-in-progress giving the figure a protective foundational structure at her back. As Knott notes of Protestant martyrs in contrast to images of earlier, Catholic sufferers, they look out at the world and at others, rather than upwards to God, so that Askew’s pictorial pose links her to others. In this image of her, in addition to others in Foxe’s collection, Knott asserts the effect of this stance by the victims:

In the woodcuts that accompanied early editions of the Acts and Monuments, the martyrs stare out at the reader or at the onlookers (in fuller representations of the execution scene) rather than looking to heaven. Foxe's narrative and the accompanying illustrations work together to reinforce the bond between the martyr and the community from which he or she emerged. This community, which Foxe liked to see as imitating the experience of the primitive church, becomes the locus of the sacred. His emphasis is on the communal

experience of a persecuted band of saints, a "godly fellowship," rather than on the rapture of the transported soul. (728)

Knott points out that belonging to the larger community of believers is stressed in these portrayals, and that this locating of the martyr among the larger group makes her someone to fashion oneself after, rather than one of the earlier tradition's "exceptions to be admired" (qtd. in Knott 725). At the same time, the figure's connection to the sun places her in terms of "high" and "low," elevating her through identification with the divine, so that an association with the greater spiritual being is maintained. Behind her is the wall, before her, in place of the traditionally depicted cross (Loewenstein 75), she holds the book as protection in front of her, just as Askew uses the biblical text and a particular scriptural interpretation of it, to defend herself from her enemies. Through material associations, the image encourages believers and potential followers to take up the biblical Word as their protection, and suggests the centrality of this Word—and of reading and interpretation—by the discernable "word" in the picture, which also designates the Latin name for books, in general.

Hickerson suggests further ways in which the image and the language that pertains to it, both in the Bible and in Bale's commentary, indicate the importance of gender in the function of Askew's text. Foxe's and Bale's promotion of the pregnant woman of Revelation as an icon went along with his advocacy of marriage over virginity as an ideal state, Hickerson says, so that Askew's married (and separated) status did not deter from her usefulness as a model for their readers; the editors could even overlook her separation from her husband, which critics see as something that they would have disapproved of, and that would have made them hesitate to use her story, particularly if they had known of her attempts to secure a divorce from William Kyme. As Hickerson shows, the robes worn by the figure in the woodcut are given meaning through

their connection to the “white garments” that recur in Revelation and in Bale’s writing. As she points out, in Revelation, figures of the “purified”—coded through colour—appear in long robes



Fig. 1 Woodcut of Anne Askew as Mother of the Church

and also carry palm fronds. As she points out, “Bale describes the gowns as large enough to cover the old deformities of those wearing them, and as made ‘white in the precious bloude of

the Lambe', by those 'belevinge to be puryfied by the meryte of his death'" (70). A new identity is thus available to be "put on," through an adoption of the (new) faith. But there is more.

In the men's reinterpretation of doctrine and scripture, the boundaries of the body were transformed, so that believers were virgins again; they were "brides of Christ playing the part of his faithful wife" (Hickerson 12). Hickerson points out the problematic issue of women's disobedience in leaving their husbands over differences in their respective beliefs (79); this tendency had to be somehow justified in the new terminology. While Bale refers, too, to male martyrs as purified and "redeemed from earth, undefiled by women" (qtd. in Hickerson 70), women's bodies most clearly conveyed the metaphor of restored virginity due to the way they are changed materially by sexual penetration. Bale writes of the martyrs of reform that because they have maintained their borders, keeping out false beliefs and practices, they have a fresh bodily integrity in their spiritual marriage, as Hickerson shows:

Bale transforms the virginity of the redeemed from a physical state into a spiritual one. The virgins have protected their faith from 'straunge doctrines' and 'prophane worshippinges'. The 'spousage of their soules' has been 'broken by no fylthye tradicions of men' or 'very whoredom in the spirite'. Like St Paul's ideal Corinthian, they are married, 'a chast virgine unto Christ', like Askew with the 'maydenhede of the soule' intact. (70)

In the new theology, the papal establishment is paradoxically characterised by wantonness in its prohibition on marriage for the clergy (because of the clergy's well-known sexual proclivities, despite the ban) and its promotion of chaste virginity as an ideal; instead, as Hickerson demonstrates, the new model for pious and virtuous subjectivity was "the sexually mature and perhaps even unchaste, and yet virgin martyr" Anne Askew (72). The "walls" of the self are

remade in this gendered representation, so that a wholeness of the physical person signalled the inner experience of wholeness through the experience of faith.²¹

Thus women's disobedience of husbands—husbands who were given new authority in the reformed model of marriage—was justified along new lines of piety and the realignment of one's loyalties, offering a simultaneous explanation to readers of how Askew's defiance of her interrogators could be virtuous. Her refusals to answer their questions, for example, enact a serious breach of the conventions of politeness by which she should have avoided insult to and lowering of her male interlocutor through rhetorical codes, rather than pursuing these ends. These episodes dramatise and draw particular attention to the conflict over the interpretation of the Eucharist, which was such a central concern to both new and old beliefs, and presents the Protestant subject in relation to the reformed community in shared agreement and understanding, in the dynamic between the interlocutors.

Of Mice and Women: When Small is Not Beautiful

Askew's tacit responses to questions about the Eucharist involve a number of layers of meaning in terms of the body and subject. In one instance in which Askew uses silence to signal her meaning, the Lord Mayor is examining her, posing a standard question in the current debate, about whether a mouse is blessed if it eats the host. Askew does not answer directly but, instead, smiles (27). As in her previous deployment of silence, above, her response both fends off the hostile other, through its disruption of the discourse that would bring about her downfall, and brings him close to her, as she challenges him to read into her gesture. She has models to follow in this rhetorical (or *anti*-rhetorical) move: the first is Christ, whose parables harbour spiritual

²¹ As Susan Scholz points out, the perceived "wholeness" of the female virgin body did not derive from the intact hymen, as medical, somatic discourse did not yet identify this aspect of a woman's physicality (81); however, the awareness of the connection between penetration and virginity surely informs the notion of the virginal body as having borders that are "unbroken." The symbolism retains its effectiveness despite the qualification Scholz makes.

wisdom, and who, when he, too, is being questioned, declines to answer Pilate, requiring his listeners to puzzle over his answer and consider its implications. The audience—now as well as then—scarcely needs Bale’s pointed reference to Christ’s summoning before Pilate just at this point in Askew’s text in order to make the connection between her silence and His. Readers would recall Christ’s silence, and the righteous motivation behind it. One’s refusal to offer an answer can signal disrespect, socially—and a disdain for both the question and the one who asks it; the silent interlocutor communicates to her addressee that the other is not worthy of her attention. The circumstances of Christ’s interrogation present other dimensions, as well, as he knew, just as Askew does at this point, that his words are sure to bring about his downfall at the hands of the authorities, like the men questioning Askew, “wycked mynsters, and cruell servaunt slaves to Antichrist and the devyll,” as Bale calls them. Both Askew’s silence and Bale’s gloss align her with Christ and her community of believers—who know the correctness of her rejection of transubstantiation—against the others, who are outside this group.

The smile adds another layer of potential communication to the text, and the recurrence of these strategies in the accounts of other Protestant martyrs reinforces and contributes to the strength, size, and duration of the community, connecting Askew to fellow-sufferers across history. Connecting the generations of like-minded martyrs, similar patterns of dialogue can be found in the questioning of earlier figures such as Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, and it is possible that Askew knew the account of his interrogations and death, since his story had been preserved from over a century earlier, and Bale had written of it while in exile.²² In Oldcastle’s case, from the early fifteenth century, we find that he is reported to have variously ignored his interlocutors, pretending not to hear them, smiled at their questions, and laughed them “to scorn”

²² His story was grouped with Askew’s and that of William Thorpe, and although this bundle was not published until 1849, all three were sourced from Bale; one can surmise that Askew may have heard of Oldcastle’s plight, in greater or lesser detail than the 1849 text contains.

(Bale 33). In Oldcastle's laughter, he is more overtly defiant and derisive than Askew, perhaps because the image of this treatment of men by a woman would have been too extreme in its suggestion of female usurpation of authority, even for the reformers, or perhaps it is included to give the narratives some differentiation and authenticity. The connection between them that the martyrologists make, however, is evident. One point in their alignment can be noted in Hickerson's demonstration that Bale's characterisation of Askew as weak and in need of God's power have little to do with gender, because he is likewise characterised. Oldcastle's text in the *Acts and Monuments* provides Askew's text with a complementary piece, with its differences making it at once comparable to, and interesting in its small distinctions from, Askew's. It is told from the point of view of his persecutors, for example, and at this point in the history of the reforms, the document he prepares for the authorities attests to his upholding of certain tenets of the Catholic doctrine, including the notion of penance. However, when pressed for further clarification of points on which he has either been vague or missed entirely, they insist he elaborate. Both accounts, Oldcastle's and Askew's, involve documents, which they must disavow or align themselves with officially, making reading and writing, the marker of Protestantism, a thread of connection between them. Under questioning, like Askew, Oldcastle answers that he does follow the laws set out in the Bible, "that he wolde beleue and obserue whatsoever the holye Church determined, and whatsoever God would he shoulde obserue and beleue" but denies that the pope, "the Cardinalles, Archbysoppes and Bysoppes or other prelates of the church haue any power to determine any such matters" (Foxe 331). This language is remarkably like Askew's addition to the recantation she was coerced into signing, during the first examination sessions, which reads, "I Anne Askew do beleue all manner thinges contained in the faith of the Catholike church" (Beilin 175). These statements emphasise the priority of the

individual over officials, and the points over which they run into conflict concern precisely the same aspects, the ones out of which come the power of the clergy: the place of priests in the sacraments, and the real presence in the Eucharist.

The question of transubstantiation has wide-reaching implications for the period, having to do with the power of language in the world and over the individual. As Loewenstein notes, “Askew’s sacramentarianism was based on a figurative reading of scripture which made particularly contentious and urgent issues of representation and signification” (69). When Askew avers that the moral state of the priest would make absolutely no difference to her experience of the sacrament, for example, she takes on the very controversial issue of the power of the clergy to transform bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood. The question of the real presence touched dangerously on the state’s power structure, whose reins were so tenuously held in Henry’s anxious grasp (Kruzner 128). Carter Lindberg explains the reformist view of the doctrine: “Theologically, tran-substantiation appears to give priests the power to make Christ in the mass, thereby usurping Christ and positing the infallibility of grace upon correct performance of the rite.” Further, by extension, “[s]alvation thus appeared as a human work dependent upon a clerical class, rather than as a divine gift” (189). The reformist focus on the human community of believers made masses said without the presence of others run counter to the spirit of the rite; as Lindberg says, “[i]n a private mass there is no community to hear the words of the gospel and thus the elements of bread and wine lose their meaning and become objects, ‘holy things’, to be offered to appease God” (189). The cautious consideration of, and discrimination between, very specific ways in which Christians must worship thus suggests larger questions, then, concerning the relationship of human beings to those who governed them—both spiritual and earthly. The distinction between the divine realm and the clergy who were God’s representatives—a group by

this time long criticized in some quarters for corruption—grew among the reformers, and Askew’s answers, picking up closely on Oldcastle’s, convey the idea in the *Acts and Monuments* that her stance against the authorities was an ongoing struggle, from which the reformed church would emerge triumphantly.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12.12)

Transubstantiation has other implications, too, regarding the early modern subject and the view of the permeability of borders, which continued to hold, albeit with gradual modifications, as Kruzner argues. He links the increasingly “fortified” individual—what Enterline and Hill termed the “container self,” above—and the Protestant rejection of transubstantiation; the rejection of the doctrine of the real presence reflects a similar spurning of the idea that the individual could be “invaded” by another’s body in the sacrament. Kruzner contrasts the Protestant view with the way “transubstantive language” pervaded Catholic views in the period. It was in Catholic discourse, particularly, that language was conceived as capable of making material connections between individuals; Catholic documents refer, for example, to the erotic-sounding “pipes” between people, and Catholic martyrs used words to manipulate the way devices of torture were perceived, “turning” these items into positive elements in their spiritual process by renaming them “sweet bed” and “blessed chain” (129). On the other hand, Kruzner argues, for Protestants, “the prospect of linguistically vulnerable subjects and objects often was a nightmarish one, to be guarded against at all costs” (129). When the institutional tide later turned in the reformers’ favour, this discourse was reflected in their pamphlets and legislation, taking a prominent place in the “English social imaginary,” Kruzner claims.²³ Kruzner’s observations are

²³ Examples of this discourse include the declaration that “speech should not touch the furniture of the world or be spoken in hopes of having direct material effects” (qtd. in Kruzner 129); Kruzner notes that in this model,

limited by his focus on literature from the end of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries, and he might gain further perspective in his argument by including a text like Askew's in his analysis; the point I would like to note here is, rather, the premise that language has the power to construct and tear down boundaries between people. This notion seems to be operative in Askew's dialogue, as her text is based on the power of God, through scripture, to defend herself. In Askew's avowal that not only did she accept the sacrament of the Eucharist but that she eagerly looked forward to it, she places emphasis on the communal aspect of the sacrament, as critics note. As Kruzner's own study takes pains to prove, the malleability of an individual's borders need not always uncomfortably expose one to danger; rather, the flexibility and impermanence of the boundaries of the self in the martyrology is the key by which one can be unmade and remade as a new subject, by conversion to the true faith, fortified by one's connection with the Almighty and with the other believers in the church.

A further related element of the importance of practices surrounding the Eucharist to subjectivity is detectable in its history. As Rubin's research shows, the centrality of the Eucharist had grown in Catholic tradition since the twelfth century, and the symbolism had increased along with an ideology attached to its use. The ritual of elevation of the host, for example, and meticulous directions for its handling and carrying out the sacrament (and penance for mishandling it) were developed with great detail since the later middle ages. In addition, the church built up the office of the clergy, creating careful instructions for how they should carry out their duties, making ecclesiastic officials central to people's understanding and conception of the faith. Accompanying these developments was the growth of a body of lore involving the Eucharist, consisting of *exempla* or anecdotes involving various specific figures—the Jews,

“[I]language instead should aim to be persuasive, transparent and efficient—an aim, it turns out, not easily achieved” (129-30).

children, and women—who made errors in their handling of the host, either maliciously or in ignorance, and were corrected, in the end (in variously felicitous or violent ways). Intriguingly, Rubin points out the significance of these developments in terms of identity, with the construction of “others” by which self-definition was achieved (53). Rubin’s work suggests the degree of realignment and recasting that was involved in the reformation of the church, in the way people identified themselves, against and in conjunction with, others.

A sense of paranoia over borders, though, can be sensed (and read directly) in a political context, in Henry and his bishops’ coding of religious dissent as heresy, and both as invasion and trespass, particularly over this central issue of transubstantiation. After all, as Rubin shows, the Eucharist had come to be the “ultimate” symbol, “the essence and promise of a sacramental world-view [which] came to be placed at the very centre of a system of power and meaning” (48). If the court, too, represented that centre, those who undermined the validity of the sacrament crossed into areas that should have, and had previously, been protected. In the kingdom’s division by religious faction, the term “unity” appears prominently as a key word in the literature from the court used to suppress dissent, making “others” of those who took up the new beliefs. In putting Askew’s case in terms of the “culture of heresy-hunting” that held sway (70), as noted above, Loewenstein observes the language used to characterise the perceived threats: “if pernicious heretics lurked ‘secretly in divers corners and places’ (to recall the king’s 1538 proclamation), then the new freedom to engage in scriptural exegesis, including by women, had enabled venomous heresy, religious conservatives suspected, to spread to the very heart of Henry’s court” (72). Katherine Parr’s involvement in the subversion, which Askew’s trials suggest, contributes to the idea that fears of heresy were understood in terms of borders, of “inside” and “outside.” Similarly coded language of cross-boundary transgression is found in the

account of Oldcastle's martyrdom in the *Acts and Monuments*, in which the conservative narrator declares, "Not willinge that hee that is wycked, shoulde become more wycked and infecte other wyth hys contagion, ... we haue iudged and declared sententially and diffynitiuely condempned the sayde syr Ihon Oldcastell knight" (Foxe 331). Whether this language came authentically from official fifteenth-century documents or whether Bale and Foxe adapted these details of history, Henry's court incorporates similar ideas, intensifying what was perhaps an earlier coding of religious dissent over the Eucharist. Both sides in the controversy, then, used the imagery of trans-border trespass—explicitly the wanton woman of Revelation for reformers, and the secretly infiltrating and proliferating poison in the body, for the conservatives—capitalising on (and perhaps constructing, too) the early modern aversion to insecure boundaries, to express their interests.

This language and imagery plays into the torture that is used on Askew, with the idea of opening up the subject, and extracting what was hidden inside. As her situation worsens, the terms in the account begin to refer more explicitly to disclosure, or the exposure of what are perceived to be "inner" secrets. In the *Latter Examination*, in her interrogation at Greenwich, Askew answers questions by referring to scripture and to previous replies she has made, or with silence. She is told, she says, that "it was the kings pleasure, that I should *open the matter* to them" (180). Pressured for details about her view of the Eucharist, she connects herself to readers as she repeats the reformed perspective: "I believe, that so oft as I in a christian congregation, do receive the bread in remembraunce of Christes death, and with thankes geving accordinge to his holye institution, I receive there with the frutes also of his moste glorious passyon" (180). At Bishop Gardiner's insistence that this statement is still not clear, Askew says, "if I shew the open truthe (quoth I) ye wil not accept it" (180). The narrative simultaneously

states the Protestant view and justifies the verbal tactics that have been employed, in self-defense, to conceal it. Askew continues in her attempts to ward off the likelihood of violence, saying in subsequent documents, for example, “I neither wish death, nor yet fear [god’s] might” (185); this rhetorical gesture follows a pattern of the Protestant subject as one who values her boundaries, as opposed to the Catholic saints’ disavowal of their bodies and their passive acquiescence to their persecutors (Hickerson 68). While the Protestant subject finds her strength and identity through her relations and associations with the larger community, we can see the seemingly paradoxical importance of the individual believer in this ideology, and the will to preserve the boundaries that form the individual subject.

The body becomes a focal point at the end of the account, when the circumstances allow Askew to recall the pain she experienced, and the physical details of setting and bodily position and condition that are included in this section make for a narrative as much about persons interacting bodily with one another as about scriptural discrepancies. The political interests behind Askew’s torture explain why, as she reports, she was subjected to the rack for “a long time” because she “confessed no ladies or Gentle women to be of my opinion” (187), and this point is one that makes her narrative dramatically affecting to readers. But in the rendition of her report provided by Bale and Foxe, the political authorities’ aims to ferret out dissent at court are strangely intermingled with the will to make her change her beliefs, which is necessary to the effectiveness of her story for the sake of the movement; it also makes her struggle doubly heroic: she is able to maintain a view of religious doctrine because she believes it to be true, but her ability to withhold information that she wants to remain hidden offers readers another way to see her preservation of her borders. She is strengthened against outside intruders, those who want to force false beliefs into her, and she is able to keep her secret information from being exposed or

extracted from within. Interestingly, the scene she describes in which she “sate ii long hours reasoning with my Lord chancellor upon the bare floor” offers a strangely intimate conversational space, within which they are presented as being on an equal footing. She and he are joined together, “*with*” one another. Religious affinity with the reformed Word, the account seems to communicate, raises her status in the social world as well as the spiritual one; or rather, the first signals the second. If “proximity was power” (Knowles 11), this strange configuration of dialoguing bodies in striking circumstances of power presents a scene in which closeness affords access to authority, for Askew’s speaker.

As they are depicted as occupying a similar “place,” though, the Lord Chancellor attempts to dissuade her from her views, using “flattery”—the signal word for falseness of intention. As Magnusson’s explanation of dialogue goes, speakers use “positive” and “negative” verbal forms of politeness, positive being “strategies [that] address the hearer’s wish for approval, and the negative his or her wish for non-interference” (21). Magnusson goes on to say the following:

With lower-risk threats one expects positive politeness: it works upon an interactant’s desire for approval, especially through strategies for claiming common ground between speaker and hearer and strategies for conveying that the speaker and hearer are cooperators. With higher-risk threats one expects negative politeness, redressive action addressed to the interactant’s desire to be unimpeded. (21)

We see Stephen Gardiner deploying positive politeness, which must be anomalous for early modern audiences, considering the difference in position between the bishop and Askew—a woman nonetheless, even if a *gentlewoman*. While we are not given the details of the exchange, Gardiner’s association with flattery characterises him as someone seeking approval, and

attempting to make himself and Askew “co-operators” who share “common ground,” in order to coax her *over to his side*. But according to the narrator, Gardiner’s attempt to elicit consent in his addressee fails, and instead of coming together we assume that the two are distanced, a separation created by the falseness of the flatterer’s intentions and Askew’s seeing through it. Indeed, cultural discourse incorporates many warnings about discerning a flatterer from a true friend. And in the “Ballad of Anne Askew,” also titled “I am a Woman poore and Blind” (195), possibly written by Askew herself, there appears a reiteration of this idea. With a matching first-person narration, the ballad’s speaker recounts the events of Askew’s tribulation in symbolic terms, and features a “Gardner” who “flattered me with words so kind” (line 23). This representation of a fawning (and powerful) admirer seeking Askew’s favour helps to further associate her with—and, indeed, make her into—an authority to whom others appeal.

The “Gardner” metaphor offers another interesting “bodily” metaphor for the spaces and selves, in relation to others, that the text puts forward, in its religious (and political) message. The garden is a popular image for the cultivated or “planted” and bordered space of the nation, set against the wild and as-yet-untamed nature of as-yet-unconquered lands, with Ireland being commonly figured as an example. As Parker notes, above, it represents the household, as well, and in these associations, interchangeably, it refers also to the individual. It is the earthly, bodily element, but this indicates the spiritual, as well, as Askew’s ballad shows. The speaker tells of her long search for the “hearbs in my garden [that] were best to be.” She sings, “A garden I have which is unknown, / that God of his goodnes gave unto me: / I meane my owne body wherein I would have sowne / the seede of Christs true veritie” (4-8). The speaker reports that she requested of the “Gardner” (18) that he sow “true seedes in my garden” (20). However, the gardener saw the chance to “work his will” on the speaker” (22), and “fed” her “lyes and

mockes” and “stinking meate” (29). The metaphor is extended as the speaker’s experience goes on: “In me was sowne all kinde of fained seedes [Popish ceremonies and Masses of Requiem]” (33), with the result that “Gods spirit out of my garden was gone” (36). The speaker bitterly rues her behaviour in being deceived by the gardener’s advice, and appeals to God, whom she knows will forgive her. Emphasising the depravity the gardener has caused in her, the speaker laments that she has been “[w]orse than Jewes or Turkes” (47), drawing on these traditional signs of opposition to godliness, in order to defame the enemy she most urgently opposes. In the last section of the poem, the imagery changes to focus on a human body that is fortified through “standing” “in thy [God’s] truth,” that can withstand “bloody butchers” and their “slaughter knives” (63), and that cannot be harmed by “Prison, fire, Faggot, nor firc sword” (60). The relationship between the self and powerful other is conveyed in these very material terms, made especially effective by the juxtaposition of vulnerability and strength, linked to conservative and reformed views respectively. The idea of conversion comes across as well, asserting a new self she has constructed through divine help.

“My shyppes substancyall”

Metaphors that reference the body are adapted in another document associated with Askew, allowing the cause to get yet more out of her famous case. In “The Ballad which Anne Askew made and sang when she was in Newgate,” the speaker begins with the language of armour to protect the body, representing the Christian’s protection by faith and divine grace. She then moves to employ the often-used biblical simile comparing woman to a ship, in Proverbs 31:14. Her incorporation of the blood of the martyrs can be discerned, with careful reading—such reading that early modern audiences were used to, in their frequent encounters with the proliferation of images that tended to overlap with one another. The speaker asserts her faith,

saying, “I am not she that lyst / My anker to lete fall / For everye dryslynge myst / My shyppes substancyall” (lines 33-6). She “substantiates” herself in this passage, through her association with God’s power. Further, she builds on the image to add another dimension to the moral superiority of her community and cause: having usurped the throne of “Justice,” the Antichrist now occupies the place of authority (the worldly rulers of Askew’s moment), and “Absorpt was rightwisenes / As of the raging flood / Sathan in his excess / Suct up the guiltless blood” (45-8). The “flood” relates to the ship, into which the speaker will not let her anchor drop, and the imagery suggests the magnitude of the threats to the human soul and person—the subject—and the equally powerful strength that ensures her borders are not overcome.

The images of borders and metaphors like the garden—which is sometimes surrounded by protective “hedges,” in common terminology—appear again in the pamphlets written in the defence of women, in the next period I turn to, almost fifty years later. The pamphlet market, situated in the “public” arena, can be linked to the *Examinations*, as well; as Brown notes, on a “busy,” “noisy” street on market day, for example, one was apt to hear texts read or sung, including pamphlets on all kinds of subjects and excerpts from the popular *Acts and Monuments*, and also to witness theatrical entertainment and demonstrations of state power like public executions. The last scene in Askew’s text takes place at the public site of the scaffold, its dramatic elements exerting a potentially powerful effect on its audience—both those who experienced it first-hand and those who came in contact with it later. The episode is described for readers by Foxe, and conveyed pictorially in the other woodcut that pertains to the event, with the aim, according to Foxe’s own stated goals, as John Knott points out, to benefit people’s spiritual lives (789). In the woodcut, the space of execution resembles (and, indeed, *is*) an outdoor theatre: the circular space in which the “action” takes place is surrounded by crowds of

onlookers, and in the backdrop, the high-ranking officials enjoy optimal viewing from structures that raise them above the scene and the other observers. The multitude, although it may not actually be made up of believers, suggests the community that was the focal point of the new faith. As John Knott says, comparing Protestant and earlier, Catholic victims of religious persecution, “His [Foxe’s] Protestant martyrs anticipate joining a perfected community of the faithful in heaven rather than achieving an ecstatic vision of God” (723). Locating the scene in a local, easily identifiable place, even to those who lived elsewhere in the realm, would have been one familiarising detail that brought martyrs like Askew close to the audience, and helped make her experience direct and immediate for them, to make them feel “almost like an eyewitness” (728). If the woman martyr in Askew’s account, like others in Foxe’s book, “speaks with a voice that asserts an enhanced moral and spiritual authority” (Knott 729), other attempts at achieving authority comes to us in the pamphlets in the *querelle des femmes*, to which I now turn. Also involving dialogue over contentious points of debate, and likewise engaging with interlocutors of the opposite sex as well as with those of their own, the speakers in the pamphlets use strategies both similar to and unlike Askew’s speaker for asserting themselves and for negotiating with the dynamics of power and position, both bodily and rhetorically. I move to this new, popular and public arena with a quotation from Brown, regarding the textual landscape of the street, with which the pamphlets are associated in various ways:

Just as space was shared by living bodies, writing was shared between people or broadcast to the wider public, whether via texts or the spoken word. Because most texts were read aloud, and many compositions passed through circuits of handwriting, printing, and speech, writing emerged from a permeable field that continually combined the aural and the written, the spoken and the performed” (155).

Chapter Three
The “War” Over Women’s Bodies in
Early Modern Pamphlet Literature



Fig. 2 Woodcut of Woman with a Fan

Woodcuts like the one that accompanied Anne Askew’s published text often went along with pamphlet literature as a selling feature of these documents, and carried a particular kind of message in the “pamphlet war” over women’s role and worth during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Simone Chess explains, making a woodcut was a costly process involving much careful labour and expensive wood, so the finished product was typically reused many times, even “circulated among printers,” and partnered with different kinds of written content whether it “matched” the subject matter of the text or not (n.p.). The “Woman with a

Fan” in Figure 2, above, is particularly notable as a woodcut that was coupled with numerous ballads in addition to its pairing with Joseph Swetnam’s *Araignment of lewd, idle, froward and unconstant women* (1615), according to Chess, and its movement across generic boundaries and over years made it an especially suitable piece to go with his tract regarding women’s behaviour. As Chess posits, “The publisher’s choice to include this ‘promiscuous’ woodcut [Samuel Pepys’s term] on the cover of this pamphlet suggests a connection in meaning between the woodcut’s proliferation and the ‘problem’ of promiscuous women that Swetnam undertakes to discuss” (n.9, n.p.). Indeed, this particular “meaning” that the image has accumulated is precisely what makes the defence of their sex so difficult for women: the notion that the publication and dissemination of their words was coded as the circulation of their bodies in the commercial market. Swetnam’s pamphlet was one manifestation of a long tradition of “antifeminist” literature that surged in popularity in certain decades in the early modern period. His and similar textual “attacks” on women provoked responses during this time, with the anonymity offered by the medium of print and the demand for this material prompting numerous “answers” to the accusations levelled at them. This chapter examines the debate over the “woman question” and those responses that participate in the dialogue, the “defences” of women whose female speakers convey mixed messages, but also offer intriguing possibilities for women’s subjectivity in the period.

The image of the “Woman with a Fan” is also apt because it conveys contradictory meanings with regard to women’s ability to “defend” themselves in patriarchal culture. Indeed, the association between this print and illicit sexual behaviour that Chess discovers is surprising considering the woodcut’s portrayal of a well-dressed woman, whose elaborate clothing and fan—a sign of leisure—suggest she belongs to the upper class, and whose social position, then,

should give her some protection from such slurs. The pictorial representation even suggests that this woman has not only substantial clothing as a barrier between herself and the world—clothing that extends far beyond the borders of her body into the space around her—but also the fan, an accessory that she holds out well in front of her, as if to protect herself through creating an extra layer of fortification, and increasing that surrounding space. Further, the fan also suggests coyness and dissemination, flirtatious behaviour and playfulness involving courtship and heterosexual social exchange, that could slide into more serious deception. This blend of signifiers is perhaps fitting for texts that also incorporate ambiguous messages regarding male-female interaction, both verbal and bodily.

The “key stylistic traits” that Megan Matchinske notes²⁴ are shared by the pamphlets considered to belong to the *querelle des femmes*, or as she calls it, “gender polemic,” all resonate with the idea of dialogic interaction. These include “a genuine sense of debate with an opponent either imagined or personified; a thesis about women that involves the use of logic and rhetoric for evidence; the appearance of *exempla*, drawn from both history and literature, and, finally, a format that imitates a classical oration or dialogue” (91). Many of the defences (and attacks) also involve vitriol, anger, and insult, although these sometimes seem to be delivered tongue-in-cheek. We can see how the pamphlet defences of women draw on models already available, such as religious polemic, conduct literature, “Mother’s Advice” books, “jest-books” and ballads about women, and the more “serious” and literary works that take up the questions of women’s place and the legitimacy of their speech. Noting the “cross-fertilization” of texts on the subject of women among the English and Continental humanist writers, as well as the classical sources of many arguments and *exempla*, Linda Woodbridge reminds us to be cautious in ascribing the term “popular” to the treatises (16); however, while Woodbridge objects to the categorization of

²⁴ Matchinske draws on the work of Linda Woodbridge in this passage, she states.

pamphlet literature based on its being “bound in a certain way” (7), I see, instead, the significance of the availability of cheap printed materials and the favour they found among a wide and diverse group of consumers—including, importantly, women readers. If they were composed by the formally educated and rhetorically skilled spokespersons, the pamphlet defences (and “attacks”), like other genres that early publishers chose to print, directed themselves in some important ways to an audience increasingly sophisticated in receiving and interpreting such texts. Further, the treatises involved in the debate featured more deliberately the body as text, and the bodies of women and men in a material and social world. The defences are situated in a textual culture that includes Askew’s dialogue with the authorities. And like her speaker, these writers evoke the spaces and borders between interlocutors, in the struggle for authority over women’s bodies and lives.

The pamphlets I discuss here fuelled and constituted the debate over women that was also driven by market forces. Publishers milked the “controversy” over women for its commercial worth, waiting decades to recycle it as the subject of textual fulmination each time it lost its novelty. This may explain a consistency in some of the arguments and techniques used across these waves, linking them to each other. The pamphlet defences that I examine have attracted attention from critics and readers, especially since they have been republished in the last few decades in collections such as Barbara F. McManus and Katherine Usher Henderson’s anthology *Half Humankind: Controversy and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640*, and Simon Shepherd’s *The Woman’s Sharp Revenge: Five Women’s Pamphlets from the Renaissance* (both 1985). The texts in my study include Jane Anger’s *Her Protection for Women* (1589), which she writes in response to a pamphlet by “a late Surfeiting Lover,” Esther Sowernam’s *Esther Hath Hang’d Haman*, Constantia Munda’s *The Worming of a Madde Dogge*,

and Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell For Melastomus*, all published in 1617, and all provoked by Swetnam's *Arraignement*; and Mary Tattlewell and Joan Hit-him-home's *The women's sharp revenge* (1640), in which the authors address John Taylor's pamphlet, *A Juniper Lecture*, of 1639. Like editors McManus and Henderson, I have chosen texts notable for their popularity, for the rhetorical skill they demonstrate, and for the significant arguments they present (including "the development of feminist ideas") that figured strongly in the debate over the worth and role of women that took place during this period (133).

My selections find a place within the proliferation of texts at particular times, as noted above. To situate them more specifically, I observe the pattern of textual history into which they fit.

Notable points in the period under consideration here begin in the 1540s, with Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women* (1540); Edward Gosynhill's *The Schole House of Women* (1541); Gosynhill's *The Prayse of all women, called Mulierum Pean* (1542); and Robert Vaughan's *A Dyalogue Defensyve for Women agaynst malycyous detractours* (1542). The next group emerged two decades later, and includes John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558); Joh Aylmer's *The Proude Wyves Pater Noster* (1560); Edward More's *The Defence of Women* (1560); and C. Pyrrye's *The Praise and Dispraise of Women* (ca. 1563-71). The following surge includes the lost, and anonymous, *Boke his Surfeit in love with a farewell to the folies of his own phantasie* (1588), to which Jane Anger responds; John Lyly's *Euphues his Censure to Philautus* (1587); and Thomas Nashe's *The Anatomie of Absurdity: Contayning a breefe confutation of the slender praises to feminine perfection* (1589). The next appearance brought Swetnam's *Arraignement* (1615)—in ten editions to 1637 (Demers 39), and the corresponding defences by Munda, Sowernam, and Speght that reacted to it. Also current during this period were Daniel Tuvil's *Asylum Veneris, or A Sanctuary for Ladies, Iustly*

Protecting Them, their Virtues, and Sufficiencie from the Foule Aspersions and Forged Imputations of Traducing Spirits (1616); Barnabe Rich's *My Ladies Looking Glasse. Wherein May be Discerned a Wise man from a Foole, A Good Woman from a Bad, and the True Resemblance of Vice Masked Under the Vizard of Vertue* (1616); the anonymously authored *Hic Mulier: or, The Man-Woman: Being a Medicine to cure the Coltish Desease of the Staggers in the Masculine-Feminines of our Times* (1620); *Haec-Vir: or The Womanish Man: Being an Answere to a late Booke intituled Hic-Mulier, Exprest in a briefe Dialogue betweene Haec Vir the Womanish-Man, and Hic-Mulier, the Man-Woman* (1620); Richard Ferrer's *The Worth of Women* (1622), which mixed praise and blame (Demers 43); and Thomas Heywood's *Gunaikieion: or, Nine Bookes of Various History Concerning Women* (1624). The final breaths of the dialogue came with John Taylor's *A Juniper Lecture* (1639). Accompanying Taylor's piece were William Austin's *Haec Homo, wherein the Excellency of the Creation of Woman is described, by way of an Essaie* (1637), and many other sermons, essays and treatises, according to Demers (43). The authors of Tattlewell and Hit-him-home's "answer" to Taylor constructed their text within this very "full" environment of anti-woman propaganda.

Askew would move in close, at times, in order to either appeal to some shared understanding with her addressee or to score a rhetorical point, and she would distance herself from him at other times, for self-protection. The pamphlet-writers likewise show their awareness of interpersonal space, but unlike Askew, they are already a step further removed from those whose arguments they address, with the printed word being the means through which the two parties interact, and through which they gain access to their fellow interlocutors. In the debate about women, many writers of these defences used irony in the sense that they ventriloquized

women's voices (even, possibly, their own voices, in some cases²⁵) for the sake of entertaining their reading public, if not to deliberately undermine women through parody. However, these writers also deal, often directly and primarily, with the physical reality of women's lives, and take up questions of their bodily safety, in conjunction with the always-present arguments related to their spiritual role.

Whether deliberately or accidentally, the writers of defences create boundaries to protect women from their adversaries—both the men who penned scathing indictments of women and men who violated the borders of their physical bodies and domestic spaces. The pamphlet writers deal very much with the material world—the practical, corporeal experience of the body—as well as the theoretical aspects that they discuss. It is by this very characteristic—their focus on the body—in fact, that writers both satirize and defend women. Whether ironic or “earnest,” they expose how polemical attacks on women were undergirded by the implication of real danger. My concern is with how the attacks on women, written and “in person,” both reflected and played a role in the development of subjectivity for women, particularly with respect to women's ability to control their occupation of social space and their sexuality. The interplay of the arguments from opposing sides—arguments that weave together in the pamphlets as they respond to each other's points—offers a rich ground for an examination of these issues.

With a broader range of “readers”—including those who were partially literate and those who would receive the text through oral transmission—the tone of the pamphlets was likewise mixed, to appeal to this audience. The women's defences are among a great many kinds of writing produced for the popular press, both religious and secular, which included other

²⁵ Lisa Schnell offers support for the possibility that Anne Southwell penned the tract *Esther Hath Hang'd Haman*, whose author is unconfirmed; in contrast to Southwell's signed work, Schnell argues, which conforms to the generic and class-informed expectations of her upper-middle-class position, *Esther* transgresses those expectations in its incorporation of irreverent, vehement, and satirical elements. The possibility remains that women could have written other pamphlets that satirize women, as well.

dialogues and even other “pamphlet wars,” so easily accommodated by this inexpensive publication form. The expansion of the bourgeoisie during the early modern era suggests that publishers could hope to profit from the many kinds of material they made available, whether polemical, sensationalistic, or otherwise in nature; texts expressing pro- or anti-woman views would understandably have had a broad appeal, pertaining as they did to both male and female readers rather than a small, specialized group. But the recipients of this “street literature” were not limited to middle-class. Joy Wiltenburg documents the growth of these publications, the “flourishing market for broadsides and pamphlets containing songs, jokes, news, and stories” and the fact that they were “[s]old at markets or fairs, hawked in the streets of towns, or carried to the country by peddlers, [so that they] reached a far wider audience than more sedate volumes of sustained discourse” (29).²⁶ Regarding the tendency for the monetary aims of publishers to seem at odds with the reality of oral transmission in the marketplace, Wiltenburg comments that despite the inability to pay of many who would hear and potentially repeat the content of the pamphlets, “it was an advantage to sellers to draw a crowd, even if only a small minority would buy” (29). Although opinions vary on the comparison of wages to the price of the pamphlets, it seems likely that they would have been accessible to wage-earners as well as the merchant and artisan classes. Esther Sowernam’s address to the “best disposed and worthy Apprentices of London” (220) suggests the likelihood of this assumption, along with the hint, according to Elizabeth Clarke, that Sowernam is purposely compromising her reputation, with the idea that she is too familiar with these same apprentices (47). This is one instance in which distance is encoded through interpersonal address. The style that brought bodies into contact in this way

²⁶Her study covers pamphlet culture in both England and Germany during the period I am looking at, providing background of obvious relevance to the questions I am attempting to answer. The prevailing type of literature at this time was “the broadside ballad, a single printed sheet, usually decorated with rough woodcuts ... [which] grew popular during the second half of the sixteenth century, and by the seventeenth ... had become a flood” (29).

must surely have enhanced their popularity, in an already sexually-charged debate. The “defences” or apologies for women are also striking in their opposition to the many pieces published that warned, censured, and warned against, women; indeed, of the roughly four thousand selected pamphlets in Wiltenburg’s investigation, she pays special attention to “about 900 that deal directly with disorderly women” (44). The pieces I consider here, by contrast, communicate either overtly or suggestively the need for extreme measures to combat male transgressions against women. In this respect, they make a radical statement about the seriousness of the problem of men’s behaviour and attitudes, whether or not they do so with sincere intentions.

The authorship of some of the defence pamphlets is uncertain, particularly when the writer uses an obvious pseudonym, and raises the possibility that a female speaker might be a man “ventriloquising” a woman’s voice. Of the ones I examine here, only Rachel Speght uses her real name, which makes her the only author verifiable as a woman writer. However, just as we see some women writers in the period expressing ideas that do not oppose the ideology that subordinates them, so male writers may argue for women’s self-sovereignty. In both cases, their possible reasons may include commercial, emotional, or intellectual interests. I proceed with the view that while it is prudent to watch for places where women are being satirised, the fact remains that the pamphlets do articulate difficulties that women faced in the culture, and do offer strategies for resistance through arguments that seem undeniably reasonable. Surely this in itself could have encouraged women in their struggles against the injustices visited on them, and given them further language and perspective for protecting—and making space for—themselves.

As Lisa Schnell rightly warns, we must be careful to avoid taking the writers of defences—and women writers of the period in general—as “a largely undifferentiated category” (58). The

pamphlet war, featuring Swetnam and the responses to his tract particularly, was, as Schnell and others show, inflected by realities such as class and commercial demand. But if we approach the “defences” as potentially more complex than straightforward attempts to overturn women’s standing in society, we can still examine these documents together, for the insights that they can bring regarding women’s “place.” Rather than beginning with the assumption that the writers all hold something important in common, I find it more useful to conduct a close reading of the texts for how they present women in relation to others and to the spaces in which women live. As with Anne Askew’s text in the previous chapter, I will refer to the writers by their pseudonyms, and in the feminine, according to the claims of their publishers, for the sake of simplicity, and with the added effect of preserving something of how they might have been received.

Uncomfortable Nearness: Social Space and Sexual Conduct

Specifically, my purpose is to look at how the writers of women’s defences express, even if satirically, the dilemma of women’s physical existence in society, often using images of, and language that pertains to, the body and sexual appetite. In the spatial theme that prevails, the writers convey the sense that women are besieged: first, women lack the sufficient social power—indeed, the right—to defend the borders of their domestic spaces and physical bodies, as well as their reputations, against the onslaughts of men. Christine de Pisan, among others, expresses these conditions in the proverbial metaphor comparing women to “a felde without a hedge” (qtd. in Beilin xiv). And second, writers communicate the narrowness of the space—physical and psychic—that women’s presence was permitted to occupy, and show how women experienced an intense feeling of being hemmed in by the forces around them. Women found themselves open to attack through behavioural codes that restricted their abilities to defend themselves—to keep others “out”—and that licenced male actions towards them—that allowed

men “in.” This double sense of both hyper-openness and confinement comes across in various ways in the pamphlets, and is complicated by further expectations regarding women’s role.

The tension caused by women’s inability to control crucial aspects of their social space was exacerbated in a society that required their chastity—that is, their virginity before marrying, and their strict monogamy after doing so. One of the three mandatory feminine virtues, chastity was wedded to the silence and obedience that were at times synonymous with it, and that also made it difficult to maintain. An early modern image of the feminine ideal that gained circulation, for example, was woman as a “locked house”: portraits of the middle- and upper-class woman reflect this standard, representing her silence with her closed mouth and her chastity through the high-necked dress that completely enclosed her body (rather like the *Woman with a Fan* in the woodcut print). Ideals presented in such images instructed women on the very limited ways they could occupy space, seeming to verge on the potential negation of their existence beyond this very contained physical presence. With such restrictions on their speech and movements, women came dangerously close to taking up excessive social space simply by speaking or acting. Further, as Naomi J. Miller shows, the expectation for women to be constantly productive was another ideal, paradoxically put forward through male-authored advice manuals and pamphlets while other tracts castigated women for excessive sexuality (“Hens,” 164). Thus (in spatial terms), women could—indeed, they were required to—fill the space around them and increase it, but only through the material fruits of their labours, and they were discouraged from what would effectively have been creating negative space, by passively consuming (as Swetnam accuses them of doing), becoming a vacuum or black hole into which goods (produced by men, in the new money economy) disappeared. The pamphlet literature

begins to articulate these dynamics, and disrupt the discourses that circumscribed women's agency by keeping them to such narrow confines.

In negotiating women's fraught relationship with the space around them and the opposite sex, the defence writers place the body in the foreground through corporeal imagery, highlighting the exploitation of women's bodies and linking it to men's disparagement of women in social discourse. When, for example, Jane Anger calls attention to the bodily relation between women and their male critics in the title of *Her Protection for Women (To Defend Them Against Scandalous Reports of a Late Surfeiting Lover and All Other Like Venerians That Complain So to Be Overcloyed with Women's Kindness)*, she works strategically with the assumptions her audience would likely have held about a woman writer's willingness to participate in the sexual arena, rather than ignoring them. The underscoring of corporality constituted a key part of the "quarrel" between the sexes. The tendency to think from the material to the social was a cultural norm, as I discuss in the introduction to this project, above, but here, Anger focuses specifically on women's sexual vulnerability in the culture, and attempts to define and defend their social territory.

The medium of the pamphlet added another level of embodiment to the content within it, as "Woman with a Fan" suggests. In addition to the "promiscuous" woodcuts, the underlying idea of the circulation of women among men through the pamphlet literature "voiced" by women comes across through the use of innuendo, prurient jokes and plays on words. References to bodies in the text brought the potential for the sexual titillation and gratification of men. As Susan Gushee O'Malley claims, the "book or pamphlet ... becomes a female commodity for the gentleman to own and listen to at his leisure and perhaps also a sexualized text to provide a private and renewable source of arousal." Further, she adds, "It could be argued that the

pamphlet form was gendered female in the early modern imagination and had a special affinity for questions about women” (122). Clarke’s description of a surviving copy of Speght’s text—the pamphlet least sexually-loaded of all the responses to Swetnam’s tract—glossed with sexual innuendo by its male owner (47) underscores how closely the woman writer was associated with her material text. This characteristic meant that neither supporters nor defamers in the dialogue could help suggesting women’s sexuality. It also gives the pamphlet an additional or meta-textual component that underwrites the defense of both women’s character and their bodily and domestic territory. If women writers wanted to circulate in print but not be seen as sexually available or compromised—as commodities—the pamphlet seems perhaps a counter-intuitive choice; yet what better medium than this to take up the very issue of women’s frustration with their inability to control the conditions of their physical relationships with others—to protest such an understanding?

This impression of the text as body was emphasized when the pamphlet announced that its writer was a woman, and the defence writers used this metaphorical understanding to take up the problem of men’s sexual exploitation of women. The back-and-forth exchanges involved in the dialogue between male and female-authored pamphlets acted to suggest even more overtly the illicit interaction between the sexes, and many of the defenders of women played up the interweaving of the tracts. The presence of men’s bodies is incorporated into ostensibly female-authored discourse through criticism of men’s lascivious behaviour, as Anger’s title suggests. But defence writers also attempt to use the same kind of physical associations in their equating of the attack pamphlets with the male body. Anger refers to the men who attack women through the pamphlets as “fornicators” (Anger 183), and Sovernam states, “What [Swetnam’s] composition of body is I know not, but for his disposition otherwise, in this Pamphlet I know he is as

monstrous as the work is misshapen ...” (221). The equation of body with text apparent in the prurient glosses we can see on the surviving copy of Speght’s pamphlet suggests how the dialogue structure that the publishers set up would have been interpreted in a material sense, and how the sexual language of the pamphlets would have been enhanced through a perceived intimacy and exchange between the sexes in this conflict.

The often graphic directness with which the writers in the controversy respond to their opponents and with which they discuss the opposite sex, as well as the way the defence writers weave in the arguments of their adversary in order to refute them, resonates for early modern readers with the intimate interactions of the body, then. The writers create the impression of close proximity between the bodies of men and women metaphorically through this rhetorical interweaving, even if inadvertently. Anger, for example, refers specifically to the style and expressed intentions of the writer to whom she answers; Speght cites page and line for the parts of Swetnam’s text she discusses, alternating these passages with her refutations; Sowernam, too, quotes passages in full, and “replies” to them. Speght and Sowernam both take up Swetnam’s remark about bearbaiting, as does Munda. She, too, responds directly to parts of his tract, to both his arguments and to him, with the details about him she can glean from the text; because he has travelled, he says, he has come upon many wanton women. Munda examines this information and its implications, and suggests he could have made his writing more interesting if he had talked about traveling in foreign countries rather than berating women. This gesture of deflection, interesting in that it sounds like a way of bringing about harmonious relations, also gets at him personally, showing the closeness the pamphlet writers are able to achieve. This kind of textual movement mirrors, and increases, an illicit intimacy that the references to the body and its desires create. The result, on one level, is an implied lasciviousness in the interplay between

the texts and their authors, and perhaps their readers, as well, but also a protest of the motivations that drive the conditions of women's situation.

Another way that the writers weave together Swetnam's and their own texts is through their adoption of his theme of the trial, set out in his title. Esther Sowernam "answers" him with her own *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Men, and Husbands*, intent on trying him, she says, at the "same bar" at which he indicted women—that of "fame and report" (233), with the "two Judgesses, Reason and Experience" (233). She takes up from him the format of dividing her text into chapters with explanations of what they will contain. His first one, which "showeth to what use Women were made [and] also showeth that most of them degenerate from the use they were framed unto by leading a proud, lazy, and idle life, to the great hindrance of their poor Husbands" (193) is matched, in *Esther*, by her first chapter: "An Answer to the First Chapter of *The Arraignment*"; another of her chapters, clearly engaging closely with Swetnam, is "At what estimate Women were valued in ancient and former times," while the last two are devoted to Swetnam's trial "and under his person the arraignment of all idle, frantic, froward, and lewd men" (233) and indictment (234). Her language—"In your first and second Page, you allege..." (236)—shows her willingness to get very near to him, with the context of the pamphlet culture giving her the freedom to do so—and, in fact, encouraging it. In countering Swetnam's "arraignment" with her own, Sowernam criticizes the sexual excess that is connected to his writing. In her "lewd, idle, furious and beastly disposed persons" (219), her adjectives of course mirror those in Swetnam's title, but she substitutes the last two for the female flaws of "frowardness" and "unconstancy," employing gender-specific shortcomings. Munda balks at Swetnam's accusations, too, telling him that "we will cancel your accusations, traverse your bills, and come upon you for a false indictment" (249). The "Spinster" speakers of *The Women's*

Sharp Revenge follow this model, as well, setting up a trial with “twelve god women and true” to judge their adversary’s “lying lectures” (309). The dialogue created through pamphlets responding to each other, while on one level intertwining the “bodies” of women with men, also gave writers a medium in which to argue on that level, for the control of those bodies.

For the borders of those bodies were in dispute—a point the defence writers go to lengths to explain, consistently connecting them to textual boundaries. Anger’s text introduces and thematizes the limits of women’s bodies and speech versus men’s immense freedom, which they use to take advantage of women’s vulnerability. She turns over the idea of women’s excessive natures that need to be controlled, saying instead that it is men who must be reined in. She begins the first dedication addressed to “the Gentlewomen of England” by appealing to their “settled wits” that she knows might not be receptive to her “rashness,” her “choleric vein,” and the “fit of extremity” that prompted her writing; this admission, however, consistent with the conventionally humble and apologetic rhetorical opening, belies the rational, measured way she describes the method she plans to use: “I will not urge reasons because your wits are sharp and will soon conceive my meaning, nor will I be tedious lest I prove too, too troublesome, nor overdark in my writing, for fear of the name of a Riddler” (173). In contrast to women’s careful, considered articulation and reception of ideas, men are represented in quite opposite terms a few lines later, as their “minds go oft amadding, and [their] tongues cannot so soon be wagging but straight they fall arailing” (173-4). Throughout the piece she repeats this idea of men’s excessiveness, saying “their minds are ... carried away” and “they overrun the bounds of their own wits and go they know not whither” (174). In the comically exaggerated tone that characterizes many of the pamphlets in the debate, she calls on the gods and goddesses to employ their powers through nature to overwhelm men—particularly the writers who deride

women—suggesting the extent of men’s “surfeiting” in both body and text. She conveys the need for men to be restrained in her further call for “a halter [to] hold all such persons!” (174). She takes up the debate on the level of the body, using associations between the body of woman and text to ward off bodily attacks as she defends against written ones.

“Encroaching” on Women’s Territory: Men’s Prerogative Over Women’s Bodies

That Anger’s “protection” is for women’s bodily integrity as well as their status becomes clearer as she weaves the two spheres together. In the first paragraph of *Her Protection*, her language demonstrates this mixture as she discusses male writers’ process: the writers of attacks are inspired to defamation “[i]f they may once encroach so far into our presence as they may but see the lining of our outermost garment” (174). Slander is indeed a problem that she deals with in the discussion, but men’s “encroachment” is clearly not just visual. In maintaining the thread of her argument in the idea of men’s *surfeiting*, she quickly turns to men’s sexual voracity, citing male figures from biblical and classical history, such as Sardanapalus and Menelaus (176), known for their sexual proclivities. From the words of the title, boldly printed on the cover of the pamphlet, to the end of the piece, Anger persists in the idea that the men who criticize women do so because, valuing women only for sexual purposes, and demanding women’s sexual cooperation, they eventually tire of the women who are “kind,” and blame these very women (and all other women, as well) for their dissatisfaction. If her remarks also signal a tongue-in-cheek subtext that uses code words like “kind” to mean “loose,” she nevertheless provides the potential for women to identify with her anger at men’s mistreatment of women. While perhaps compromising the speaker deliberately, it was a technique that kept the consequences of men’s actions, in real terms, at the forefront of the discussion about women.

Both Anger and Swetnam incorporate close proximity between the sexes to signal physical intimacy, whether wanted or unwanted, and the rhetorical transgression of women's boundaries. Although Swetnam's *Araignment* came twenty-five years after Anger's *Protection* (which responds to a different pamphlet), the arguments are so well matched that they clearly convey pervasive attitudes within the culture, despite changes that took place during that time. The surfeiting man in Anger's text is a "Smell-smock" (176) who uses force and/or flattery to gain access to women's bodies; of these men, she complains, "If we hide out breasts, it must be with leather, for no cloth can keep their long nails out of our bosoms" (180). Swetnam echoes such imagery evoking illicit contact; he lectures his female readers as he converses with them, saying "let me whisper one word in your ears" (191). This imagined invasion of women's "locked houses," while part of the comic mode he uses, nevertheless conveys male prerogative and the power that men held over their female counterparts to enter into those spaces.

The idea comes across in Swetnam's suggestive request, then, as in responses to it that women's ability to maintain their borders was in constant jeopardy because of men's freedom to act on their desires—using women sexually—and this idea was represented through images of consumption. Anger complains that when men are attracted to women, "they become ravenous hawks, who do not only seize upon us, but devour us" (178). Anger's critique of the male sexual appetite that prevails throughout the piece is often, and proverbially, associated with horses—that animal common to anyone's experience in everyday England, whether rural or urban, and employed for labour or used as a means of attaining status and mobility. This creature was understood to have an appetite that caused it to eat until it became sick, rendering it useless for its occupation. The horse's long-standing associations with desire ("the passions") added to its suitability as a stand-in for the wanton male. The image of men as horses recurs throughout the

text, when Anger wants to describe the men who overindulge in sexual activity to the point at which they become repelled by women. Men, she says, “have been so daintily fed with our good natures that, like jades, (their stomachs are grown so queasy) they surfeit of our kindness” (175). Anger advises women to rein in men’s excessive appetites in order to protect their own boundaries, but also expresses the difficulty of doing so.

Further images build upon the idea of men’s inability to control their appetite, but also go deeper into the problems it created, attempting to express something about the sexual role women desired for themselves. Perhaps, too, Anger sees the efficacy of combining critique with sexual titillation, and the potential for a wider reception for her critique through her readers’ concupiscent interest in the text. Anger seems to urge women to ration out their sexual favours, perhaps referring to the understanding of the humoral body and men’s greater vulnerability to the detrimental effects of sexual intercourse: “Great eaters, being kept at a slender diet, never distemper their bodies but remain in good case; but afterwards, once turned forth to Liberty’s pasture, they graze so greedily as they become surfeiting jades and always after are good for nothing” (180). She exposes the hypocrisy in men’s criticism of women’s sexual excesses, when they actually appreciate women only for their sex appeal. She claims that “[t]heir eyes are so curious, as be not all women equal with Venus for beauty, they cannot abide the sight of them; their stomachs so queasy, as do they not taste but twice of one dish they straight surfeit, and needs must a new diet be provided for them . . . The Lion rageth when he is hungry, but man railleth when he is glutteth” (179). “We” women must hold them in check for our own sakes, for “if we do desire to have them good, we must always tie them to the manger and diet their greedy paunches; otherwise they will surfeit” (180). Readers are advised that “When provender [grain for feeding horses] prickes, the jade will winch, but keepe him at a slender ordinarie, and he will

be milde ynough.” Even men themselves, she says, occasionally show their awareness of how they are spoiled by all of women’s generosity: “That we are liberal they will not deny, since that many of them have (*ex confesso*) received more kindness in one day at our hands than they can repay in a whole year, and some have so glutted themselves with our liberality as they cry ‘No more’” (181-2). She says that when “*Lust* pricketh them, they will swear that *Love* stingeth us. Which imagination only is sufficient to assay the scaling of half a dozen of us in one night, when they will not stick to swear that if they should be denied of their requests, death must needs follow. Is it any marvel, though, they surfeit, when they are so greedy?” (183). The reference to the “manger” is one of numerous signs here that the author is attempting to stimulate readers with suggestively sexual comments; being “tied to rack and manger” (and its various versions) was an idiom for unmarried cohabitation. Indeed, men’s constant state of “surfeiting” and being “glutted” in the text matches women’s equally consistent experience of enduring “hard siege to the weak Fortress[es] of [their] frail Carcass” (315), of being accosted by men’s prying fingers and tongues, and of being “scaled,” “pricked” “stung,” and otherwise penetrated. While these passages seem designed at some points as a kind of thinly veiled or “soft” pornography, other parts of the text take a quite different tone, which suggests that perhaps there is an effort at genuine critique along with the appeal to male desires; perhaps this was the most efficacious way of promoting women, despite the images of women’s bodies being pierced or “entered” by men’s.

What might seriously be conveyed about male-female sexual dynamics make these vitriolic passages worthy of attention. Clearly, Anger berates oversexed men who seduce women through lies and then abandon them; but what is it that the speaker wants when it comes to the men she speaks to and about, in the pamphlet? Does a “slender diet” and the advice to women to keep

them tied up mean celibacy, and is she advising women to hold back from physical intimacy with men, as a way to maintain power? A close reading shows that the language, despite its extremity in many places, does not support this idea. Rather than starvation, in fact, she recommends a healthy—because moderate—diet that keeps them “in good case.” The notion of the woman’s denial of all sexual satisfaction is an idea Anger dispels through contrasting it with the extreme examples of the man who desires to bed six women in one night and the numerous biblical and historical male figures she mentions near the beginning who were notorious womanizers. Further evidence that she is attempting to negotiate a harmonious relationship between the sexes can be found in the passage in which she articulates men’s unwillingness to deal positively—and not just sexually—with women:

If we will not suffer them to smell on our smocks, they will snatch at our petticoats; but if our honest natures cannot away with that uncivil kind of jesting, then we are coy. Yet if we bear with their rudeness and be somewhat modestly familiar with them, they will straight make matter of nothing, blazing abroad that they have surfeited with love, and then their wits must be shown in telling the manner how. (175)

Here she articulates the impossible situation men put women in, when women try to be agreeable—or obedient—while still maintaining their personal boundaries. She also draws attention to their willingness to ruin women’s reputations with false claims, which has such serious consequences for women. She reiterates this idea later, showing the way men can misrepresent women’s responses to their overtures: “If we retire for a vantage, they will straight affirm that they have got the victory. Nay, some of them are so carried away with conceit that, shameless, they will blaze abroad among their companions that they have obtained the love of a woman unto whom they have never spoke above once, if that” (183). Further, she exposes some

of these claims to “surfeiting” as empty boasting, and perhaps as deliberate misinterpreting of women’s gestures of politeness or friendship, in a show of bravado to others, so that their trespass is not of the physical body but the image of the woman.

Texts such as Anger’s can be read as attempts by women to gain control over their own sexuality, despite the satirical element. The politics of sexual intimacy are central in this articulation of women’s need for self-determination, for the right to accept or decline men’s gestures of intimacy. Men and women’s meeting for the purpose of sexual intimacy must be a negotiation, Anger asserts, rather than the breaching of borders that it is in the images she gives. Men must back off and give women more space in which to exercise their preferences, which I will discuss further below.

“Let’s Have a Parle With You”: The Invitation to Rapprochement

In the defence pamphlets, both the problem and the potential of men and women’s intimacy and proximity come into view. Jane Anger describes a situation in which women are caught, for women’s being even “somewhat modestly familiar with them,” men are apt to misread their behaviour, resulting in difficulty for women in establishing their chasteness—and their boundaries. “Familiarity” on the part of women, as Anger notes, can be interpreted as an invitation to eager men’s sexual advances, while women’s reputations are fragile things, capable of being ruined through just the kind of announcement by men that Anger refers to. A woman’s ability to keep her “good name” is a concern of the other writers, as well; Esther Sovernam, for example, draws attention to the double standard: “[I]f a man abuse a Maid and get her with child, no matter is made of it but as a trick of youth, but it is made so heinous an offense in the Maid that she is disparaged and utterly undone by it” (231-2). The authors of *The Women’s Sharp Revenge*, too, discuss this issue in a section in which they concede that not all women are

virtuous; they protest the conditions that mean “whereas a Woman’s reputation is so poor that if it be so much as suspected, it will be long before the suspicion will be cleared, but if it be once blemished or tainted, the stains and spots are of such a tincture that the dye of the blemishes will stick to her all her lifetime and to her Children after her...” (308-9). By contrast, men easily escape such consequences. These writers expose the difference in power, and how men’s superior social power can be wielded in these interactions, in which women are at men’s mercy, whether or not sexual activity actually occurs between them. Gaining access to women’s intimate spaces, men then have particular power over women, and the disparity between them is a stubborn impediment to harmony.

Cooperative interaction between men and women does happen occasionally in the pamphlets, as well, demonstrating how interdependent the sexes are in the material arrangements of the time. Positive portrayals are given in representations of the willing crossing of spatial borders—if still complicated by cultural discourse disparaging women. Esther Sowernam, for example, begins her text with an anecdote about a dinner conversation she had had the night before, where, in mixed company, the subject of woman—predictably, she indicates—had come up: “As there is nothing more usual for table-talk; there fell out a discourse concerning women, some defending, others objecting against our Sex.” Swetnam’s tract was mentioned, and when she expressed her desire to read it, one of the gentlemen at the gathering brought it to her the following day, she reports. This helpful behaviour contrasts rather strikingly with the way men are portrayed in Sowernam’s pamphlet immediately following this introduction, and reminds us, perhaps, of the fun that the debate about women could generate, how it could be framed in different settings and with varying dynamics, and how it could fuel both desire and repugnance for the opposite sex. It also suggests that class plays a significant part in a woman’s ability to

control her proximity to men. A willingness to discuss the issue of women's value comes across here, and so we can interpret Anger's and Sowernam's pamphlets (and maybe even those of some of their detractors) as attempts to engage with the opposite sex—however clumsily, at times—as Constantia Munda also clearly does; she suggests a discussion with Swetnam after his rage (fuelled, she perhaps suggests, by sexual frustration) has dissipated: “[N]ow let us talk with you in your cold blood ... let's have a parle with you” (251). The “railing” that goes on in the defences of women often contains suggestions of at least partially-amicable relations, if men approach them without excessive sexual aggression; the authors mix these intimations with the extreme language of invective against the serious nature of men's transgressions against women.

Despite occasional pleasure derived, even for women, in the published debate, and the falseness of some of men's claims to sexual conquering of female subjects, the problem of rape, sexual coercion, and physical abuse, as well as seduction and subsequent abandonment, remains a serious one. The sexual subjugation that marriage entailed for women, and the structurally sanctioned dominance of men, which included women's necessary obedience to them, allowed men room to manoeuvre, to gain what they desired from women. Both the attacks on and defences of women address sexual desire and the fact, or possibility, of sexual contact between them, and the affective discomfort (or emotional disconnection) that often existed between them at the same time. With the social proximity of bodies in relation to one another, it was difficult for women to manipulate society's codes to respond to their needs. In other words, physical intimacy may have occurred without affective intimacy—and without women's consent, which they begin here to articulate and protest. The overt rules held that sex was permissible only within marriage, but the reality—the underlying code—seemed to allow for men's abuse of their

position in relation to women in order to secure women's sexual compliance. This is at least part of the platform that Anger presents.

Notwithstanding the satire of Anger's tract, her intention seems to be twofold, in that she seeks to "protect" both women's reputation and their physical safety, and she implies the second is not possible without the success of the first. Men's crossing of women's physical or spatial boundaries becomes the focus of the argument, interwoven with the theme of the verbal detraction men commit in writing. We hear not only of men's snatching at petticoats, which is telling in itself, but even more graphically, of the reach of "Venerians' " hands, for "no cloath can keep their long nailes out of our bosomes" (180). Later, she uses the language of physical intimacy and bodily violation, this time to suggest the verbal damage and betrayal that comes of men's slander: "Mischief, he pries into every corner of us, seeing if he can espy a cranny, that getting in his finger into it, he may make it wide enough for his tongue to wag in" (185-6). Indeed, Swetnam's "let me whisper one word in your ears..." (191) shows the prerogative he feels regarding women's bodies. In this suggestion of intimacy, he assumes his right to close proximity with them. The problems attendant in the fact that men and women live side by side, and that their interdependence requires their frequent coming into contact, when they occupy such disparate social positions, are plain in Anger's text.

Anger highlights the egregious nature of men's mistreatment of women that intimate domestic conditions allow, by emphasizing women's care for men. When men are sick they need women, and no less when they are well; in fact, there is nothing men have that is not touched and provided, it seems, by women:

They are comforted by our means; they [are] nourished by the meats we dress; their bodies [are] freed from diseases by our cleanliness, which otherwise would surfeit unreasonably

through their own noisomeness. Without our care they lie in their beds as dogs in litter and go like lost Mackerel swimming in the heat of summer. They love to go handsomely in their apparel and rejoice in the pride thereof, yet who is the cause of it but our carefulness, to see that everything about them be curious [elabourately prepared]. Our virginity makes us virtuous; our conditions, courteous; and our chastity maketh our trueness of love manifest. (181)

She overturns the traditional view of women as servants, or “men’s mere Vassals,” a role that women have been brought up to understand themselves in through the “policy of all parents” (Henderson and McManus 313). Rather, she presents the work that women do for them as part of what makes men dependent, rather than superior. In this caretaking position, women work closely with men’s bodies, but this intimacy is to the men’s benefit. However, they themselves are grievously put at risk by men’s exploitation of the intimate household situations in which the men have greater access to women’s bodies.

“Your currish disposition”²⁷: Canine Representation of Male Attackers Against Captive Women

As Anger shows, above, just as writers move from the material level to the metaphorical, their language also works the other way, and often weaves together the literal and figurative. So when women represented themselves as prey, or as being under attack—often by adversaries represented by dangerously unloosed, vicious or mad animals—we should expect that they mean to indicate the physical threats to their persons, in addition to their status in society. The usefulness of such images came from people’s familiarity with wild creatures, from their own experience living in close proximity to nature, and from the traditional use of nature’s inhabitants proverbially and symbolically. Most animals were automatically linked to baser instincts, including unrestrained sexuality, with some of them being especially indicative of uncontrolled

²⁷From Constantia Munda’s *The Worming of a mad Dog*, (Henderson and McManus 253).

carnality. Esther Sowernam refers to a lecherous man as a “Common Town Bull” (309); Anger, too, talks about men as bulls, running after cows, in her discussion of male lust (176). For her, they are also “ravenous hawks,” (178), and “nothing better than brute beasts” when they make “our body ... a footstool to their vile lust” (179). We’ve seen them in Anger’s text as the equine “greedy grazer,” apt to demonstrate fickle behaviour (180). They “snarl on [her],” and “bark” (181). She warns that men use persuasive words to seduce women, saying, “when the Fox preacheth, let the geese take heed: it is before an execution” (185). Man is “a Wolf clothed in sheep’s raiment” (186). In like manner, Rachel Speght asks for shelter from her lofty readers, against the persecuting heat of Swetnam, a “fierie and furious Dragon.” And one of the most common images of man is as the “bayter,” a reference to the practice of bear-baiting for public entertainment, “a very popular sport in which dogs were set upon a bear chained to a stake” (Henderson and McManus 192). The writers who respond to Swetnam take issue with his use of the image, perhaps especially because of the casual way he refers to his text as an occasion of “Bearbaiting,” and invites interested readers to enjoy it as such. Incorporating the image into their pamphlets, women’s defenders protest against it, and present it—the “sport” and men’s attacks on women—as the antagonistic, abusive activity it is. We see, for example, how they involve scripture to justify their resistance to, and their call for the prevention of, this kind of aggression; in *A Mouzell For Melastomus*, subtitled *The Cynicall Bayter of, and foule-mouthed Barker against Evahs sex*,” for example, Speght cries, “[Y]ou haue plainly displayed you[r] owne disposition to be Cynicall, in that there appeares no other Dogge or Bull, to bayte [women], but your selfe.” This ubiquitous image, so suggestive of specific animal associations and spatial metaphors, calls for further examination.

The captive bear that calls up the association of men with bulls and dogs is, of course, full of significance for the argument taking place through the pamphlets. We can recall Christine de Pisan's metaphor of woman as a field without a hedge to protect her borders, open to any attack, because the bear, tied up, is similarly unable to defend itself, and is open to assault and torment, its movements confined to the length of its shackles. The image is carefully chosen to express women's situation in a society in which they lacked the authorization to refuse and resist men's actions towards them. As Rosanne Gasse demonstrates in her discussion of "Hunger" in *Piers Plowman*, the dog proves to be a "polysemous" image in premodern English culture, and medieval symbology certainly carries over into the early modern era. Because it was so heavily loaded with associations, the dog—if not all the animals evoked in the texts—was a metaphor that writers could employ with shrewdness, to emphasize and give further persuasiveness to their claims. Like Speght, Constantia Munda incorporates the image of bear-baiting in her title, as well: *The Worming of a mad Dog* is followed by *or, A Sop for Cerberus, the Jailor of Hell. No Confutation but a sharp Redargation of the baiter of Women*. Referencing the gatekeeper of the underworld in order to deride Swetnam, Munda builds on the metaphor of bear-baiting, casting her adversary and women in roles that clearly expose the antagonism that exists between them because of men's behaviour, and the hypocrisy of men's complaints against the opposite sex.

The dog's history provides the defence writers with an apt image for their purposes. Gasse notes that in addition to their positive role as companions, dogs are well-known as attacking animals, too. She cites the frequency with which they appear this way, and notes "the number of cures for dog bites listed in the Old English *Herbarium* and the moral exemplums used of biting dogs which are found in collections such as *Aesop's Fables* and the preacher's manual *Fasciculus Morum*" (3). Gasse's work helps contextualize Munda's title, too, when she

explains that Piers uses bread to divert Hunger (personified in the text by a dog) from its attack on him. As we can well imagine, "Trying to divert a dog's attention with a piece of bread is an animal-control technique so old and well-known that it is referenced in Aesop" (3). She also mentions dogs as commonly begging creatures, and as perpetually hungry, "ever-voracious" (4). In the "general frame of reference" she explicates (4), we recognize some of the traditional associations she mentions in our modern idea of the dog: it is a hunting animal (which fits with the writers' suggestion that women are men's prey); to be called a dog is an insult, particularly a "son of a bitch" (5); it means a common sort of person, a heathen, and—in the early modern mind—it is associated with the underworld (5). Its associations with religion are multiple, and include the hell hound—minion or representative of the devil, who pursues the Christian believer (5). Gasse adds further historical and literary context:

Likewise in *Ancrene Wisse*, while the dog can on the one hand be symbolic of the human sinner, more often it has a demonic significance: the dog of hell surrounded by its attendant "blodiflehen of stinkinde þohtes" is the vice of Lechery waiting to bite the unwary sinner who lets it get too close, that must be struck down at once with a heavy stick, while demonic greyhounds await their master's command to drive the sinner like prey into the Devil's nets of despair and presumption. (5)

What convenient shorthand for the virtuous woman who wishes to assert her moral and spiritual superiority over men! Dogs also signal carnality, and can employ "a trick that dupes a foolish girl into giving up her virginity to a lecherous cleric" (6). Can we fail to recognize the men castigated in the pamphlets? The dog has a "voracious appetite" (6), and a tendency to eat its own vomit, so great is its insatiability. The dogs referred to in the pamphlets, too, often show a propensity both to vomit and to eat their own or others' vomit. The dog is a "fairweather friend,"

leaving someone after obtaining what he wants from her (7). Gasse sums up her account with what is by now more than clear: the dog is “[t]he epitome of immoderate appetite” (11). Indeed, it would be surprising, to say the least, if women did not use this creature to expose the male vices they deplore. And the pain of dog bites and the fear that was doubtless inspired by canine attacks—imagined or experienced—in addition to the common sight of bears bound and beset by hounds, help to outline how women suffer at men's hands. Furthermore, the very practice of bearbaiting as a form of entertainment suggests the darkest of associations regarding how women could be treated; as Paula Gunn Allen observes, in a hierarchical culture like that of sixteenth-century Western Europe, control is kept by allowing those oppressed by state forces to each experience a small amount of that power, towards those beneath them, which ensures their consent to the practices used by the ruling elite (39).²⁸ Allen's insight links the actual baiting of bears and the tormenting of women more firmly, and suggests that the physical argumentative “baiting” of women, as well, was a political, as well as pleasurable, pastime for those who took part in it. The image signals its importance through its recurrence in the pamphlet debate, and this is due to how it reproduced the conditions of women's position in relation to the men around them, and to patriarchal culture in general.

This metaphorical connection between woman and bear in the cruel image of bearbaiting speaks to a wider development in attitudes towards nature at this time. Male prerogative in the realm of women's space and bodies derives from a tradition of hierarchical structuring that became more pronounced in the early modern era. Caroline Merchant follows the trajectory of

²⁸ Allen's remarks come in the context of her discussion of European, Christian ideology (apparent in documents from this period) and the deliberate dismantling, by the Jesuits, of Native forms of government and social practice, such as those of the Montagnais-Naskapi, who lived in the St. Lawrence Valley. Evidence shows that this culture operated by a non-authoritarian system, with power being dispersed evenly across gender lines; the absence of hierarchy and of punishment was regrettable, according to the Jesuit Paul le Jeune, who was charged with “civilizing” the Montagnais. He wrote of his intentions to institute these aspects of European rule, which are clearly linked. The first was not possible without the second, as Allen says, for “[h]ow could they understand tyranny and respect it unless they wielded it upon each other and experienced it at each other's hands?” (39).

the ideology that helped to instigate and perpetuate a new perspective on the earth and its resources that not only allowed for the exploitation of the physical world, but that was reflected in the way women were perceived and categorized, as well as how they were subsequently treated. If the abuse of women not so much began as continued, the justifications for it were revamped and rearticulated, incorporating imagery and language from the emergent perspective that came out of scientific and capitalistic streams of thought. Merchant describes the “organic” conception of the cosmos, which included the important idea of a “female world soul,” whose replacement with a mechanistic paradigm meant the demise, too, of the “normative constraints” that had previously prevented the wholesale exploitation of the earth’s resources (111). Women’s close ties to the landscape were strong in the English cultural imagination, and people’s ambivalence to and experience with the elements, features, and inhabitants of the natural world meant that women were vulnerable to fluctuations in how others saw them. At this time, Merchant explains,

[W]ild uncontrollable nature was associated with the female. The images of both nature and woman were two-sided. The virgin nymph offered peace and serenity, the earth mother nurture and fertility, but nature also brought plagues, famines, and tempests. Similarly, woman was both virgin and witch: the Renaissance courtly lover placed her on a pedestal; the inquisitor burned her at the stake. The witch, symbol of the violence of nature, raised storms, caused illness, destroyed crops, obstructed generation, and killed infants.

Disorderly woman, like chaotic nature, needed to be controlled. (127)

This cultural backdrop sets the stage for Swetnam’s and others’ attack on women, and makes typical the use of agricultural and monetary images and metaphors in their texts. The writers who

respond to Swetnam and to the lines of thinking that his writing reflect had to work against this powerful view of nature that such a perspective entailed.

“Yet Every [Horse] That Kicks Is Not Galled”: Increasing Space for Women

Here, as in many places, violence and pain play a key role as women protest the restraint and confinement they endure—and as they assert that it is actually men who require reining in. Another image that links these themes is the horse, which carries associations besides its reputation for having a sensitive stomach. The *galled horse*, for example, appears in *The Schoolhouse of Women* (whose author is unknown), Jane Anger’s text, Joseph Swetnam’s, and Rachel Speght’s. The proverb to which they refer, which is expressed in a number of versions, is simple: as Speght cites it, “Rubbe a galled horse, and he will kicke.” The saying is a cultural idiom for the idea that one becomes defensive when, and only when, an unfavourable judgment about one is true. Our current colloquial equivalent might be, in a similar situation, that someone “touches (or hits) a nerve.” Swetnam, along with the author of *The Schoolhouse* and many other writers of attacks on women, employs the proverb, claiming that good women should not be insulted by his text, and that only those women whom his critique fits ought to take offense. But although the proverb may be applied to both sexes, as we see below, its implications are quite different depending on which gender this creature refers to.

Writers of women’s defences deal with the adage in different ways. Jane Anger’s approach is to regender the image, building on her metaphor of the horse tied to the manger so that it will not “surfeit,” which she uses to suggest that men must be kept from acting on their baser instincts. Anger, in fact, uses the horse in a radical way, overturning the image that writers of the “attacks” use (as Swetnam does twenty-five years later) in its typical connection with women, by casting men rather than women as the horse in need of restraint. Near the end of her

piece, she refers to the proverb, but in a sympathetic way, perhaps to subtly undermine the spatial restrictions that it creates conventionally for women: “If a jade be galled, will he not wince, and can you find fault with a horse that springeth when he is spurred?” (186). She changes the meaning of this image, by taking it into a context in which the horse is a creature who only pretends to be “healed” or quiet after its being galled or spurred, respectively. Men who rage against women, like the “surfeiting lover” whose text she answers, are “diseased”; this kind of man will appear harmless when he has convalesced or come out of his fury, but cannot be trusted because “yet he will show himself in kind,” reverting to his old habits of sexual inconstancy “when his smart ceaseth” (186). Without a more compelling reason to reform themselves than women’s requests, men will ignore these attempts to improve their behaviour, and women must continue to be wary of them. Anger does not work with the traditional sense of the adage, since doing so would not achieve the effect it has with regard to women; men *can* speak out (or *kick*) in order to protest, without causing damage to their virtue; without finding themselves in a double-bind. Instead, Anger reformulates it, and draws out another aspect of a horse’s nature in service of her point.

The officially sanctioned power that men have over women makes the violence that underlies the proverb much more serious when women are the ones represented by the horse. Swetnam’s use of the image, for example, links the mistreatment of horses with how women must be handled, conveying the abuse implicit in such proverbial discourse. He argues for the validity of wife-beating, especially of women who won’t keep silent: “As a sharp bit curbs a froward horse, even so a curst woman must be roughly used...” (209). This passage provides a chilling backdrop for references to horses whenever they are used in connection with women.

Rachel Speght takes up the suggestion Anger makes in excusing the kicking of horses, but gives more attention to the traditional meaning of the galled horse and its association with women. She attempts to push back the boundaries enclosing women when she exposes the flawed logic of Swetnam's accusation. Shooting down his "*Bugge-beare* or aduice vnto Women, that whatsoever they doe thinke of your Worke, they should conceale it, lest in finding fault, they bewray their galled backes to the world," she responds:

Vnto it I answere by way of Apologie, that though everie galled horse, being touched, doth kicke; yet euery one that kickes, is not galled: so that you might as well haue said, that because burnt folks dread the fire, therefore none feare fire but those that are burnt, as made that illiterate conclusion which you haue absurdly inferred.

Speght dismantles the rhetorical structure Swetnam has used to box women in, and condones their "kicking." In his employment of the adage, women have no room to move or respond, because, as he implies, a woman who speaks out against his diatribe and protests her innocence merely proves her guilt, since it is silence that makes a woman virtuous, and her speech in itself that condemns her. In showing her anger, a woman goes against the rules of appropriate behaviour, so expressing her emotions likewise demonstrates "to the world" that Swetnam is correct in his assessment of women. Speght uses this image of the galled horse and overturns it, pointing out that women who take issue with the logic, grammar, or any other element of Swetnam's argument are not necessarily guilty of the crimes he charges them with, just as horses sometimes kick when being handled (and are perhaps more likely to do so when being too "roughly used") even when they are not sick or injured. Speght's clever reasoning makes strides in equipping women with language to counter this means of silencing them.

If, as Christina Luckyj argues, Speght's response to Swetnam was a coded critique of James I, the point is strengthened further. Luckyj makes a convincing case for the allegorical reading of Speght ("Rereading the Swetnam-Speght Debate"), putting this treatise in the cultural context in which many observed James's rule becoming increasingly absolutist. Allegory works both ways, so that its message would not be discernible or meaningful if it did not apply to the situation being openly discussed as well as the one implied; if the king's behaviour was being criticized through the pamphlets that discussed marriage, then they were none the less relevant to that domestic institution than to the issues of royal power, and the desire for "space" for the political subject.

Gwynne Kennedy investigates in a helpful way the common adage about the galled horse and its material implications in Swetnam's and other texts:

The galled horse is by definition imperfect—either sick or injured, depending on whether "galled" means diseased or made raw from repeated rubbings (*OED*). The disease, presumably, is pride and the refusal to accept the male master's control or correction, however slight...The raw spot suggests repeated resistance or disobedience, a self-inflicted injury from willfulness and insubordination. (28)

Swetnam evokes the idea of public opinion to add to his censure of any of women's attempts at resistance against domination by men: others, like him, will interpret women's anger as a symptom of their "sickness," he is saying, and so women expose themselves to their own detriment—losing credibility—in fighting against their male superiors. He implies that women should be embarrassed to let others see that they have striven against men's directives or wishes, so that the men have beaten them. An important question is how directly this image corresponds to an actual, material equivalent; to what extent should we take this analogy involving physical

restraint and abuse literally? Frances Dolan's study of legal reports and complaints of abuse involving men's violence against women in domestic situations, *Marriage and Violence* (2008) indicates that the horrific image in the passage depicts all too closely the actual physical relations between men and women.

Kennedy quotes I.T., whose comments highlight the physical as well as metaphorical relationship between the sexes:

Yet thou [the brawling wife or malapert mistress] the more I put thee in minde of thy dutie, the more unrulie wilt waxe; the more I contradict thee, the more fiercer wilt thou rage; & the more I touch thy gauld backe, the more dangerously wilt thou winche; untill thy precise pride be turned to thy best ornament humilitie, & thy overweening presumption metamorphosed to a confession of thy weaknesse. (qtd. in Kennedy 28)

But despite the fact that women are so often denied “just anger,” or acknowledgement of the legitimacy of their rage against unfair criticism and treatment by their male companions (as Kennedy demonstrates convincingly in her work), they attempt to use their anger—their scolding, “railing,” “brauling,” “unrulie . . . waxing,” “wincing,” biting, and kicking—to push back the boundaries that so constrict them, and that keep them under the control of men (which is precisely what the men take aim at). The suggestion is made through proverbial references, and seems to be inherent in the image of the galled horse, that women are overly sensitive to criticism, both because they are irrational and because their proper role involves accepting and submitting to such criticism; however, the fact remains that the horse with the galled back *is* justifiably sore, and has reason to balk. Its wincing and kicking indicate a natural cause-and-effect process, even though such a reaction is met with condescension and continued attempts to quash its resistance. Granted, then, that while men may persist in trying to control women, the

expression of anger creates space around the woman, and can keep away those who would “tame” her, at least for a time.

Women-authored texts from the period (and those that proclaimed their authorship female) made use of not only this, but other physical images and ideas to carve out a social or domestic area for themselves, against the forces that hemmed them into a small, vulnerable and exploitable position. The names of some of the most well known of the pamphlets illustrate this point admirably: Rachel Speght’s “muzzling” (*A Muzzle for Melastomus*) and Ester Sowernam’s “hanging” (*Ester hath hang’d Haman*) straightforwardly present the reverse of women’s subordination, with language that indicates the violent treatment of recalcitrant men. In Constantia Munda’s *The Worming of a Madde Dogge*, the author likewise suggests extreme physical measures to deal with the author’s adversary, threatening that “we will cram you with Antidotes and Catapotions, that if you swell not till you burst, yet your digested poison shall not be contagious ... wherefore I have provided this sop for Cerberus, indifferent well steeped in vinegar” (Henderson and McManus 254). The violence that these writers use helps them make the case for why such measures are required, and justify extreme bodily acts to defend themselves against their attackers.

Women’s need for protection grew with the loosening of social structures that accompanied the Reformation, which historians have documented. The uncertainty of women’s new position within society as England moved more deeply into Protestantism brought them similarly uncertain gifts. Joy Wiltenburg traces the developments of women’s material conditions in Europe at this time, noting the increased emphasis on each individual’s conscience and her unique relationship to God, which credited women with a certain amount of autonomy and responsibility; however, the onus now placed on the male as head of the household meant

the possibility, at least, of men's further and tighter control of women than previously (15). Wiltenburg explains the changing economic climate that meant fewer opportunities for women (12), and the Protestant reforms such as the abolishment of nunneries and of feminine images and saints (15), as significant aspects of women's declining position. These tighter restrictions not only led women to feel the pressures of their shrinking boundaries, but, as Wiltenburg points out, it caused others around them to fear the resistance that women expressed in contexts in the pamphlets and elsewhere (8). Another contributing factor in women's sense of their own vulnerability at this time is the erosion of kinship structures that protected them in smaller, more unified communities; as young women (and men) moved to the cities (particularly London, the largest city by far in the early modern period), they could no longer rely on (nor were they bound by) the closeness of familial connections to oversee their behaviour or their safety. The circumstances of city life, with its many possibilities for social interactions of all kinds, along with emerging ideology regarding individualism, encouraged more "contractual relations in place of reliance on tradition and custom" (Wiltenburg 21). Ironically, then, as the patriarchal structure of the household took hold with newly-articulated force, great numbers of women were finding themselves without the male figure who would conventionally have been their protector. Women's attempts to protect themselves and each other, which we see in the pamphlets like Anger's, are articulated within these social conditions, which may help to explain the vehemence of the pamphlets' tone and content.

The very act of "raging," expressing negative feelings with obvious emotion, possibly loudly and accompanied by physical gestures and thereby causing or encouraging others to keep their distance, is one of the very reasons, if unstated, that women's anger was so unacceptable. If men assumed the right to unconditional, consistent access to women's spaces and women's

bodies, then they would have a motive to circumvent any gesture on the part of women to limit that access. Indeed, the metaphor of the swelling toad, following (if somewhat incoherently) the galled horse image, which the author of *The Schoolhouse* (possibly Edward Gosynhill²⁹) uses to represent women's response to even a small gesture of correction from a man, suggests his intolerance of women's occupation of more space than usual or desirable:

when ye [a man] touche the sore
 With one bare worde, or lytle more
 They [women] flushe and flame, as hote as fyre
 And swell as a tode, for fervent ire. (138)

The excessive heat which accompanies (or causes) their swelling, too, suggests an environment unsuited to men's comfort, and a bodily state for the women not amenable to men's pleasure. "Swelling" suggests rhetorically not only the experience of the angry person, but the effect of this person on those who witness it, and is coded as an unwelcome, unacceptable response to men.

The image of women taking up greater amounts of space is particularly odious and threatening to men, it seems, in the images they present in the pamphlets and elsewhere. The "swelling" of angry women implies that they encroach on territory that does not belong to them, keeping men at a distance, and also, perhaps, moving into space that has been men's purview. It is significant that some of the very anger that underlies this issue is the direct result of women's wish not to engage in sexual intimacies with men, and that the rejection these men feel is the possible motivation for their written invectives, as a number of the defence writers note.³⁰ Men

²⁹ I have listed this source under Gosynhill's name in my bibliography.

³⁰ Esther Sowernam makes this point (314); likewise Anger suggests men's claims of conquering women come despite women's refusals of their advances (177), and that her adversary—the writer of the treatise she is answering—has had negative experiences with "Italian Courtesans" (183);

had been accorded the greater freedom to occupy social space as they pleased, and they felt any expansion in the presence of the other keenly, experiencing it as an alien incursion; they declared it inappropriate in the pamphlets, using proverbial discourse to support their position. Any increasing breadth of women's physical and psychic scope threatens that analogous area occupied by men, and hence such growth appears as danger that pushes them to the sides of shared public or domestic space, and even overwhelms this space, in the language of the pamphlets. No one wants to go near a woman who exhibits hostility or violent anger—just as they wouldn't a “Bore [that] fome[s] at the mouth,” as Solomon suggests the angry woman resembles (Swetnam 18). This creature poses a violent threat to all those around it, and makes these others back away from it. Another of Swetnam's metaphors expresses particularly his fear of the angry woman, representing her as “the Sea, which at sometimes is so calme, that a Cockboat may safely endure her might; but anon again with outrage she is growne, that it overwhelmeth the tallest Ship that is” (3). The power of such claims is apparent in the fact that even today, studies show that women's speaking is experienced as excessive and as taking more time than men's, even when this is not the case (Holmes, ch. 2). When women's presence exceeds the area that has been allowed them by social arrangement, as when they express their anger, for example—in words and/or actions—the pamphlets show that they are seen as violating these established rules, and thereby as claiming too much social territory for themselves, and often as threatening to overwhelm the selves of men.

“At least we will cram you with Antidotes and Catapotions”: *Women's Counter-Violence*

The rhetorical and material forces that constrain women appear in the defences in other images of violence to give force to their arguments, and have the effect of bolstering the solidity of the female selves that speak and are spoken for. Sidney Sondergard interprets both the

popularity and effectiveness of violence in some women's writing of the time, reiterating Richardson's and Bruster's assertions regarding the early modern preoccupation with the body, and the "emphasis on corporality" (Sondergard 21) that was so pervasive in the day. It is helpful here, too, to note Sondergard's (and others') argument about the body as text, and how the body comes to resonate, through cultural discourse, with the measures taken by the state to control its citizenry. Violence done to the body was very real in the English cultural imagination: those who lived in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had experience through either their own memories or reports of the recent turbulence deriving from religious conflicts; they witnessed the public disciplining and high-profile beheadings regularly carried out by authority of the Crown; they saw or felt the whippings and other corporal punishments that were typical consequences for various crimes, such as adultery, for men—for a married woman, it meant execution (Wiesner 300). They lived in a culture in which, as Sondergard points out, the Tudor monarchs had "popularized violence" (21). Further, Frances Dolan's research into domestic violence shows the pervasiveness of the use of harmful physical force within marriage, and how the marriage model actually set conditions that easily led to discord and the eruption of violence (54). In such an environment, it is no wonder writers use extreme and visceral language to persuade their readers, and to substantiate their own voices.

Sondergard discusses the way early modern women "resort" to rhetorical violence, having few other ways to add impetus to their arguments. Certainly, men's and women's use of violence had differing implications, due to the disparity between genders. In any case, these kinds of images abound in many of the defences of women, and while, again, one possibility for one or more of these texts is that a male writer has hijacked a woman's voice in order to satirize her sex, the hostility expressed in these tracts may also have spoken for at least some women

readers, and not just repelled them. Sondergard notes that the women writers she studies use violence in particularly gendered ways, and that these writers did not “simply [begin] imitating the rhetorical strategies of male writers who were perpetuating norms” (23). While Sondergard’s conclusions may fit the texts she examines, some of the pamphlets in my study that claim female authorship do incorporate images of violence against men. One difference between the texts voiced by a man and those whose speaker is a woman is that the men’s violence tends to be sexually aggressive. If men use violence in their writing to maintain the social order in which they dominate, for example, which involves the suppression of those elements that pose a threat to this order, including women, then women’s attempts to undermine such efforts contrast with these aims. Rhetorical violence in the service of self-defence veers away from conventional uses of violence, and this is one thing we can read in the defences of women.

If we look carefully at Jane Anger’s piece, for example, we see that the violence in it is really about the safety of women, rather than revenge or the oppression of others. She begins with vituperative language that, while in a comic or playful tone, nevertheless calls for an extreme response to deal with “surfeiting” men: “Will the Gods permit it, the Goddesses stay their punishing judgments, and we ourselves not pursue their undoings for such devilish practices?” (174). The “undoing” of men articulates, even if only in a mocking tone, the dissolution of women’s attackers, as opposed to the further solidification of the security that women desired. She goes further yet, envisioning the disappearance of her foe: “Let the streams of the channels in London streets run so swiftly as they may be able alone to carry them [men] from that sanctuary! Let the stones be as Ice, the soles of their shoes as Glass, the ways steep like Aetna, and every blast a Whirlwind puffed out of Boreas his long throat, that these may hasten their passage to the Devil’s haven!” (174). The removal of threatening, predatory men from the

space she is claiming for women (London) is for protective reasons, not vengeance. Interestingly, the speaker appropriates the city as an ally, through her verbal command of its part, and establishes her authority through naming its places and power.

She does not limit her focus to the bodies of her adversaries, but incorporates her own, as well, in order to vivify her message. In these passages, though, discomfort seems to work in service of subjectivity, being presented as part of the effort to fend off the “other.” She conveys the idea of pain in the writing of her response to women’s attackers, caused by these oversexed men who prey on women, and incorporating violence to add “argumentative emphasis” (Sondergard 120). Fast on the heels of the images of men on their way to hell—being taken away or negated—come ideas about her own bodily tension: “. . .and shall not Anger stretch the veins of her brains, the strings of her fingers, and the lists of her modesty to answer their Surfeitings?” (174). This passage, combining pleasure, through alliteration and internal rhyme, with pain, draws attention to her own striving body, establishing and entrenching her position against the hostile other. Imagery conveyed in the term “stretching” implies that she pushes at her boundaries, physically (the “veins of her brains” and “the strings of her fingers”) and socially (“the lists [or limits] of her modesty”). The “lists” that suggest battling as sport, specifically the boundaries around the place of the tournaments, make a subtle but strong statement about her willingness to participate in a public encounter involving men. A metaphor that Speght also incorporates, more directly, the image is reiterated in Anger’s poem at the end of the tract. As she stresses elsewhere, the goal behind such a tactic is defence, rather than aggressive offense or active suppression of the other, as male pamphlet literature in the debate tended to express. The potentially comical and sexual element of this passage, I think, does not nullify its representation of a substantial female speaker and subject.

The rhetorical “negation” of the threatening male presence, and images of the subversion or “obliteration” of female presence, in the language of Sondergard’s work, appears to effect in the pamphlets on both sides of the dialogue, again with specifically gender-inflected results. The “undoing” of hostile men that Anger calls for in a moment of exaggerated vituperation, above, and which seemingly requires divine power to achieve, is echoed later in her text with a woman’s “undoing” when the behaviour of men causes her chastity to be called into question, whether or not women actually engaged in sexual activity with men. She says, “Our good toward them is the destruction of ourselves; we, being well formed, are by them foully deformed” (178). There is here a suggestion of the distortion of shape that occurs with pregnancy. She later adds, “[Hesiod] would have said that if a woman trust unto a man, it shall fare as well with her as if she had a weight of a thousand pounds tied about her neck and then cast into the bottomless seas” (179). The extremity of such language adds weight(!) to the warning she conveys to her readers about the potential for their own dissolution in their dealings with men.

An envisioning of violent fates for men appears throughout Anger’s pamphlet and other defences of women, and does, in fact, seem to bear out Sondergard’s theory that women—or female personae, with regard to my study—have differing uses of violence as compared with male writers, and that these serve to establish and shore up their subjectivity through self-defence rather than outright attack on others. Echoing Jane Anger’s call for protection through the restraining of men through “haltering” them and “tying them to the manger”(180), Constantia Munda’s speaker imagines a similar ability to control men’s violence, addressing them directly and exposing the difference between the need for, and misuse of, restraint: “Yet lest villainy domineer and triumph in fury, we will manacle your dissolute fist, that you deal not your blows so unadvisedly ... [t]hough feminine modesty hath confined our rarest and ripest wits to silence”

(249). Their concern seems to be with preventing the men's violence against them (and drawing attention to the way women are suppressed), which differs significantly from the way Swetnam's aggression, the necessary "rough handling" of women he cites in order to control them, for example, is figured. Both Anger and Munda connect the spoken word with violence, helping their readers see the serious assault implicit in silencing women, and the physical harm that follows from language that debases them. Anger's vision includes violence aimed at men, but perhaps significantly, it is violence that she does not (or cannot) carry out: "[Men's] slanderous tongues are so short ... that they know we cannot catch hold of them to pull them out..." (175). Later, she links word and material actuality again when she warns her readers, "Their glozening tongues [are] the preface to the execution of their vile minds, and their pens, the bloody executioners of their barbarous manners" (183). The difference in harm that illicit sexual contact has on the genders comes across in the (violent) metaphor Anger uses to persuade readers that many men are willing to deliberately suffer in some way—whether she means having their own reputations tainted, or going through the torment of lust that they allow themselves, is not clear—in order to obtain women's sexual favours: "Wherein they resemble Envy, who will be contented to lose one of his eyes that another might have both his pulled out" (184). Munda chastises Swetnam for compelling women to be silent, and for putting them in the position of being unable to defend themselves without proving his accusations true; she describes the only types of response women could be expected to express, in contrast with the violent reactions Swetnam could anticipate from men if he were to attack them in a similar fashion (and which keep him from doing so):

if your currish disposition had dealt with men, you were afraid that *Lextalionis* [retribution or retaliation] would meet with you; wherefore you surmised that, inveighing against poor

illiterate women, we might fret and bite the lip at you, we might repine to see ourselves baited and tossed in a blanket, but never durst in open view of the vulgar either disclose your blasphemous and derogative slanders or maintain the untainted purity of our glorious sex. Nay, you'll put gags in our mouths and conjure us all to silence; you will first abuse us, then bind us to peace. We must be tongue-tied, lest in starting up to find fault we prove ourselves guilty of those horrible accusations. (253)

Elsewhere, the pain Munda envisions for men comes not from women, but results from their own actions against the opposite sex: "If you delight to sow thorns," she advises Swetnam, "is it not fit you should go on them barefoot and barelegged?" (250). Her last words, "transcribed" from another source, suggest the appropriate conclusion to his life: being laughed at by others for the work of his "rude quill," and "to feel this, and then groan/ ... and none / May rescue thee till your checked conscience cry, / 'This, this I have deserved!' then pine and die" (262-3). This sentiment is echoed in Speght's equally extreme language as she concludes that "Whosoever blasphemeth God, ought by his Law, to die." Both Munda's and Speght's criticism continues to present violence against men as either self-imposed or necessary for women's self-defence.

Building Up the (H)Edges

To "sow thorns" is an image that calls up the agricultural metaphors that reappear in the texts, repeating the theme of gardening, fecundity, and sexuality together. While the violent images they reproduce reflect the urgency of women's demands for protection, the writers of defences also use non-violent metaphors to put forward a positive vision of their improved standing, and legitimized use of space, in society. Metaphors of gardening lend themselves well to the expressing of tensions surrounding the question of physical territory. Anger uses language in a way that articulates a broader area for women, but like the other defenders of women, has to

work, always, against proverbial assumptions that women's bodily boundaries must be kept strictly in check, and that any overstepping of accepted borders could be equated with sexual incontinence. In Anger's concluding poem, she takes up this theme, suggesting women's bodies, text, and social territory. She advises that "[t]hough sharp the seed by Anger sowed, / ... "shall thou (Reader) reap / such fruit from ANGER'S soil / As may thee please, and ANGER ease / from long and weary toil" (187-8). Cultivating a space for women has been her project, she shows, explaining that her "pains were took for thy behoof / to till that cloddy ground, / Where scarce no place free from disgrace / of female sex was found" (188). Rather than the image of male penetration that the "tilling" of earth could provoke, an all-female space is suggested, without the need for protection, perhaps because men are not present, or because women themselves—her readers—form the protective boundary around her as she works.

As Gwynne Kennedy notices, this author forges "a space for female respondents to participate" in the argument over women's role and value, by using such "ground-clearing imagery" (38). The poem that ends her text, featuring terms of cultivation such as "sow[ing]" and "reap[ing]" (187), is rich with the possibility of growth in the area that women can occupy, and suggests a new and changing view of women that resonates with undertones of the productivity and prosperity of a future garden, which was such an important symbol in English literature and culture. Anger's last words express her wish to please her reader, and also, through doing so, to achieve her aim, to "have her request" (188). Ending on a positive note, she creates for the reader the possibility of a protected area of ground, without the need for hedges around it.

Indeed, "hedges" seems to have been a byword for women's boundaries, which could be permeable. Combining the idea of unrestrained appetite and breaking through the "hedges" around women, Anger's frequent references to sexually-voaricious men as "greedy grazers," for

example, incorporates this idea. As Munda pictures the damage Swetnam does deliberately to women through his written assault, her text also combines the larger associations of land and nature with women: “But your barbarous hand will not cease to ruin the fences and beleaguer the forces of *Gynaecia*...” (250). Here, again, the imagery expresses men’s transgression of women’s boundaries.

Speght also shows how the metaphor took on these associations, when she addresses the much-cited report of Eve’s temptation in the Garden of Eden—which was an important aspect of women’s negative reputation. Speght’s words echo those of Christine de Pisan when she explains “that Sathan first assailed the woman, because where the hedge is lowest, most easie it is to get over, and she being the weaker vessel was with more facility to be seduced.” This is language that can be read more than one way: in its most misogynistic interpretation, women are inferior beings who cannot control themselves; but if we remember de Pisan’s earlier reference to women’s plight in these terms, we should see that the “hedge is low” for women not because they are flawed, but because of their situation, in which assaults come at them from others, and they lack the social power to protect themselves. Speght’s text is interesting to view alongside Anger’s and Munda’s, and together they suggest the sexual element inherent in the image of the serpent in the garden. The latter authors decry the sexual violation of women by men, and the penetration of the garden’s boundary mirrors this illicit and unwanted entry. The sexual dynamics between men and women are replayed in the serpent’s liberty to cross the garden’s borders, and show that it is the underhanded behaviour of the serpent rather than the woman who is to blame for her violation. The phallic image of the serpent and the references to “masculine serpents” in Sovernam’s piece contribute to an understanding of malicious behaviour that

“undoes” women through their bodies. The hedges are meant for protection, her text asserts, and, as such, should be maintained rather than attacked.

One way to attempt the building up of protective walls, suggested by Pisan so long before, was for women to gather together, with the strength in their numbers working for their defence against aggressive men. The defence writers use a number of rhetorical techniques for uniting women. Anger’s image, in the ending poem, of herself cultivating a new garden—without the fear of intrusion from men—surrounded by her women readers, is one of these. All of the defences pull women together by addressing and advising them, if some do distinguish among women of different classes; where such discrimination occurs, it is elided elsewhere in the texts, through, among other things, marks of the defence writers’ participation in the public debate that involved circulation and readership across class lines. Anger’s address to “all women” is clearly meant to cast a net wide enough to include women regardless of class; similarly, Esther Sovernam claims she is “neither Maide, Wife, nor Widdowe, yet really all, and therefore experienced to defend *all*” (217, emphasis added); and Munda accuses Swetnam of attacking “half humankind” (250), which is so suggestive of an inclusive group, but an all-female one.

The imagined gathering of women in both private or domestic and public spheres, and multiplying of their numbers against men’s incursions strikes a chord with the “standard” practice in such defences (Schnell 70) in which the writer lists exemplary women of the biblical and pagan past. It is a technique through which women push back the boundaries around them, requiring metaphorical space for their greater numbers, and through which they protect themselves from men by crowding out the intruding male forces. Speght, for example, lists numerous women in the “Headpiece” (*Certain Queries to the Bayter of women, with confutation*

of some part of his Diabolicall Discipline), beginning with Deborah and Hannah, and including Abigail, Rebekah, and others; Sowerham does so more extensively, particularly in chapters III, IV (both), and V; “Spinsters” Mary Tattlewell and Joan Hit-Him-Home also use this well-worn technique (324). The effect of this strategy, recognizable from Christine de Pisan’s *City* as well as numerous other conventional apologies for women, is that women gradually fill historical space more often occupied in the social imagination with male cultural figures, creating a sense of the breadth and strength of a female community. The vision also offers a positive model of women together, and brings them awareness of others like them, who also need protection, and who are justified in trying to defend themselves. It justifies and encourages actual meetings between women, which were discouraged in cultural discourse, with the exemplary women setting the precedent.

In the public sphere, we see the same kind of strategic crowd-formation or bringing together of women in operation to “protect” women in the play *Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women*, which draws on the controversy and particularly on Swetnam’s *Arraignment*. Within the broader framework of the storyline, a debate is set regarding the woman question, at which Swetnam’s character speaks; although he technically wins the debate, he is triumphant only over a single male opponent, and, significantly, he is only present and taking part in it because he has been chased out of London by a group of women who, outraged at his misogynistic writings, gathered together for that purpose—an early modern “flash mob” or “smart mob,” in today’s language. The power of women together offers an image of them storming the site of shared social space, and reclaiming it for women, defending it, *en masse*, from malicious attack by banishing the threats to their occupation of that site.

The traditional tactic of peopling the landscape with women endures, then, although the context changes slightly in this period: efforts were stepped up to keep middle- and upper-class women at home, at this time in particular, as their chastity was enforced and emphasized as a crucial possession. The early modern writers show the English household at this time, a space of potential intimacy between men and women, as fraught with tension. It was not only a haven of safety for women, but a space in which they were subject to abuse, the relative privacy and enclosed area of the domestic area where women dwelt (and where they were *contained*) making women's exploitation more convenient for men (Dolan).³¹ But there is more to the political aspect of how domestic spaces are occupied.

Paper(-Thin) Walls

Jane Anger's invitation to her audience of women readers to meet with her in a private, all-woman space is another tactic to protect women through bonding together, in a material sense. While her suggestion has sexual overtones, with its idea of an intimate female group secluded away from the lustful male lurking outside their walls, she also appeals to women's desires for one another's company and collaboration as she says, "Let us secretly (ourselves with ourselves) consider how and in what they that are our worst enemies are both inferior unto us and most beholden unto our kindness" (180). Indeed, Anger's image of women together "secretly" calls up an intimate space such as a small room or "closet," the presence of which in English homes was newly common, being one of the structural innovations in the architecture of the "Great Rebuilding" that took place between 1570 and 1640, as Lena Orlin explains (4). Orlin notes the

³¹ We may correctly recognize the tactic in the late twentieth-century feminist approach to gaining rights or "liberation" for women through "consciousness-raising" groups—gatherings particularly of middle-class women—in which the goal was for women to show each that they shared many experiences, and that they were not alone in feeling the oppressive aspects of their lives, despite their isolation in their "nuclear families."

development of a “preclusive practice” in the use of the civic “parlour”—a room that mirrored the domestic parlour, as she points out:

[T]he corporate parlour, sheltering meetings to which only a handful of company officers had access, was already inflexibly established as a site for confidential discussions, secret elections, and closely-held records. It had a coercive role within the corporate hierarchy as the prerogative of the all-male Company elite, who enacted and exerted their patriarchal authority in displays of *spatial control*. (5, emphasis in original)

In addition to adding to the titillation of the text—and perhaps through such attempted stimulation of male desire—Anger’s vision of women together for private purposes flies against male “prerogative” here, as she does in many places in her treatise. And Orlin’s discoveries regarding architecture that caters to (and creates) different social circumstances at this time mean that the listing of notable, upright women from history gains new resonance, with the resistance to male spatial control that these imagined female populations provide, and with the added suggestion that these spaces could increase women’s ability to control men, by allowing them to separate themselves from men, putting space (and walls) between them.

For political reasons, that is, for access to the power to make decisions and influence the community and their own lives, women’s retirement to private space with other women is an important gesture, with the potential to evoke frustration and outrage from men. Anger incorporates the element of sex and desire, perhaps for its entertainment value, but importantly this part of the text includes the serious and unsettled question of bodily security for women. Anger’s passage seems to anticipate (and protect against) Swetnam’s insinuating suggestions of invasive intimacy when he says, “let me whisper one word in your ears” (191); he boldly addresses women in this way, with advice to keep quiet, despite his criticism of women’s

“inconstancy,” which, it would seem, he is encouraging by his proximity. The sexual overtones of Anger’s image of women secreted away, with the desirous male lurking outside but prevented from entering, belong to the tone of such pamphlets, and their trade in sexual innuendo in general—for her, Swetnam, Sovernam, and others (if not for Speght³²). And the intimacy achieved by the rhetorical accessing of each others’ bodies (such as when violence is enacted verbally against men, for example, and when they trespass women’s boundaries in Swetnam’s tract, in numerous places) constitutes part of the sexual appeal of the pamphlets, but also brings out the disparity in the relative power of the sexes. The writer evokes women’s gestures to avoid men’s sexual advances (women’s isolating themselves from men in a separate room, for example), combining them with women’s attempts to tempt men, with ambiguous results. Women’s actions may appear as deliberately provocative (under the surface of protest), but the suggestion remains that women did need the ability to resist men’s attempts to access their bodies, in order to define themselves and exercise autonomy; the text begins to give language to the idea of bodily security, with the idea that it was—and is—a precondition for subjectivity.

Whether composed by male or female writers, it is possible that the texts in the dialogue offered a model for interaction between the sexes—at least, between those men and women of a similar class—even if the premise for it is their very opposition to each other. At the same time that some readers read mockery of women in the texts labelled as defences of them, because of a perceived sexual aspect of the medium and content, these speakers also wrestle rhetorically with their opponents, and seem to attempt to wrangle some space for themselves and other women, using the rhetorical body and reasoned argument. Rather than trying to squash their male adversary altogether, the writers protest women’s subjection to men’s whims, and call attention

³² Lisa Schnell’s argument that Speght’s piece differs in some significant ways from Sovernam’s and Munda’s, both also written in response to Swetnam, is convincing on this point, if not on others.

to the close relationship between the sexes. Perhaps again, then, these publications are also aiding men and women as they learn, however clumsily, to converse with each other—to argue with one another, trying out various ways of engaging with the other. One thing that occurs while this is happening is that women’s interests are articulated in some regards, so that the speaker builds up rhetorical boundaries for herself and her kinswomen, and pushes men back to create this space in which to be respected, and from which she (and others) can speak.

This bodily conscious world with which the pamphlets deal, and in which the stakes of the “quarrel” are anchored, comes across thematically in many of the details and strategies of the writers. The expectations of the genre encourage the authors to make bodies prominent, which suits the kind of struggle goes on among them. The next section of my study moves to poetic writing, and away from the city and bodies in close contact to the estates of the upper class, and to different investments. The poets’ expression of subjectivity focuses on the interior world of the speaker and on the emotional drama of love, in Mary Wroth’s sonnets, and on attempts to enter the patronage network that could offer material support and cultural authority, in Aemilia Lanyer’s country-house poem.

Chapter Four

Intimations of Subjectivity:

Self in Relation to Intimate Other

in Poetry by Lady Mary Wroth and Aemelia Lanyer

The spatial metaphor of the labyrinth that appears near the end of Jane Anger's 1589 text—in that case to do with the deceit through which men draw women close to them only to exploit them sexually—figures as vividly but differently in Mary Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. In the first instance, Anger's *Protection* takes part in a "public" circulation of women that satirizes and undermines them even as it ostensibly seeks to defend them against such exploitation. In calling attention to their bodily vulnerability to men's advances, it titillates readers with suggestive language, warning women, for example, to "stop your ears," as an image of an appropriate (and sexual) physical reaction to men's (wagging) tongues. Adding ambiguity to the text, Anger's advice is also to encourage women to be aware of their connection to other women, and "she" states her purpose of inciting them to self-protective action, with the strength of the female community to draw on. Wroth's labyrinth likewise describes the situation of the speaker, but offers a much more intensely personal reflection on heterosexual emotional (and again sexual) attachment; the structure of the work mirrors that of the labyrinth and its confines, presenting the insulated, inner experience of one particular feminine speaker, but the speaker also evokes connections to significant others. Aemilia Lanyer, too, chooses the metrically and stylistically disciplined genre of poetry as her vehicle of communication, and looks directly outward, connecting herself to a powerful other—her potential patron, Margaret Clifford—whose authority she constructs through the projection of

the noblewoman's subjectivity onto the landscape of an expansive estate, and other rhetorical positioning techniques. The pamphlets I discussed in the last chapter thematized women's bodies, and exposed the difficulties of their struggle to push back the boundaries of the spaces allotted to them. When women take up poetic forms, they can express the inward nature and dimensions of the self, and also how it is shaped in complex interrelationship with the others, both human and otherwise. Wroth, for example, wrestles with her psychic and material borders, using irony and parody to manipulate the distance between self and those outside it. Lanyer works through an other with whom she creates an affinity, and by inference, through those connected with the countess, whose position in the social hierarchy becomes a focal point. Both experiment with spatial imagery in conveying feminine subject positions, and authenticate their subjectivity despite the difficulties they face in making their voices heard.

As Wroth's biography shows, she was born, in 1587, into a family who was wealthy and well-connected at Elizabeth's court, as well as literarily inclined. In Mary Ellen Lamb's sketch of her life, we find Wroth was the eldest surviving child of eleven born to Barbara Gamage and Robert Sidney, who was first earl of Leicester and Viscount Lisle of Penshurst. Robert Sidney was brother, notably, to Sir Philip Sidney and Lady Mary Sidney Herbert, both of whom shared with him a passion for the arts and for writing, themselves, and the latter of whom occupied a position as the centre of a flourishing literary community. Wroth made connections with other writers through this circle, as well as through her contacts with the nobility she encountered at court; Wroth danced for Elizabeth at court and at the Sidney estate of Penshurst near the end of Elizabeth's reign, and took part in court masques with Queen Anne when James succeeded to the throne. She married Robert Wroth, a courtier who became well-placed under James I in a position as forester, with duties related to game-keeping and hunting. Margaret Hannay's recent

biography of Wroth (2010) argues against the idea that their marriage was an unhappy one, but certain details leave this view inconclusive, as I discuss below. Their only child, a son, died when still very young, soon after Robert Wroth himself died of gangrene, which left Mary Wroth in debt, and meant that the most part of the estate reverted to male relatives of Robert Wroth's. After this time, Mary Wroth struggled with debt and spent much effort trying to recover funds for herself and her two illegitimate children by her cousin William Herbert, according to records. Traces of this network of familial and social contacts appear in her work, although, as Lamb and others observe, she draws on the details of her life rather than creating directly allegorical texts. This background of kinship and artistic influence situates her work in interesting ways, and suggests her conceptualising of herself as embedded in this web of relations, so that while the sonnets express a solitariness, they actually reach out to those who Wroth knew would appreciate the complexity of her referential approach.

When Wroth begins the poem collection *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, primarily comprising sonnets, she immediately makes clear the contentious position of the female writer as poet and lover, using the Petrarchan mode and techniques in which women figure as objects of men's (fraught) desire. Her undertaking of this project constitutes a paradoxical gesture, in that she must accept the ideal of women as "silent," while she asserts her authority through the rhetorical flair and personal voice characteristic of the genre. I think Jeff Masten is correct to read the last lines of the first sonnet as an indicator "that this sequence will contest woman's place in the Petrarchan lover's discourse" (70) when she laments Venus's insertion of the burning heart in her breast: "I waking hop'd as dreames it would depart, / Yet since, O me, a Lover I haue beene" (1.13-14). Drawing attention to this awkward gendered speaking position, she blends the realms of love and language typically connected in the genre, and gives herself

permission to take on the role of courtly lover-poet, conveying the idea that she has no choice about it. And in “contesting” her speaking position, she sends up the conventions—in literature and in life—that denied women full subjectivity. The bodily metaphor that signals a turn inward, which Waller also notes (70), while it sends her “inside,” actually “opens” her to initiated others, who can “read” her as they do poetry.

Critics have differing perspectives on the possibilities for subjectivity in Wroth’s work. Janet MacArthur sees in Wroth’s adherence to the Petrarchan mode a failure to counteract the cultural limitations on her gender. MacArthur posits that “*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* echoes the conventional Elizabethan sonnet sequence because Lady Wroth’s poetic discourse is aligned with that of her uncle and her father ... [and therefore] it does not offer any direct challenge to the gender-specific Petrarchan mode” (13). MacArthur explains that her view takes into account the situation of the woman writer as both “inside” and “outside” (in a different context than I use the term above) since the female poet “tries to write within a tradition, but because of her gender necessarily writes outside and against it” (13). But while admitting that “[t]here is more longing for death and more living death in this poem than is usual in Petrarchan sonnet sequences” (14), MacArthur still neglects to consider how Wroth might be strategically presenting this element. Masten, on the other hand, claims that in her “withdrawal from circulation” among men (by not publishing the sonnets), and her “refusal to speak in the public, exhibitionist voice of traditional Petrarchan discourse” by enacting an intensely inward movement in the sonnets, she expresses her subjectivity as she “gesture[s] toward a subject under self-control” (69). These two views contrast sharply in the extent to which they credit or dispute Wroth’s ability to establish selfhood through her poetry. But what if we were to see her method as an ironic way of defying the strictures of gender? Approaching her text this way, we see that in presenting the female

Petrarchan poet in the extremities of that tradition (and *in extremis*)—in her exaggerated acceptance of that tradition—Wroth creates a parody of courtly love and the ambitions of the courtly poet in order to critique them both. Through her poetics, she substantiates herself through a secret language of artistic technique, communicating with those in the coterie of her social sphere, with whom she read, exchanged, and discussed literature—those who understood the subtleties of poetic distance.

“From Knowledge of my selfe, then thoughts did moue ...”

We can understand Wroth’s work more thoroughly if we grant that irony is an essential part of her poetics, particularly in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, and there is an abundance of evidence to support this view. In order to escape—or at least to comment on—the position of women according to convention, in which their subjectivity is diminished through the writer’s effacement of the beloved, she uses subtle rhetorical techniques. The “absence” of the female beloved in Petrarchan sonnet verse occurs through the male author’s objectification of her, of his “scattering” of her through references to her separate body parts (Vickers 266) and through his repeated focus on his own inward state in reaction to the effects she has on him. These effects come through his exposure to her beauty, and through the variously kind or cold behaviour she exhibits in response to his overtures. In Wroth’s hands, this tendency becomes magnified, with the poems being devoid of any reference to the beloved himself besides his name in the title of the collection. In fact, critics have noted the glaring absence of an addressee altogether in this text, in contrast to Petrarchan tradition.³³ Readers find the speaker making appeals to other sources for sympathy, help, or relief from her suffering, as if her most central relationship is with a force, rather than another human being, beyond (or within) herself. She addresses various potential listeners, such as “darke night” (1.4.1) and “You endlesse torments” (1.11.1), and

³³ Masten is one, in his article “Shall I turn blabb?”: Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Wroth’s Sonnets” (67).

“sleep” (1.16.1), but primarily she speaks to Venus—to her “Deare eyes...” (1.2.1), or to the goddess herself, as she says, “Love but play thy part” (1.3.1). In lines like “Watch but my sleepe, if I take any rest, / For thought of *you*, my spirit so distrest, / As, pale and famish’d, I for mercy cry” (emphasis added 1.3.9-11), she suggest the primacy of her connection to the state or experience of love, and by implication, also of the importance of poetic creation in place of the beloved—although the passage evokes the lover in the ambiguous reference that the pronoun *you*’s placement creates. The rapport she sets up with these abstract beings suggests the extremity of her insulation, and her isolation from the world and others. However, the point is made within a wider framework of her readerly and writerly community; as Nona Fienberg also argues, the speaker of the sonnets “suggests the need for an audience to confirm her contributions to poetic invention” (175). Her readers’ recognition of her poetic strategies make her poetry meaningful both as the inward journey it depicts, as she substantiates herself through the inner depth she creates in her soul-searching, and a dialogue with others.

Wroth uses the sonnet form and the sequence of sonnets to mimic the poets who write of the lady, of love, and who are far removed from the actual person they purport to be bound to. Love itself is the obsession of this speaker, rather than the male other we would expect. Wroth’s speaker mocks the extent to which Petrarchan lover-poets retreat inward even to the point of forgetting the person for whom they pine. If they put the beloved at a remove from their emotional experience, and focus on the drama inside their heads, she takes that gesture a step further. The self-centredness (or self-absorption) featured in their poems becomes the conceit around which she builds her collection, but she is gesturing to others that her labyrinth involves more than the framework of the love conceit, and that it what makes up the twists, turns, and dead-ends of her experience is, in part, the larger problem of writing as a woman.

Desperately Seeking Something

The tendency for the courtly love poet to be obsessively inward and insular, which Wroth both takes up and mocks, had to do with the conditions of the production of European lyric poetry, among other things. Joan Kelly verifies the trend for writers to replace sensual longings with spiritual ones, and connects it to the political transition from feudalism to the nation state, and the decline in women's position in society. In her influential essay "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" (1977), Kelly outlines the trajectory of courtly poetry and its social system, giving us a history which remains relevant today. In its beginnings, courtly love offered a model of reciprocal relations between the sexes, in which women possessed the power to choose their lovers, and where their sexuality was acceptable. While many of the tropes of that early tradition persisted in courtly literature, they were no longer connected to the social and political reality of English life as feudalism declined. The language of sacred love coupled with the symbolic system of fealty under the feudalism remained, for example. But educational developments—specifically the humanist system that became foundational to English culture—presented quite a different model, under which women's inferiority was institutionalized. As Kelly argues, "The humanistic education of the Renaissance noblewoman explains why she cannot compare with her medieval predecessors in shaping a culture responsive to her own interests" (12). Kelly cites Dante as a reference point for the change in the nature of courtly literature and the culture that that literature took part in, and cites the "asexuality" that became incorporated into it. Crucial changes became standard components: "Love still appears as homage and the lady as someone else's wife. But the lover of Dante's poems is curiously arrested. He frustrates his own desire by rejecting even the aim of union with his beloved" (13). In Dante can be seen the disappearance of the female beloved, as he "confesses that the joy he once took in his beloved's greeting he shall

henceforth seek in himself, ‘in words that praise my lady.’” Typical of Dante’s poetry and that of his many followers is “a spiritual contest ... among competing states of the lover poet’s soul” (13). Kelly’s observations shed light on both Wroth’s work and her social position, and offer a checklist of concepts that Wroth seems to be parodying:

The experience of a wandering, questing life gave way to scholastic interests, to distinguishing and classifying states of feeling. And the courtly celebration of romance, modeled upon vassalage and enjoyed in secret meetings, became a private circulation of poems analyzing the spiritual effects of unrequited love. The actual disappearance of the social world of the court and its presiding lady underlies the disappearance of sex and the physical evaporation of the woman in these poems ... [Women] have no meaningful, objective existence, and not merely because their affective experience lacks a voice ... The unreality of the Renaissance beloved has rather to do with the *quality* of the Renaissance lover’s feelings. As former relations that sustained mutuality and interaction among lovers vanished, the lover fell back on a narcissistic experience. (14)

Kelly connects a loss in the way women could participate in their culture in both figurative and material terms to the distancing of noble men from the centres of government, as the nation state consolidated its power. Castiglione’s important and popular book *The Courtier*, Kelly asserts, “created a mannered way of life that could give to a dependent nobility a sense of self-sufficiency, of inner power and control, which they had lost in a real and economic and political sense, [and] the book’s popularity spread from Italy through Europe at large in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (17). Castiglione’s message was about “how to maintain through detachment the sense of self now threatened by the loss of independent power” (17), responding

to the developments taking place in those centuries. The political distancing between subject and court paralleled that between courtly lover and beloved.

In addition to the poets' preoccupation with their own inner states, the bleakness of Wroth's text, especially in certain groups of the sonnets, suggests a send-up of the Petrarchan writers' characteristic wallowing in self-pity. If *they* bear the adversity of heartless mistresses, *she* amplifies such experience: in sonnet 6 of the first section, she endures "disdaine," "cruelty," "sorrowes," "grief," "scorn," "tortures," "paine," and "despaire." Later, she undergoes "torments," and is "rack[ed]" and "pinch'd" among other tortures (1.1.36). Perhaps this is standard fare for the Petrarchan practitioners, but she goes to such linguistic extremes that one begins to notice that this is sonneteering in hyper mode. Her dexterity with the conventional devices takes motifs to the ends of, if not beyond, their logical possibilities: "e'en grieffe is growne to pittie me,/ Scorne cryes out 'gainst it selfe such ill to show" (1.6.5-6), in a dazzling display of paradox, a popular device of classical rhetoric.

Further, if the lady must be (and seem to be) chaste, Wroth will be extravagantly so. In *her* heart, "flames ... burne in truest smart/ Exciling thoughts, that touch Inconstancy" (3.6-7). The sonnet sequence that makes up the *corona*, sonnets 77 to 90 of the 103 poems, takes her away from the lover altogether, and seemingly into union with the idea of constancy that she has sought after giving up on the possibilities of a real-world connection with her lover. The circle of sonnets in the collection represents the containment that is often rhetorically created for the Petrarchan lady; the corona or "crown" of sonnets is constructed so that the last line of each sonnet is repeated in the first line of the next, and completed with the very last line's repetition of the sequence's first line: "In this strange labourinth how shall I turne?". She weaves into the sonnets thematically the idea of being caught or imprisoned, and replicates this notion in the

structure of the sequence.³⁴ Doing so, she cuts herself off from the one she might otherwise seek out, and, in fact, from the world entirely. The distance she establishes from her lover through this section of the sequence ultimately displays the ironic comment on how women are expected to behave, showing a movement away from the other, and linking the speaker, instead, to the other-worldly idea of an abstract concept.

Perhaps just one of these elements alone would not clue us in to what Wroth is doing, but taken all together, it seems clear that she parodies the tradition she is so familiar with as a reader of courtly poetry. Janet MacArthur passes up the opportunity to read Wroth's poetics with insight into this aspect, when she praises French poet Louise Labé's work for *its* irony, in contrast to Wroth's (ironically): Labé uses the convention of the blazon in reverse (describing men through the eyes of desirous women) so that she "parodies hyperbolic Petrarchan praise and asserts female sensuality rather than chastity" (18). However, Wroth's choice not to focus on the beloved is just a slightly different kind of irony.

"... dissembling their inward intent, (as well they could for they were Courtiers)"

A number of extra-textual details support the idea of parody in Wroth's text, and help us understand her poetic practice. Her immersion in a culture of covert types of communication, which came as a facet of the politeness codes that developed at the time (as Magnusson demonstrates in her study of letter-writing and social dialogue) seemed to inform her poetics. First, I will note that I use the term *parody* in a particular way when I refer to Wroth's sonnets. Formally defined, it often includes the idea of the application of a highly-sophisticated style to a lowly subject or vice versa, with the contrast producing humour. Wroth's poetry, I think, does

³⁴ Margaret Morlier points out the metaphorical meanings the image of the labyrinth had accumulated in the period, as both a "sign of psychological complexity" (93) and a "highly structured design" (94) so that her poem could "represent the confusion of emotional experience and the order that language can provide to clarify this confusion" (94).

not quite fit this definition, although one might claim with validity that women's status was sufficiently low that their use of sonnet techniques could qualify their works as parody on that basis. But at times this element might be downplayed, so that in Wroth's case, rather than lampooning the Petrarchan works that so proliferated in the years before her adulthood, she uses a kind of serious exaggeration, with the intent to critique the original.

Linda Hutcheon's study of modern parody sheds light on the uses of the mode, and suggests, to me, why Wroth might have found it amenable to her aims. Hutcheon notes the fascination with the past that accompanies the use of parody, and the "mixture of praise and blame" that qualifies it as "a critical act of reassessment and acclimatization" (2). As a "major form[] of self-reflexivity" (2), parody by its nature suggests an investigative process into the values and structures upon which the original source was founded. Significantly, Hutcheon points to the early modern literary practice of building on the past as a necessity for a writer to legitimate himself, and the way he derived cultural authority by demonstrating his ability to master the forms and ideas of the classical, and male, tradition (4). She also includes the notion of parody's flexibility in its effects, which run "from the ironic and playful to the scornful and ridiculing" (6). The writer's position to the earlier model is not fixed, then, but must be established; if parody is "a form of imitation ... characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text," then it is a particularly apt approach for the woman writer, whose authority does not come immediately through her use of artistic conventions. As "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6), the use of parody in Wroth's work, if not quite inevitable, is well suited to a writer with "outsider" status, and whose literary background made her well aware of the tradition upon which, as a poet, she was expected to imitate, but as a woman she was discouraged from using. Hutcheon does not

collapse the Renaissance practice of imitation into her theory of modern parody directly, seeing the difference as “an ironic and critical dimension of distantiation” that has developed since the earlier period (6); however, she does allow that early modern poetic imitation “offered a workable and effective stance toward the past in its paradoxical strategy of repetition as a source of freedom” (6). Traditional forms provided the early modern writer with “freedom” to express herself while qualifying anything “new” with an undeniable link to the past. Her argument is insightful, but I find that her explanations actually support a reading of Wroth’s poetics as parodic. The particular *kind* of “ironic and critical ... distantiation” that modern art employs may be unique to the twentieth century, which is Hutcheon’s focus, but the Renaissance writers were actively engaged with past texts in a way that can also be described this way.

In its reference to another, earlier work, parody may also express a lament for the passing of a former time—the time in which the original texts were produced—while simultaneously carrying out a critique. It can incorporate humour to counter grief over what is lost, as well as to mock the values of the previous time or work. The extreme melancholy that pervades Wroth’s poem collection (as well as in the melodrama operative in her romance, *The Countess of Montgomerys Urania*) suggests a strong sense of loss, and it is fruitful to note some of the possible sources of Wroth’s poetics of lament.

From the time of Wroth’s early life, what must have seemed to her a golden age was rapidly reaching its end. The memory of her courtier-uncle Sir Philip Sidney would have been strong in the Sidney family and among those in the “Wilton circle,” the group of poets who gathered there under the aegis of Wroth’s aunt, Mary Sidney Herbert, and whom Sidney Herbert encouraged in their literary aims. Many of these writers were important contributors to the rapid production of English literary output that took place at this time, including her aunt, who had

such a significant influence on Wroth, as Hannay demonstrates in her essay on the two women (“Your virtuous and learned Aunt”). Wroth spent much time in her aunt’s company and among the Sidney Herbert clan, and that she drew so heavily from both Sir Philip’s prose romance *Arcadia* and his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* attests to the prominence of his writing in her life and her connection to him, despite that she never knew him. Her association with her aunt also brought her into frequent contact with her cousin William Herbert, Mary Sidney Herbert’s son, as noted above. Not only was skill at rhetoric a family trait, but Wroth’s relationship with Herbert, her own courtly lover, may well have involved speech and actions that later appeared to have been feigned on Herbert’s part, or proved to have been deceptive, although we cannot be certain. Certainly, the pain of love that comes across in the text makes the emotional resonance of the text seem as though it derived out of Wroth’s experience, as was the need to hide it from those around them, since Herbert did not—or would not—acknowledge her in a public relationship. An incident in *Urania* offers a reference to Wroth’s attitude towards the tendency for courtly communication to involve layers of hidden meaning as well as deception, when the narrator describes two young knights who plot to kidnap and rape the important character Antissia. Inquiring about the Lady’s rank, the two men pretend that they want to pay her due respect, when really, the narrator explains, her high social position is merely fuel for their lust. When they question their male host, we are told, they do so “yet to be certaine, with a good fashion of dissembling their inward intent, (as well they could for they were Courtiers)” (38). Their exaggerated depravity suggests the possible bitterness with which Wroth may have responded to the affair with Herbert. And her use of both forms out of fashion for a generation and of parody make sense when we take into account this context.

However, while gathering information about Wroth's life provides material about which we might speculate, we must be cautious in approaching Wroth's writing as a vehicle for her autobiographical pursuits. The text does not simply convey the details of the writer's life in any transparent way, and Wroth's poetics were considerably more complex, as Margaret Hannay argues in her extensively researched book-length biography. While it was perhaps an awareness of the futility of both her literary and romantic suits that prompted Wroth to parody the idealized forms of the past, a close look at her oeuvre suggests equally plausibly that it simply suited her purposes to emphasize a state of melancholia and isolation. It is true that her relationship with her cousin, with whom she had a son and daughter, did not last, and that Herbert, who was known to have been involved with a number of women besides Wroth, eventually married another woman and named a nephew his heir rather than his son by Wroth. But whatever Wroth's feelings about these events, she did not, it turns out, undergo a wholesale alienation from the court and its aristocratic social circles. Rather, relations remained cordial between Wroth and her father, and her father and William Herbert, as well, after her mother died, Hannay finds in her examination of family letters. And if the romance *Urania* was not to bring Wroth universal acceptance and renown (in the modern, positive sense), and had to be withdrawn at Lord Denny's insistence because of its perceived allegorical reference to himself, Hannay also shows that Wroth was widely acknowledged and respected for her writing (*Mary Sidney*, xiii). Under the protection of the celebrated status of her aunt Lady Mary Sidney and others in the circle of her politically-connected family and friends, she must have felt she could afford to run the risk she did in representing in coded language those connected to the court. So whether and how much Wroth represented the actual events and feelings of her own life in the romance and sonnet sequence we cannot be sure, but the possibility of a connection between Wroth's

experience of love and her artistic passion is verified by Morlier's observation about the connection between the two, as she notes that "labourinth—with its pun on 'labour'—can refer to the advantage of working with language" (97). (Wroth's own experience of giving birth to children, too, and the emotions of motherhood—including the loss of a child—may be incorporated into the extended metaphor of creativity, as the poems contain birthing imagery.) Perhaps it is Wroth's keen awareness of her position as a woman and the limitations that accompanied it that offers the most fruitful explanation of the melodramatic and melancholy elements of the poems and of why she cannot write with genuine commitment to the forms.

Because the sonnet craze preceded Wroth's literary pursuits, she is in a position of distance from the mainstream literary establishment. I suggest that her poetics partake in a practice of extreme or acute writing typical of the Petrarchan mode, and that because rhetorical tricks and veiled meanings are already part of the style or method of literature of the time, she incorporates them to the greatest extent possible, which must include parody as an artistic as well as a critical device. As critic Doug Reimer remarks of Canadian writer David Bergen, he rides a wave of *extreme* experience in this, our contemporary culture;³⁵ in some important ways Wroth's historical moment bears an important resemblance to ours—or to the one, at least, that Reimer describes and Bergen writes of. At the end (arguably) of the "modernist" era of literature, writers who today employ traditional artistic devices for their craft face the challenge of tropes overlaid with a surplus of meaning, given them by convention; this means that they must use these devices in continuously new ways, and often involves a process of amplification, for emotional and dramatic impact. For Wroth, the end of the era of romance and sonnet sequences, such as

³⁵ In Bergen, Reimer identifies "the current zeitgeist—the popular interest in all things extreme (extreme racing, extreme trucks, extreme survival, extreme mountain climbing, extreme dancing)" (13). Reimer could have mentioned examples from other artistic endeavours, such as film, television and theatre, to demonstrate the level of sophistication that these products have reached, how their intended effects include an emphasis on extremity of emotional stimulation, and how they often involve parody, as well.

those by her uncle, Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and his *Astrophel and Stella*, was wearing out and moving into new models. The devices of classical rhetoric used in the sonnet and in the Petrarchan mode in a wider sense had been employed so often that they had already been thoroughly exploited. Also observing these circumstances in relation to Wroth's sonnets, Fienberg reads, as I do, sonnet 7 as an expression of this notion, as Wroth's speaker avers, "Thou canst noe new invention frame but part / I have allreddy seene, and felt with woe" (5-8). When a writer took up the sonnet form (or the romance, for that matter) she had to increase the intensity of the images and feeling elicited, in a practice already rich with passionate, evocative language. This point may have been one that sparked Wroth's ideas about parody, in fact; realizing how the sonneteers had gone to extremes in their work, Wroth must have noted the melodramatic and sensational elements that she would also work with, and transform the tradition (Fienberg 184) by going farther than others had, making cultural "space" for herself as a writer.

Further, Wroth had other reasons for parodying the sonnet sequence—the poetic form that contained such established figures as the elusive, beautiful, proud, cruel, and silent female beloved, and the melancholy, pining, virtuous male lover. As the pamphlet wars I discussed in my last chapter attest, antifeminist feeling was expressed particularly vehemently during the time in which Wroth wrote. Elizabeth had been—and continued to be—a touchstone and role model for aristocratic women despite her inability to improve women's lot in general (Wroth's focus on queenship in her prose romance and Amelia Lanyer's references to Elizabeth in *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum*, illustrates Elizabeth's persisting importance in their minds). So the social context from which Wroth's parody emerges includes a sense of her awareness of this increased hostility towards women following the death of Elizabeth. As Josephine Roberts demonstrates at the

beginning of her edition of the *Urania*, James treated women with contempt, and his official view, expressed in his writing and public presentation of his ideas, was to sanction harsh attitudes towards and condemnation of them; as Roberts asserts, sources show James “as a spokesman for misogyny” (xv). Women had lost much with the death of the Elizabeth as a political presence and as a figure who gave them a certain proof of the possibility of female authority, even if the vast majority of them remained at the other end of the social ladder. If the male members of the aristocracy experienced alienation from the centre of power under James I, in his increasingly forceful implementation of absolute monarchy, women suffered an even greater decrease in their influence and access to authority—especially after the death of Queen Anna in 1619, as the culturally rich court that centered around the queen, which had included Wroth, must have offered a mitigating effect to James’s harsh attitudes. Women’s experience of the decline in their status, even if subconscious in part, was coupled with other losses, which seem to feed into and undergird Wroth’s work. If Wroth felt disenfranchised under James in particular, the distance she sets herself from the poetic form is one expression of this feeling.

As well as the role of the past in Wroth’s personal life, we know some of the reasons for widespread mourning at the time Wroth lived and wrote, and these help to explain the depth of feeling prevalent in her work—depth that made her take emotion to the lengths she does. The shift from the Elizabeth I’s governance to that of James I was only one of the drastic upheavals in English life just as Wroth was coming of age. In her essay “The Passing of the Elizabethan Court,” Sarah van den Berg notes that “In Renaissance England, the transition from Elizabethan to Jacobean rule was marked by three events—the funeral of Queen Elizabeth, a severe outbreak of plague, and the entertainment welcoming King James to London” (31). Van den Berg notes the quick succession of these events and argues for their connection with each other in the minds

of Londoners: “The royal funeral and the royal welcome, two of the most elaborate displays the city had ever seen, were separated by a devastating outbreak of plague that killed up to one third of the city’s population (up to seventy percent in [some] parishes ...” (31).³⁶ For Wroth’s generation, two of these events represented outright deprivation and bereavement; the third—the advent of James’s tenure—also marked one of those causes for sorrow, and was a harbinger of the increase in anti-woman sentiment to come. If the eponymous shepherdess Urania in Wroth’s text seeks her identity after discovering that the lowly position she occupies is not her true place, she signals on a symbolic level that her real worth has not been recognized, and thereby she plays a representative role for the women of Wroth’s time in a broad sense.

But there are more supporting reasons for the idea that Wroth is using irony and parody in the sonnet sequence. That the other writers in her social and literary circle both institutionalized and renovated conventional literary forms has been documented. Sir Philip Sidney had taken the romance and sonnet genres to new frontiers. Likewise, Lady Mary Sidney had shown Wroth how translation could be a vehicle for one’s own ideas and values, managing to create highly personal, artistic work in a genre sanctioned for use by women, when she published her translation of the *Psalms* (finishing the project Sir Philip had begun before his death in 1586); indeed, as Hannay demonstrates, Mary Sidney acted as mentor to Wroth (“Your virtuous and learned Aunt”), and it seems logical to suggest that her work and influence encouraged Wroth’s less-than-orthodox approach to literary creation. Further, we can see the effect, in addition to her literary relatives, of family friend Ben Jonson and his writing when investigating this idea. Both Jonson and the Sidney family writers were innovative in their

³⁶ Van den Berg cites Thomas Dekker’s description of the three episodes in *The Wonderful Year* (1603), in which he expressly draws them together.

approaches, and if Jonson was inspired as he says he was, by Wroth's poetry, it is easy to imagine her willingness to strike out in bold ways.

Jonson's involvement with the Sidney and Herbert families is well known, and historical record shows the intimate connections he had with Wroth in particular. Significantly, Jonson uses an ironic, heavily subtextual style to mock Mary's husband Robert Wroth, as Gary Waller points out, in the poem "To Robert Wroth." Waller begins by showing that the poem begins with "a back-handed compliment," when Jonson praises his subject, who "canst love the country," for embracing rural life and rejecting the superficiality of the court—the world in Robert Wroth's new wife Lady Mary Wroth thrived ("Family Romance" 43). The poem continues in this vein, making what Waller argues are sly digs at Robert Wroth's penchant for rural pursuits in contrast to those of the city, while Lady Mary and her like-minded cousin "might well laugh up their sleeves," as Waller says. Jonson attributes to Wroth "exactly the characteristics his wife scorns" ("Family Romance" 44). Whether he meant to deride or tease—or even partly to show genuine admiration for—Robert Wroth, Jonson offered Lady Mary a colourful and meaningful example for her own work.

What Jonson's poem and these other examples show is the currency of the parodic mode, and the likelihood that Wroth would not have hesitated to use covert communication herself, to position herself in certain ways in relation to others—both in an appeal to her close reading peers and in cloaked, third-person reference to her husband. As suggested in the account—remarked upon by both Josephine Roberts and Gary Waller—of her early days with her husband, as reported in a letter from her father to her mother. After Robert Sidney had visited his daughter and her new husband, he wrote of his son-in-law's "discontent," and Robert Wroth's "protests that hee cannot take any exceptions to his wife, nor her carriage towards him" (qtd in Waller 42).

The passage suggests the propensity of Lady Mary (or her husband, or both) to have used in her personal relationships a form of the “double-speak” found in her poetry, when her speakers use language to convey ideas other than what they say overtly. Waller remarks that this comment “sounds as if there are sexual overtones to the incident” (42), which would suggest a connection between Lady Mary’s rhetoric of subterfuge and her feelings for William Herbert. The point seems clear that either husband or wife was quick to use sarcasm or covert language and behaviour to communicate strong feelings. Perhaps both of them spoke this way, saying one thing while letting the other know they meant quite the opposite. But whether Lady Mary Wroth was on the giving or the receiving end of this language, she clearly understood it. She gestures to her readers on this level of coded communication, creating a further dimension of the poetic self.

In addition to the literary kinsmen who were Wroth’s role models—some of whom were intimately acquainted with her—she had other exempla in the reading material available to her. Josephine Roberts notes the popularity of Thomas Shelton’s translation of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* after its publication in 1612 and 1620, in its first and second parts; Roberts observes that this text “called into question many of the key conventions of the [chivalric and pastoral romance] genres” (xx), and is convinced that Wroth was influenced by its satirical critique. Although Roberts limits her discussion to Wroth’s *Urania*, the satire found in Cervantes’s text may well have inspired Wroth outside of these genres, prompting her unique send-up of poetic precedent in her sonnet sequence.

If Wroth’s critics are disappointed—or mistaken—in their attempts to uncover evidence of her subjectivity inside the text, then, they would be more successful looking outside it. As she satirizes the Petrarchan dependence on absence, and the lack of closure through union with the beloved, she augments and stretches out the unrequited desire of her speaker. The “doubleness”

in the communication that Wroth creates through irony and parody has important implications as far as her subjectivity. I think Masten is mistaken in his claim that Wroth shows that she genuinely wishes to withdraw from a potential reading public. Masten argues that Wroth indicates in various rhetorical ways, including through the “heart transplant” at the beginning of the sequence, that she withdraws from “circulation among men” (69). Rather than the printed version appended to the *Urania*, Masten looks at the earlier, and hand-written, copy of the poems that is preserved in a manuscript miscellany of Wroth’s writing in the Folger archive, and suggests that the text of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was a working copy meant for Wroth alone, and that she did not mean for it to circulate as it later did, so that the material text replicated the movement of the poet herself: “That the manuscript contains alterations in Wroth’s hand and lacks dedication and title-page suggests it was a fair copy for her own use, not a presentation copy” (69). But the irony I read in the sequence contradicts this view; irony needs another person who understands both the surface and the unspoken meaning expressed. Whether this audience was William Herbert alone, her inner circle of close literary and personal acquaintances, or a wider audience, Wroth needed someone with whom her double meanings could register.

Importantly, in the construction of such a reading experience the author creates a sense of simultaneous movement closer to herself and the establishment of distance from herself. Removing herself a step from the emotion of the poetry, through the use of a fictional persona slyly contrived to perform the tropes of Petrarchan literature, she protects herself and refuses the vulnerability she would otherwise display. However, she also brings the knowing reader close by letting him in on what she is doing—on her true meaning, and so she makes the relationship more intimate because of the special knowledge needed to read her personal code. In this way, she establishes her subjectivity in relation to the other, knowing, addressee. Even if the text was

for Herbert, and even if it did reflect her real feelings for him, she nevertheless communicates to him, and others, additional ideas—such as her criticism of Petrarchan or courtly love—through the parodying mechanisms she uses.

The distance from—and simultaneous closeness to—her intended or implied audience “protects” the writer through a partial filtering of who can view her full meaning, and the speaker also gestures toward the other more directly. Waller credits Wroth with overturning conventions that define the genders and that preclude subjectivity for women, and he is right that the speaker does position herself intriguingly in relation to the beloved. Waller argues that in sonnet 34 in the first section of the collection, the line “Take heed mine eyes” (and what follows) signals Wroth’s laying claim to the traditionally male gaze, and therefore of agency through which she can “return the gaze”; through the act of writing, he says, Wroth “is not merely fixed by the gaze but turns it to an active and defiant exhibitionism. She has started to reappropriate herself as a subject” (56). I don’t read “exhibitionism” into the position Waller is ascribing to Wroth, but see the scene rather as one of the few places in which she limns a clearer connection to the other. And it may indeed register importantly regarding the speaker’s subjectivity. In this section in which eyes, sight, and seeing are repeatedly mentioned, so is her refusal to be seen, to have her passion recognized. While others—or *an* other—who “search’d” the “hurt” in her eyes may “look blinde / Watch, gaze, and marke till they to madnesse run” (1.34.11-12), she can take pleasure in fully beholding her lover, keeping her true feelings hidden. It is one of the few places the speaker evokes her beloved’s existence, but the speaker no sooner expresses her advice to herself to “enjoye full sight of Loue, / Contented that such happinesses moue” (1.34.13-14), than her joy is shattered by the words “false hope” that begin the next sonnet. If there was a dramatic dynamic between the object of her desire and herself, such that she wished *him* to be full of

“Doubt” instead of her, she also does invert the tradition in which the female is beheld by a courtly male writer. But that scenario is hypothetical in the sonnet, and the vision does not last long. If she has offered readers a taste of success in love and of her power to look at and thereby possess the beloved, she shows immediately afterwards that the possibility of such happiness is an illusion. The nature of the “walls” one builds around oneself as a subject is complicated by the tentativeness of relationship, when one is unsure about whether one should “join” freely with another.

Waller’s attempt to allegorize (or translate) a single passage into the material conditions of Wroth’s life and relationships—imagining stolen glances and bashful looks between her and Herbert—is not altogether a satisfactory explanation for the text, although the parallels offer interesting sources for speculation. It seems naive to try to locate the precise moments when the speaker articulates real feeling and power, when she consistently undermines those moments by contradicting them throughout the sequence. Each time the possibility for genuine feeling appears in the sequence, it is quickly negated by the opposite emotion. (And we have been told that the speaker’s “seeing” is merely a fantasy, in the earlier poems.) Rather than assessing the truthfulness of these points, we can see the work as a series of rhetorical exercises, in which she brings herself into form in the body of each sonnet, in a different way each time.

But while I think Waller is mistaken in attributing to the poems a clear connection to the social world, when she has been conscientiously keeping away from this world in the text, I don’t mean to preclude the idea of authentic feeling in the sonnets altogether. Where Waller tries to connect her text to her real-world situation, she touches on both the problem and the power of Wroth’s method. Of course we wonder whether she is being “truthful” or not in her poems, and whether her involvement with William Herbert prompts her to pour her heart out about her

relationship woes; that users of parody identify at times with the notions they are making fun of is a possibility that makes the technique intriguing. But after Wroth's speaker warns herself to be careful where and how she sees, "Lest [my eyes] betray my hearts most secret thought" (1.34.2), the next sonnet is filled with excessive and effusive language that so violently conveys the evils of deception that she seems more likely to be warning the reader to beware of the writer. The poet might be like the "Tyrant ... falsly ruling Earth ... Colouring euill with a show of good" (1.35.5, 10). The sonnet develops the theme that hope is a destructive rather than a salutary force, deepening the grief of those who trust it, when they discover their mistake. Hope merely "feeds but to destroy" (1.35.1); it "kill's the heart," and "deluding brings vs to the pride / Of our desires the farther downe to slide" (1.35.12-14). Here, Fienberg reads Wroth's metaphorical use of faulty "breeding" for disappointed hope in terms of the reproductive process that was tied to women's bodies; when she talks of hope as a mistaken product of gestation, and "unaturall to the birth / Of thine owne wombe, conceaving butt to kill" (1.35.2-3), she appropriates (back) the idea of pregnancy—a convention associated with men and their literary output—for a woman subject. Fienberg asserts that "For a woman to write a poem about birth ... as Wroth does in sonnet 35, is to reclaim her body as her own" (183). This is an interesting perspective on the use of women's bodies in the poetic mode, especially because Wroth had had experience of motherhood, and in different emotional circumstances. In these details, the feminine subject insists on its presence, through imagery of the body—which women are linked with in the culture—despite gestures of dissolution and denial that the generic code requires. The poetics allow a kind of being through insisting on the language of unbeing.

The uncertainty the reader has about the point at which Wroth's irony ends and authentic feeling begins perhaps reflects the writer's own doubt about how involved she is as a lover,

rather than a satirist. If Waller is correct that Wroth incorporates her own love affair into the poetry, as she seems to be doing, we can grant that the author moves between states of investment in and identification with the emotion of the narrative, and parody of that emotion, unsure of her distance from the narrator; her vulnerability and so her borders are unclear.

If certain points seem not only to express authentic feeling but to suggest a link to a real-world lover, and to Wroth's lived life, sonnet 21 in the first section, "When last I saw thee," is a notable example. It is the only sonnet that appears to address her beloved directly. But even here, although she may indeed refer to a real person, that person certainly is not present. As soon as she starts in the direction of the real world, than she pulls back, contradicting the suggestion that she actually "saw" her lover: "When last I saw thee, I did not thee see, / It was thine Image which in my thoughts lay..." (1.21.1-2). Throughout the poem, she refers to her visions of him, but he is merely "Louer-like," (11), and the concluding couplet's plea for "pitty" and "reward," seems to fall on deaf (because absent) ears. The possibility that the grief and love-sickness in these poems can be connected to Wroth's liason with William Herbert does not make the beloved more present, even if she appeals to his "conscience," since their illicit relationship left her reputation permanently damaged and left their children without advantage. The beloved's image comes only during sleep—when the speaker is farthest removed from the day-to-day realities of the world. All of her language can apply equally to God, her spiritual lover, whom traditional religious literature personified and presented in sensual terms. When the speaker does come close to incorporating a live lover at these places, we wonder whether she is continuing her ironic approach or allowing herself to be on display, through the honest articulation of her situation.

The experience of love creates an unstable, persistently open self, and one that is compromised, lacking closure and solid borders. The lover makes herself vulnerable to the overtures and effects of the other, who has the power to enter or not into intimate relationship with the lover, and fulfill the role—or not—of bringing the lover to completion. With the consummation of her desire, and the union with what is missing from her interior existence, the self is secure only when no longer agape with readiness to receive its missing part. The experience of instability of this kind is terrible, Wroth convinces us; sonnet 14, for example, shows the loss of self-sovereignty that attachment to another brings: “Am I thus conquer’d? haue I lost the powers, / That to withstand, which ioyes to ruine me? / Must I bee still, while it my strength deuoures, / And captiue leads me prisoner bound, vnfree?” (1.14.1-4). Burning and freezing, unable to sleep, seeking out death—these are the experiences the Petrarchan lover finds. The boundaries of the self alternately bulge or burst through excess emotion, and remain flimsy because unfilled; the speaker complains, “Heate, in desire, while frosts of care I proue, / Wanting my loue, yet surfet doe with loue, / Burne, and yet freeze, better in Hell to be” (1.17, 13-14). She is at the mercy of the humours, who “breede” emotional torments (1.18.10). She can find relief only through the conventional channel; but this, too, is treated ironically—or not.

In the corona, the crown of sonnets situated among the other groups, the speaker finds “the soules content” (3.2. 2). Indeed, the speaker poses as the successful neo-platonic seeker of the soul’s completion through union with God, espousing a chaste, spiritual love in place of the confusion and instability of her past pining. But the irony that has accompanied the speaker throughout the previous sets of poems makes its way into this group, as well, showing itself in a different way, by the “twist” at the end that changes the meaning of the entire “crown.” Ostensibly, the problems of the speaker’s perplexity and angst are solved when she decides, at

the end of the first sonnet, to “take the threed of Loue” (3.1.14). The beloved—if he was ever a real person—has acted as a stepping stone to this union with the divine, in just the way he should. The theme of constancy runs through the corona, marking the chastity that she keeps front and foremost in the poems, and marking love as divine rather than human. The speaker turns every instance of love into a spiritual experience, claiming she is no longer dependent on the whims of her former personified torments. Her grief is replaced with joy; despair with “salues,” “ioyings,” and “profit” (3.5.7, 9, 14). She traces her relief in the movement from bodily existence to the spiritual plane: “Thus loue to be deuine, doth here appeare, / Free from all foggs, but shining faire, and cleare” (3.12.13-14). To this heavenly God, “Great King of Loue,” she bestows “[t]his crown, my selfe, and all that I haue more” (3.13.13-14). But the line that follows, one that ends the next-to-last sonnet and sounds its theme, belies the notion that she is now complete and will direct her love and faith to God alone: she has given him everything she has, “Except my heart, which you bestow’d before” (3.13.14). A surprise to the reader, the self is complete in God with the important exception of her heart, “which you bestow’d before / And for a signe of Conquest gaue away / As worthless to be kept in your choice store” (3.14.1-3). Is Wroth winking to readers when she brings them back to the beginning, with a fragmented self, her soul placed securely with God but her heart elsewhere? The last lines confirm this idea: “So though in Loue I feruently doe burne, / In this strange Labyrinth how shall I turne?” (3.14.13-14).

If she has opted for divine love, as she has said, such love is still fraught; if she has chosen earthly love instead, contradicting the sonnets in this sequence, she is having a joke on her readers, having led them to think she has genuinely found completion in union with God. In either case, the symbolism of the circle is a trick, with the broken, permanently open persona. If

the pleasure of love, even though it is paradoxically also a torment, makes her choose an earthly lover, then under the auspices of poetic form, she sends up the idea of female chastity and spiritual love. This conclusion signals an end of the carefree tone of the sequence up until the last line, and the next group of poems finds her right in the thick of love once again: “[Her] heart is lost” (4.1.1). Near the end of that sequence, when she complains, “No time, no roome, no thought, or writing can / Giue rest, or quiet to my louing heart” (4.7.1-2), she still, or again, seeks the former kind of attachment: “Yet whould I not (deare Loue) thou shouldst depart, / But let my passions as they first began, / Rule, wounde, and please, it is thy choysest Art, / To giue disquiet ...” (4.7.5-8). She chooses to continue to live with the destabilizing effects of love, and to keep up the adoration of her beloved—presumably William Herbert. The self that accepts instability or persistent openness and vulnerability derives pleasure in sharing the self; that is, she maintains the value of a selfhood that depends on other beings—a self centred on social relationships. Wroth puts in copious clues for the reader that a subjectivity of this nature is a source of joy worth the pain that comes with it.

In this notion of the social self, a self willingly constructed through relation with others, Wroth’s work strikes a chord with that of Aemelia Lanyer, who depicts subjectivity as strengthened by its rootedness in attachment to other beings in the human and natural worlds. Not within the confines of the emotional inner world, but stretching out to encompass the outer world in a significant way, but in a way that selects what is encompassed, in the exclusive model she constructs.

The Description of “Cumberland”: Woman, Title, Domain

Unlike Lady Mary Wroth, whose title and ties to the court came through “gentle” heritage and matrimony, Aemilia Lanyer’s social place was more uncertain. As Lorna Hutson details in her biographical sketch, Lanyer was born in 1569 to Baptista Bassano, a musician at Elizabeth’s court, and Margaret Johnson. Her father, who died when she was very young, came from a family of Italian Jews who had emigrated from Venice in the 1530s. Lanyer herself was successful for a time at court, and became the mistress of a courtier there until becoming pregnant, when she was married to Alphonso Lanier (Hutson’s spelling), also a court musician. Musical herself, Lanyer fell into a slippery category, for, as Hutson says, “court musicians were at once household servants and courtiers, suitors for office” (n.p.). Belonging, in one sense, but having to request patronage in order to thrive, she employed her pen to attempt to earn a social “place” and sustenance, when her fortunes and her husband’s failed to provide enough for her family to live on. Lanyer has attracted critical attention for her poetry, and the innovations it entailed: her long collection of poems *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum* was published in 1611, making her the first woman writer after the turn of the century to use the press for her original work. Her “Description of Cooke-ham,” appended to *Salve*, was the first country-house poem published in English, and may have been the first written in English, too, which would make it the precursor to others, including Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst” (1616), and, later, Andrew Marvell’s “Upon Appleton House” (1651). Lanyer faced financial difficulties often during her life, and her dedications suggest her ambition to secure patronage from the aristocratic women she came—or might have come—in contact with through her connections at court; she writes a dedication to Mary Sidney Herbert, for example, in the paratext to *Salve*, perhaps with the hope of gaining the Countess of Pembroke’s favourable notice. “Description of Cooke-ham” is even more directly a petition for patronage to her “friend,” Margaret Clifford, the Countess of Cumberland, with

whom she may have spent time as a companion or in some capacity. It honours the noblewoman and her daughter, Anne, through, and in addition to, its celebration of the localised elements of a particular property, which was so much part of aristocratic identity.

The country-house poem is a genre, then, that pays tribute to the estate of a titled family. Karen Raber observes that it emerged just when the first spate of closet drama was dying down, which, she suggests, points to its function as a means of celebrating the noble families and tying them together, when their ability to keep acting companies—the way they had been entertaining each other and reinforcing their values and their outlook—had been restricted by royal order, and their distance from the court was being felt uncomfortably (36). Its origins can be traced to the Roman authors Martial and Horace, translations of whom became common reading in the period, and this tradition typically dealt with the differences between country and city life (McClung 39). Not only was Lady Clifford among the gentry, who felt their situation was insecure at that historical point, but she herself was involved, at times, in suits involving land, most importantly to regain her husband's estate for her daughter, whom he had passed over in his will, leaving the estate to his brother, instead. The issue was resolved in their favour, in 1607. Since Lanyer's poem was published in 1611, she may well have known of the dispute, and it is likely with knowledge of this background that Lanyer's poem attempts to establish the other women's authority.

In the poem, Lanyer expresses a complex interrelationship between the landscape, and the women—Margaret Clifford, her daughter, Anne, and the speaker (Lanyer herself). Lanyer builds and substantiates the self, both her own and the other women's, through the connections she creates, establishing the importance of a tie between subjectivity and the social and material or geographical world. Place and space are inflected in gendered ways, but in her poem Lanyer

critiques and overturns the convention in which women and land are linked as merely passive recipients of men's often-aggressive or even violent actions upon them. Instead, identification with property "possessed," in a qualified sense, is a way of authenticating the feminine subjectivity of the Clifford women—Lanyer's social superiors and would-be patrons. Further, she constructs the boundaries between human, geographical, and divine entities as porous, open to one other, for the purpose of imbuing the women with political and spiritual authority. While her focus might seem to be on the divine level of the countess's and her daughter's presence at Cooke-ham, in keeping with the countess's very devout character, according to Anne's diaries, the very earthly question of their rights to inherited property runs through the poem.

The Place is the Thing

Creating a triangular relationship, Lanyer expresses in spatial, spiritual, and material terms the countess's presence and influence at Cooke-ham. The description of the land reflects the countess in the speaker's identification of both with a sacred "place." In the first lines, we are told that the location of Cooke-ham is marked by its being where the poet received a special dispensation: "Farewell (sweet *Cooke-ham*) where I first obtain'd / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd" (1-2). Some critics interpret these lines as a confession or testimony of the Christian experience of rebirth; but *grace*, with its multiple meanings, can be interpreted in a number of ways, adding to this idea. Lanyer might be saying that she had a spiritual awakening and was infused with God's *grace*, the "divine influence that operates in men" (*OED*); or she may be acknowledging the favour—another meaning of *grace*—shown to her by Lady Margaret Clifford, who seems to have granted her the privilege of lodging with the aristocratic family for a time, and the woman personifies the trait; or she is claiming that God authorized her writing, that he granted allowance for her project, and gave his pardon and his blessing for her endeavour,

since writing was considered transgressive for a woman. This last reading is more strongly suggested, perhaps, because of the idea of official sanction that follows in the next lines: “And where the Muses gave their full *consent*, / I should have powre the virtuous to content” (3-4, emphasis added). For the early moderns, all of these definitions are probably intended. The poet indicates in these opening lines her practice of engaging the multiple meanings and connotations of words, and this is an important feature of her rhetorical method.

The technique of combining multifarious definitions allows her to solidify the women’s presence and authority by linking them to the land and to God. As we would expect, because of the title, place is front and centre in the poem. And as soon as Cooke-ham is established as the salient feature, the speaker begins to suggest the dimensions of the place: it is “Where princely Palace will’d me to indite / The sacred Storie of the Soules delight” (5-6). The significance of the term *Palace* continues the pattern of conflating place, person and quality, bringing all into accord to authenticate the women’s subjectivity; the high rank of the aristocratic woman supports the voice of the poet, while Lanyer, in turn, elevates the countess through her poetry. Having “will’d” the poet to write the “sacred Storie” (in *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum*, her long poem about Christ’s Passion), the *Palace* has agency, showing that the term is used metonymically, to represent the monarch. A *Palace*, of course, is the home or seat of royal authority, and is used to describe both worldly and divine structures. This meaning of the term refers to a locale, a specific *kind* of place, one that can be ornate and impressive in appearance. But a second referent is that of a structure of more humble scope: a *palace* is also a small building associated or even equated with a cellar, for the storage of goods (often fish), or simply “an enclosure” (*OED*). Noting the connotations that would be called up in the early modern mind is important because

of how they contribute to Lanyer's text as she deals, in complex ways, with the ideas of person, place, and legitimacy.

The combination of images of grandeur, spaciousness, and sovereignty with those of a smaller area begins here and persists, suggesting something about Lanyer's conception of selfhood. Specifically, they contribute to the sense of greatness housed within a diminutive space, of the local reflecting a larger expanse, and of microcosm mirroring macrocosm. The term *palace* is also associated with speaking, referring materially to the "hyghest place or rofe of the mouth" (*OED*); small and large are here, together. In this sense, the word is a synonym for *palate*, the term used in its place in some transcriptions of "The Description of Cooke-ham."³⁷ And *palate* conveys the same combination of ideas: the "princely Palate" of the fifth line can refer, figuratively, to "mental taste, liking or affinity" (*OED*), and so to the level of approval that initiates Lanyer's project; it also refers in a material sense, like *palace*, to "the roof of the mouth" (*OED*). Another current referent is to the *palatinate*, which related the nobility and the responsibility for the land, along with the idea of political connections to the court. The term, designating the highest rank of nobility and a measure of independence of action, derives, as well, from its connection to the material and political *palace*. Further, the verb *palace*, "to place or lodge in or as a palace" (*OED*), shows through etymology the firm link between *place* and *palace*, associating Cooke-ham with both earthly and divine realms of power. The use of these words verges on a pun; the words work interchangeably. So when we encounter, two lines later, the words "Farewell (sweet Place) where Virtue then did rest," the two words *Place* and *Palace*,

³⁷Renasence Editions online, for example, is one such version. Details of this copy are as follows: it was "transcribed by Risa S. Bear of the University of Oregon, December 2001, from the British Museum copy of the 1611 edition, STC number 15227, and checked against the Rowse edition of 1979 ... The text is in the public domain. Content unique to this presentation is copyright © 2001 The University of Oregon."

capitalized and appearing in the middle of lines so close together, stand out in balanced confirmation and reflection of each other.

Further, Lanyer's use of key terms facilitates her continued featuring of social position at the forefront in the poem, beginning with *place* and *palace* that figure prominently in the first lines. She emphasizes that the countess is "Mistris of that Place" (11), for example, and she includes the trappings associated with paying homage to Lady Clifford, in the imagery of the land on bended knee before her patron. The reason for the countess's departure comes up in the middle of the poem, when the speaker digresses from her memories to ruminate on the subject of the social hierarchy: "Many are *placed* in those Orbes of state, / Parters in honour, so ordain'd by Fate; / Neerer in show, yet farther off in love, / In which, the lowest always are above" (107-10, emphasis added). Lanyer blends the material and imaginary worlds in spatial terms here to create her image; *orbs* referred to the spheres surrounding the earth, which held the celestial bodies including the stars and planets, but also the angels and divine bodies. The association of distance and height with position and power, both worldly and divine, is clear in this passage, and builds on the earlier metaphor of the offering of service to the countess. The poet takes this chance to remind her mistress of the love she bears the aristocratic woman; she laments the "difference ... in degree" between them that keeps them apart, seeming to respect the system that governs this turn of events. But there is a sense of cynicism or criticism as she draws readers' attention to the idea that those lower on the social ladder are superior in some ways. For this breach of decorum, especially in a tribute to a social "better," she quickly tries to compensate, following with self-deprecating claims to offset her remarks: "But whither am I carried in conceit? My Wit too weake to conster of the great" (111-12). Even if she speaks with no sarcasm, the point is made that the poet and the countess are on a continuum, in which position is necessarily all-important.

Lisa Schnell argues, in fact, that Lanyer may never have visited Cooke-ham herself, or at least never have been there as a guest of the aristocratic ladies she addresses and to whom she appeals. The phrase “so great a difference is there in degree,” for Schnell, is part of a collection of troubling details that suggest that the close ties that Lanyer is trying to establish are much more ephemeral and imaginary than Lanyer would like. Schnell makes the important point that we should not assume that Lanyer’s vision corresponds to her actual situation, when we approach the poem looking for a “community” of women that may not be there, and we should recall that Lanyer had to work against her marginalization (26). Nevertheless, Lanyer’s attempts are clear in their intent, if not their basis in reality.

He(ath) and Sh(ir)e: Speaking of (and With) Divine Men, To Authenticate Feminine Subjectivity

Histories of subjectivity show that the self—or a certain form of selfhood—was increasingly coming to be defined through and in conjunction with the ownership of land and a person’s associations with his or her property—limited though this ability was to certain classes. Recognizing this development, we can see how the poem presents an important expression of the idea, as Lanyer continually connects interiority with the material world, and seeks to establish the countess’s proprietary rights over the estate while she was mistress there. Although the countess occupied Cooke-ham through a rental agreement, and its status does not seem to have been part of her daughter’s contested inheritance, Lanyer sees the land as a reflection of the countess’s selfhood nonetheless.

The coincidence of place and person, through their associations with the dimensions of large and small tracts of land, occurs in Lanyer’s references to the borders of the estate. Again, small and large—the human and geographical—reflect one another. The countess’s favourite place on the estate, according to the poet, had been the site of a tall oak tree from which she

could see much of the surrounding and neighbouring areas. Lanyer stresses, through a description that takes several lines, the great height of this locale, which is emphasised by the extent of the tree, suggesting the status of the lady socially and spiritually. Seated by or in the tree, which “receiv’d” her, “defended” her against the sun’s brightness and heat, and was ecstatic to do so, the countess occupied a position from which to appraise the property that reflected her own worth and power. After the speaker goes through many of the merits and features of Cookeham, she says, “Now let me come unto that stately Tree, / Wherein such goodly Prospects you did see” (53-4). From here, the speaker says, Margaret Clifford saw the landscape of Berkshire from a perspective that could easily be turned to the purposes of self-authentication: “Hills, vales, and woods, as if on bended knee / They had appeared, your honour to salute, / Or to preferre some strange unlook’d for sute” (68-70). Lanyer conveys that Clifford is clearly the reigning sovereign of this piece of land. The small site of the tree’s location provides security, and the larger extent of the estate that is visible reflects the breadth of her title and person—much like a monarch’s palace in relation to her realm.

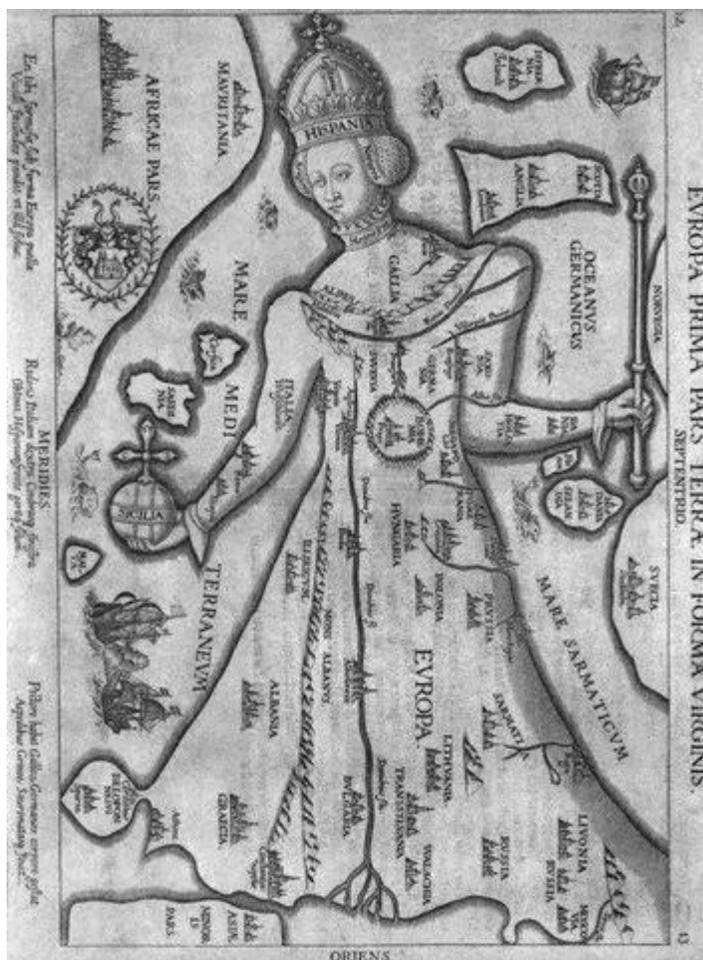


Fig. 3 Europa Prima Pars Terrae In Forma Virginis, by Heinrich Bunting, 1548

The way Lanyer outlines borders is not to fortify them by emphasizing their strength around her subject, as a method of showing the solidity of the self, but instead to convey the impression that the countess and her daughter are part of the landscape, and yet remain distinct from it. Importantly, then, the view from the tree's site is expansive, but it is not an amorphous blur. Rather, its boundaries can be detected: "And thirteene shires appear'd all in your sight, / Europe could not afford much more delight" (73-4). Her comparison creates the idea that the land visible to the countess is a nation over which she rules; it is like Europe, a politically divided land governed by powerful monarchs, only on a smaller scale. Through the analogy, Lanyer evokes the presence and importance of firm political borders, and she also suggests,

through the reference to the international bonds forged through marriage, and through the idea that the land knelt before Lady Margaret in recognition of her chastity, the sexual aspect of land ownership. She suggests the gaining and consolidation of wealth through the arranged marriages that took place between members of the gentry. To “prefer” could mean to “settle in marriage” or to advance oneself or someone else by doing so (*OED*). It was due to this practice, of course, that the countess had suffered in her own unhappy marital contract, and the line subtly incorporates the idea of the injustice involved in these transactions, when it is male advancement only that is meaningful in such unions. It is a reminder that the consolidation of wealth and annexation of property was accomplished through women’s bodies. Forging a link between women and land, through repeated blending of person and geography, Lanyer suggests that women’s investment in property—perhaps in lands due them through inheritance and arranged marriage in particular—is different from, and deeper than, men’s.

The representation of sovereign as land, merging with the geography, appeared in many forms during the period. Helgerson discusses the images that adorn the covers and pages of “nation-defining” publications, such as Christopher Saxton’s atlas (1579) and Michael Drayton’s

Poly-Olbion (1612), and that depict the nation through “allegorical personification” (118), using



Fig. 4 The “Ditchley Portrait” c. 1592

the image of a woman with geographical elements superimposed on her body. These images position a human, though god-like, subject as a specifically defined territory, as we see in examples such as the one of *Europa* in Figure 3, and Britain in Figure 4, in the “Ditchley

portrait,” which positions Elizabeth upon her realm. Helgerson explains, “The visual imagination knew no other way to represent power. But the monarch is now the land” (118). Lanyer works with this understanding of sovereignty, appropriating the authority, indeed, of the monarch, in associating the countess with the landscape as the literary and visual models did with Elizabeth. Through the ownership—or governance—of property delimited by its boundaries, then, the self is substantiated by association with the land. Even though men in the Clifford family attempted to wrest possession of income and property from the mother and daughter, Anne eventually succeeded in winning her protracted legal case to inherit her family estates.³⁸ Lanyer could not have been aware at that time that she would find herself in a legal battle analogous to that of the Cliffords, when years later she was compelled to fight, after her husband’s death, for the hay patent he had been granted. Nevertheless, in her poem she seems to grasp the stakes for women in the process of inheriting, and, indeed, to thematize women’s link to and authority over the lands they inhabit, whether familial or not.

Identification with the land seems to enlarge the feminine subject rather than making her a mere adjunct to a ruling male, if the idea is complicated by the facts surrounding the countess’s relationship to ownership of property, which critics have pointed out. As Marshall Grossman notes, the poem celebrates not the presence of the noblewomen, but their absence from the property, which presents, he says, a “dramatic reference to the peculiar legal institutions of Patrilinear inheritance as they affected the lives of real women” (6). However, the absence of the tenant is actually a facet of the country-house poem as a genre, as Marshall perhaps is unaware, so that the poet’s vision presents an attempt to create the idea of ownership despite, but also

³⁸ Margaret Clifford’s husband and Anne’s father, George Clifford, willed the lands in question to his brother, despite wording in the historical document that set out the property was to go to his heir by birth, regardless of sex. He included in this arrangement income that was part of Margaret Clifford’s jointure. Anne’s husband, the Earl of Dorset, bullied his wife relentlessly to accept a cash payment for the lands, as she details in the diary that has recently been published; he needed the money to fund his dissolute lifestyle at court, we are told (*Orlando Project*).

including, for Lanyer, the political reasons for the countess and her daughter's absence. If the geography of the land resembles, to the poet, the bent knees, shoulders, elbows, and bowed heads of courtiers seeking preferment, then surely the hill stretching out around the countess from her place under the oak tree must have seemed like the skirts of her gown, like an extension of herself in the landscape. Further, the "strange, unlook'd for sute" suggests a number of ideas in relation to the countess. She is approached with a plea for attention and love from someone unfamiliar and from far away, which suggests her fame, the considerable extent of her influence, and her ability to attract suitors from a distance. It could also be an unusual sort of "sute," (*strange* as "surprising, [or] unaccountable," according to the *OED*), but what kind is not specified—perhaps the poet suggests the sacred realm. This idea is supported by another definition of *strange* as "exceptionally great (in degree, intensity, amount, etc.)." Its extremity in any of these ways can be "to a degree that excites wonder or astonishment" (*OED*). Such an imagined marital union would be an improvement, a favourable alternative to the countess's unhappy earthly marriage. Perhaps it is unusual because the "sute" of marriage offered differs from the relationship of unequal power that typifies marriages among the nobility (and other social groups) at the time. That it is "unlook'd for" might mean it is unwelcome, since both the countess and her daughter are married, and the poet wants to show that they are unquestionably chaste. But the line could also mean that the approach of the noble suitor is unexpected, and that the countess is suitably humble in her role, and is taken by surprise to find herself worshipped in all kinds of places. Then, too, those in positions of power will be approached by "suitors" that they find unappealing or distasteful, but that is part of the role of a member of the gentry. The countess is a courtier, too, and the idea that she could be approached for favour, as an overlord is petitioned by his vassal, calls up the hierarchy within which the countess and the poet are

situated. Just as the lady of the manor can obtain status and substance through association with high-placed others, so can others seek recognition and status through her. This positioning attests to the countess's authority and subjectivity; as she is "subject to" those above her, so are others "subject to" her, and in the poem, no higher authority other than God is mentioned—despite the presence of Windsor Castle in the same county as Cooke-ham.

Another way we read the importance of identity and property is in the author's references to people by the names of their estates, specifically the lands over which they had jurisdiction. Just as Lady Anne was "sprung from *Cliffords* race" (92), she was "[o]f noble *Bedfords* bloode ... / [and] To honourable *Dorset* now espows'd" (93-4, emphasis in the original). The latter two designations refer to baronetcies, or *titles*, designating the rights over a particular tract of land and political area, rather than the *surname* such as *Clifford*. When *Dorset* appears again, the appellation is in reference to the daughter, Anne, first when the speaker recalls to her addressee the masques she took part in with the younger woman: "Remember beauteous *Dorsets* former sports, / So farre from being toucht by ill reports" (119-20). Calling the woman by the title of her estate by marriage, Lanyer creates a similitude between property and female identity rather than male identity, and thus navigates the contentious issue of each of the Clifford women's rights to property they inherited, and which they were compelled to fight to obtain.

Lanyer repeatedly evokes the presence of the natural world of Cooke-ham, of its creatures and its features; this technique, figuring geographical and material elements, contrasts sharply with Wroth's sonnets, for example, which address more abstract concepts, such as night, sleep, or torments. The focus is on the social in a more direct way, with less emphasis on the interior, private world. Barbara Lewalski reads the *relationality* of the poem as evidence of an alternative and female economy, separate from men and the male-centred system of governance

that disadvantages women (56). She remarks that no men enter the world of the poem (56), and that its idyllic quality comes from its state of isolation from masculine influences. But in their wish to see the power of women coming together independently, without men, as Schnell makes us aware, Lewalski neglects the presence and role of the biblical men that Lanyer calls up, with whom the countess “often” conversed. These male figures of spiritual instruction include Christ and the apostles, Moses, David, and Joseph; with them, she carried out all the official religious duties, relating to both interior, private self, and the social demands of her public rank: she walked and discussed scripture, meditated, sought information about God’s plan for her, sang psalms to worship God, and fed the poor, with each of them respectively. Perhaps to Lewalski, the idea that the subject aligns herself with men in order to harness male power is a strategy unworthy of women, or futile, because such power—power over others—often relies on the structures that disenfranchise women. But the details of the poem suggest that this is just what Lanyer is doing, in order to gain for women the same prerogatives and authority that men hold. While we can certainly read Lanyer’s attempts to legitimate her experience of (and her wish for) the bonds between herself and the gentlewomen she associated with at the estate, we should also be attuned to how she and the countess both tapped into the system of inheritance and preferment, despite its capacity to alienate women, in order to authenticate and substantiate themselves. So when the countess is described as inhabiting the lands of Cooke-ham with these biblical figures, her status is lifted accordingly.

Now, Then, and Always

Lewalski’s observation of the poem’s focus on the relationships between women is valid, but can be taken further. Not only do the bonds that join women—in Lanyer’s imagination—make for a strong community, but women’s ability to open themselves to the levels of reality that

inhere in a particular time and place allow them to access forms of selfhood that are strengthened by association with the other, rather than separation from it. The model of the self that emerges through the poem, and the substance of that subjectivity, comes from the blending of periods of time (calling up the presence of the countess and her daughter from the past into the present), of address (bringing numerous figures and presences into existence in (the space of) the poem, and through the intermingling of aspects of divine, material or geographical, and human beings.

In Lanyer's poem, gender inflects the theme of land and identification. Kruzner's discussion of Marvell's country-house poem ("Upon Appleton House") demonstrates that even though Marvell was concerned with the protective "closing off" of the person in a way that looks forward to the "republican subject" of the modern world, he allowed that at times the self could luxuriate in unbounded subjectivity, enjoying the experience of being compromised, without undergoing lasting harm. The model that Kruzner sets out, which is informed by theories of transubstantiation and the Protestant aversion to Catholic thought in general, is further complicated by gender. Not only must the feminine subject guard against the aggressive imposition of the crown and state power, which replicates the imposition of the ecclesiastical representatives, but women are bound by their subordination to men, which is enforced in formal legal and material ways. But women's writing presents the issue in different terms from those of male poets. The defensive, fraught subjectivity that men's work illustrates, according to Kruzner's study, comes across as dissimilar in its concerns when compared to Lanyer's constructions. The bounds of the self must be uncompromising enough to maintain a coherent, historical subjectivity, in the modern formulation. But in "Cooke-ham," the self that allows for ambiguity in these things becomes stronger rather than incomplete, enriched rather than diminished.

The Divine Miss Anne (and Her Mother)

Lyn Bennett notes that Lanyer's work has met with criticism for her combination of religious and profane levels of reality, for using devotional language to write of "a secular cause" in *Salve Deus* (243). In the longer work, Lanyer undertakes a passionate and detailed defence of women, with carefully reasoned arguments—particularly in her discussion of Eve. However, in her discussion of Lanyer's poetics, Bennett allows that while the critics are correct to see the blend of modalities, Lanyer is not merely opportunistic in employing of language of the divine realm to express worldly concerns, but that "Renaissance habits of thought are at once sacred and secular, and one can never be wholly divorced from the other" (244). When she uses *Grace*, *Grace*, and *Grace* at the beginning, and *Place*, *Palace*, and *place* with all of their spiritual and earthly connotations, she employs a technique natural to early modern readers and writers.

The place described in the poem is one with permeable boundaries, then, in more than one sense. The natural world of Cooke-ham is affected by the countess and her daughter, but in turn has its effect on them, and this dynamic relationship enhances each participant. The description of the hills kneeling before the countess for preferment show her ensconced within a system of government, mirroring the feudal relationship which was based on reciprocity—while one party is above the other socially, the two have a give-and-take agreement, in which both understand their respective positions, and willingly accept each other's roles. Further, the countess adds to the environment at Cooke-ham, having walked, as the speaker says, in "those woods that were to grac'd by thee" (40). While *grace* here may also suggest "to show favour or be gracious to" (*OED* 2a), the term carries associations from earlier lines, so that the countess is to the woods as the "ornaments" that "grace" the house (19) and the "silver spangles [that] graced" the "cristall Streames" (27). This language suggests her participation as an element of

the surroundings at Cooke-ham that enhances or improves what is there: to grace is “to lend or add grace to, to adorn, embellish, set off; to adorn *with* some becoming quality” (*OED* 4.a), and “to give pleasure to, to gratify, [or] delight” (*OED* 6.). Importantly, her involvement in the land in this way does not threaten the integrity of her own boundaries, but seems to further support them.

The natural elements of the estate at Cooke-ham are personified, and so are able to adjust themselves to take in the countess. In the section following the introductory lines, the speaker relates in detail how the landscape accommodates itself to Lady Clifford when she walks the grounds, beginning with this assertion: “Oh how (me thought) against you thither came, / Each part did seeme some new delight to frame!” (17-18). All the features of the estate are alive and dynamically engaged with the countess’s presence there: “The Walkes put on their summer Liveries, / And all things else did hold like similies” (19-22). The response of the environment to the countess and her daughter is one of excess—of moving beyond its normal limits. Their unusual behaviour includes extraordinary growth and activity: “The Trees with leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad, / Embrac’d each other, seeming to be glad, / Turning themselves to beauteous Canopies, / To shade the bright Sunne from your brighter eies” (23-26). The birds sing for the women’s “entertainment” (30), and to “praise” them and the estate (32). The elements of this world seem to the poet to be showing themselves in their summer splendour in order to “welcome” the countess (34). But the landscape further exceeds its bounds, as first the “Hills humbly did descend” (35) before the countess as she walks, and then “they still did rise” to “receive” each of her footsteps (37, 38). Moreover, the river overruns or presses against its limits, as “swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride” (43), and the oak tree “spread his armes abroad, / Desirous that you there should make abode” (61-2). Becoming part of the landscape at

Cooke-ham does not seem to mean that the women are swallowed up, or that they become indistinguishable from the land. Their embeddedness in the estate lands, perhaps because it has a spiritual quality as well as a material one, allows them to maintain their distinctiveness; they do not swell as the banks do, and therefore they do not shrink when they must depart.

The connection between the countess and the estate is further consolidated in the last section, reminding readers of their closeness that was established at the beginning. Through a loose, flexible use of address, Lanyer joins them together. Throughout the text, she speaks to the countess as *you*, and *thee*, referring to Anne Clifford as a separate presence, in various ways; the younger Clifford is “that sweet Spring” (30), “that sweet Lady” (93), and simply “*Dorset*” (119). Then, the poet changes her direction, asking, “sweet Memorie doe *thou* retaine / Those pleasures past, which will not turne againe” (117-18). A few lines later, she starts, “And *you* sweet Cooke-ham, whom these Ladies leave, / I now must tell the grieffe *you* did conceive / At *their* departure; when *they* went away ...” (127-9). At this point, “they” refers to the two noblewomen, but in the next lines, each element of the place sorrows, and “The trees that were so glorious in *our* view, / Forsooke both flowres and fruit, when once *they* knew / Of *your* depart” (133-5, all emphasis added). The speed at which this focus changes adds to the layers of language identifying the women with the land. It appears that the speaker means to blend the two women into a joint *you* after this, as she continues to report the effects of their leaving: “But when they saw they had no powre to stay *you*, / They often wept, though speechless, could not pray *you*; / Letting their teares in your faire bosoms fall, / As if they said, Why will ye leave us all?” (137-40). Soon afterwards, it is only the countess, once again, who is addressed, as she is reminded of the way she graciously took her leave. The absence of clarity on this level blurs the divisions between

woman and place, and suggests that the estate is brought into conversation with the women, in a way that transcends its boundaries.

In addition, the poem incorporates ambiguity in the way that time is presented, which allows the poet to play with boundaries once again. The speaker begins in the present looking back, referring first to the point in time when she “first obtain’d” permission or inspiration to write her long poem that preceded “Cooke-ham.” After this she recounts at length the appearance of the estate in its prime season, and the activities that the women performed there together. After a digression about the regrettable necessities that caused the women to part and to leave the manor, there comes a description of the grieving, lifeless estate that regressed as soon as it heard even a rumour of the departure; “when they went away” (129), however, does not refer to after the women are gone, for the elements of nature there still attempt to prevent the countess and her daughter from leaving. “[T]hey cast their leaves away, / Hoping that pitie would have made you stay” (141-2). The land is already stricken with disease when the countess bids farewell to each individually, having caught wind of their departure. But even within this memory another layer of time presents itself, when the countess and the speaker, apparently walking the grounds one last time together, pause at the oak tree whose hospitality the countess had enjoyed during her tenure at Cooke-ham. There, the speaker says, addressing her patron, “taking me by the hand, / You did repeat the pleasures which had past, / Seeming to grieve they could no longer last” (162-4). This scene culminates in the countess’s bestowal of a kiss on the oak tree. That the tree “took” this gift (170), and that the kiss could then be taken from the tree by the speaker, attests to the power of the ties between the women and the land; but also, importantly, the narration of events calls into question the time elapsing between the two episodes. The verb tenses Lanyer uses further enmesh past and present, as she combines them in unusual ways, often in the same

sentence. The departure has devastating effects on the environment, but the speaker relates this information, at times, as if she were present:

The Windes and Waters *seem 'd* to chide together,
 Because you *went* away they *know* not whither:
 And those sweet Brookes that ranne so faire and cleare,
 With grieffe and trouble wrinckled *did appeare*.
 Those pretty Birds that wonted were to sing,
Now neither sing, nor chirp, nor use their wing;
 But with their tender feet on some bare spray,
Warble forth sorrow, and their owne dismay.
 Philomela *leaves* her mournfull Ditty,

Drownd in dead sleepe, yet *can procure* no pittie: (181-90, all emphasis added)

This odd mixture of past and present seems to confuse time, but also brings the estate nearer to the speaker and the reader: is she speaking from Cooke-ham at the moment of writing, or even of narration, we wonder? Is the speaker there to witness how “in cold grief they *wither* all away” because the “The Sunne *grew* weake, his beames no comfort *gave*”? Or how “Delightfull Echo ... *did now* for sorrow die”? (194-200, emphasis added). In the last lines, which follow these, the poet locates herself firmly in the present, saying, “This last farewell to *Cooke-ham* here I give” (205, no emphasis added). She gestures towards both the near and distant future in these lines, as well; a more remote time comes first, in her wish to immortalize the countess in the text: “When I am dead thy name in this may live” (206). And she blends both present and future in her hope that the countess, metonymically represented by her “virtues,” will stay with the poet “lodge[d]” within her “breast ... so long as life remains” (208-9). In the mash-up of tenses, she brings the

countess and herself together, along with the memories that tie them to one another. The “rich chains” (210) that bind them are and have been woven through the presencing of a place that figures so largely for them, and where the poet could be speaking from as she ends her tribute. The perhaps conspicuous absence of detail about the house itself suggests, as Marshall points out, Lanyer’s exclusion, as a middle-class woman, from the intimate spaces in which the upper class actually resided. But ambiguity in the presentation of time aids in constructing the “rich chains” between them, solidifying their relationship, as non-existent as this may actually be, and through it, the poet’s access to a social voice.

The infirmity of the boundaries between nature and human, past and present, earth and heaven, does not threaten the stability of selves in the poem, rather by their very interaction and exchange with the countess, each element of the natural world at Cooke-ham helps to define the countess and her daughter by adding density and dimension, filling in the contours of the presence Lanyer evokes. While the poet depicts the human merging with non-human, the countess always remains superior to the elements around her, and has no difficulty maintaining her difference from them/others. Indeed, in the absence of human “suitors” and social inferiors (besides Lanyer), the landscape fulfills the need for “otherness” that sets off the countess and her daughter, reminding both the women and the poem’s readers of the social hierarchy in which the countess is highly positioned. The countess’s past intimacy with the natural world of Cooke-ham and the persistence of her memory of activities and people situated there come into play to reaffirm her status. The environment seems to be alive, with the natural elements responding to her presence, rising up to take her in, and pushing past the usual boundaries that keep them separate from the human world. They become human-like; they exceed their bounds in their enthusiasm, becoming a setting that is extra alive, and infused with added vitality. One particular

instance of this affective connection between place and person is the poetic rendering of the last moments of the countess's leave-taking, when "Each brier, each bramble, when you went away, / Caught fast your clothes, thinking to make you stay: / Delightful Eccho wanted to reply / To our last words, did now for sorrow die" (197-200). The very attempt by the natural world to make the noblewoman part of the landscape speaks to the idea of the countess's *belonging* there; indeed, this kind of detail appears in Marvell's "Upon Appleton House," in which the speaker actually becomes penetrated by the vines and growth, and may well have been suggested to that poet by Lanyer's text. The blending of past and present, of *then* and *now*, enacts the poet's intention to defy the political and material necessities that would limit both the women's friendship and the countess's belonging to the estate. And the ambiguity and confusion or mixture of address does less to make the countess's identity unclear than to substantiate it, by merging woman with other women, with God, and with the place. Lanyer's rhetorical skill includes her attention to form, so that the way the poem is constructed conveys the content. Her series of rhyming couplets incorporates the idea of joined pairs, mirroring the blend of heavenly and earthly images and connotations, and the connections she makes between land and human entities. Lanyer's form also replicates the image she creates in the last line, reproducing the links of the "rich chaines" that bind the women together, allowing the speaker to partake in the materially and socially substantiated subjectivity of her noble friend—whether the countess desires such a liason or not.

This projection of subject in such spatial imagining finds a counterpart in the dramatic tradition of Greek tragedy and the later, Roman form, known as Senecan drama, and the "sharing" of subjectivity through the forging of affective bonds between women and community finds new ground in comedic drama of the seventeenth century. The spatial projection of person

to denote identity and authority, as Helgerson notes, above, was a typical, and intensely visual and bodily, way of representing subjectivity. Such depictions feature in the closet drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and use the technique that appears in Lanyer's country-house poem, but with variations given through a wider variety of speaking positions, with the added element of a cast of characters. And the concerns with property with which her encomium engages appear in a different context in the comedies of the household or "closet" drama that were written shortly after her text's composition. The domestic and political dynamics of women's relationship to inheritance and position concerned early modern women writers in various positions vis-a-vis the centres of power, and they continued to deal with these matters in their art, showing their conception of self through the language of place, space, and interpersonal relation.

Chapter Five
Alliance, Containment, and Mistrust in
Early Modern Closet Drama

I turn now to the work of four women in the period's "closet drama," a genre that offers intriguing and vividly rendered representations of bodied selves in dialogue, perhaps surprisingly in texts meant primarily for reading rather than production on the stage (although Alison Findlay, Marion Wynne-Davies, and others have argued for the scripts' potential for performativity, and recent times have seen the plays successfully staged). The projection of the self onto the landscape that we saw in Aemilia Lanyer's work in the last chapter, as a way of conceptualizing the authority of the subject, connects her poetics to a similar technique employed in the neo-Senecan plays of the period, two of which I look at here. Mary Sidney's translation, *The Tragedy of Antonie* (1595), and Elizabeth Cary's original play, *The Tragedie of Mariam, Queene of Jewry* (1613), take up the model established by first-century Roman playwright and Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger, a dramatic oeuvre that typically explores the nature and limits of the self (Braden 10-12). In doing so, it often employs "domestic" themes—those involving marital and familial relationships—which could convey the political concerns of the upper class and its struggle with the ruler for political authority. This characteristic lent itself well to early modern writers, both women and men, who worked within an ideology that conceived of the family as a microcosm of the state (Raber 40): the security of each depended on the integrity of the relationships within them and the containment that could be achieved through the hierarchical power structure.

As Marta Straznicky points out, critics have begun to stress the inadequacy of previous assessments of closet drama as lesser or “minor” in status relative to the works produced for the public theatre (“Reading the Stage” 355). Further, the “divide” between “public” and “private” to distinguish the two genres, which might gender those spaces as male and female, similarly does not hold. Rather, Straznicky, Karen Raber and others argue that closet drama offered a different set of touch points and tools through which to express and critique aspects of the cultural moment. Straznicky notes the two “flowerings” of closet drama in the period, the proliferation of texts at these points corresponding with political developments in which the gentry felt keenly a threat to its power and sought to re-establish its importance and its function. The first occurred in the 1590s, during the late years of Elizabeth I’s reign, when the monarch and aristocracy clashed over her commitments to the religious wars on the continent; the second took place in the mid-seventeenth century during the Civil War period, when the tension between royalist and parliamentary factions under Charles I came to a violent head. As noted above, Raber makes the interesting observation that the country-house poem came into vogue just when the first wave of closet drama was ebbing (36). If she is correct that the poetic form (of which Lanyer’s seems to have been the first instance) dedicated to the “great houses” of the aristocracy replaced closet drama at this point as the expression and celebration of the upper class and its authority, she confirms the significance—by now becoming widely accepted by critics—of this drama’s political investments and efficacy. The circulation of these texts among the elite served to consolidated connections between them, and helped to define their concerns.

Encompassing both of these historical “moments,” the timeframe of my study of closet drama overlaps with that of the last two chapters. Key decades in the “pamphlet wars” over the “woman question” occur during these approximately fifty years, as do Lanyer’s and Wroth’s

poetic experiments. Here, Wroth applies her allegorical technique and her probing of “romantic” relationships and social bonds in the form of drama in the first original comedy in English by a woman. Along with these other texts, her play and the others I examine give us evidence of how women gained access to new literary genres during particular political and social circumstances, which allowed the writers to express different kinds of subjectivities—however limited these continued to be in some ways by cultural imperatives.

The four women whose work I investigate in the pages that follow all write from the privileged position that a “high” social standing brought them through birth and/or marriage, which gave them access to certain authority. As the choice of Senecan drama suggests, for example, their writing involved attitudes toward the monarchy that proved to show more than straightforward approval. Three of them were related through the social and familial circle centring on the prominent family that, during her life, had Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, at its heart. As Hannay details in her biography of the countess, although the Sidney family was at times out of step with Elizabeth’s politics, and suffered the queen’s displeasure at their attempts to direct her actions late in her reign, they enjoyed a solid pedigree, their members having served at court as close companions to the Tudor monarchs—including Mary Sidney’s grandfather with Edward VI and her mother with Elizabeth (“Herbert” n.p.). Sidney continued to associate herself with the family of her birth, through her use of the Sidney surname and coat of arms (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 13), after her marriage into the Herbert family, who were among the wealthiest of the English gentry. Mary Wroth was Sidney Herbert’s niece, and dedicated her romance *Urania* to Susan de Vere—the Countess of Montgomery—Sidney Herbert’s daughter-in-law; Wroth had two children by her aunt Mary Sidney Herbert’s eldest son, William, as noted above, after her husband Robert Wroth’s death. Elizabeth Cary, Lady

(Viscountess) Falkland, in circumstances that can be viewed as the inverse of Mary Sidney Herbert's, brought money to her marriage as the only child of Sir Laurence and Lady Elizabeth Tanfield, and gained noble status through her husband (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 43). She became alienated from the court under James due to her conversion to Catholicism during his reign. The Cavendish sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, developed their writerly skills in another literary family and social kinship and patronage system, with their father—the Duke of Newcastle—exerting a particularly strong and encouraging influence. Like the other women playwrights, they were similarly situated as facilitators of strategic alliances between families through their marriages (Humphreys n.p.). Despite the resemblance in their social spheres, all of these women present their female subjects in relation to others in slightly different ways, through the utilisation of dialogue and spatial imagery. While the nature of closet drama made it a means of strengthening aristocratic ties and the gentry as a force, it also incorporates the fears of the upper class, and their particular investment in, and resistance to, the maintenance of “borders.”

The reliance of their class on the stability of the social order for continuation of their privilege contributes, perhaps, to the significance of the theme of mistrust within the spousal relationship that all the playwrights in this section incorporate and attempt to resolve—successfully or not. Since this heterosexual alliance is conceived as a shared site defined by the borders of the two individuals together, the possibility of one member of the couple being inconstant makes for a “rift” in the structure of their union, with the potential opening up of the self to the threat of the unknown beyond, the letting in of an unwanted other from either “above” or “below.” Closet drama presents this idea in its personal and political dimensions. All of the texts portray women (and men) whose lives are threatened, and shaped in some way, by a lack of trust—in situations where trust is withheld either by or from them. The mistrust that the plays

convey suggests a fear of the power of the monarch to impinge on the independence of the upper class. Further, the aristocracy's distrust of the public theatre as "uncontrollable and inimical to the hierarchical system from which [they] derive power" (Raber 42) contrasts with their preference for closet drama, and the ability it offered them to limit the circulation and performance of the texts. We see that the genre thus has a built-in, self-referential element of paranoia, and we can also perceive how social class contributes to the anxiety associated with these issues. Further, all of these plays thematize the self's dependence on some kind of reliable other, and all convey the particular ways "trust" and "trustworthiness" were understood in terms of gender.

My argument finds rich ground here, for the way drama particularly engages with dialogue and subjectivity. As Raymond Williams says of this period and the one immediately preceding it, "It was above all in drama that the otherwise general processes of change in conceptions of the self and society are articulated and realized" (146-7). While Williams is not talking specifically about closet drama here, Senecan drama, with which my discussion begins, is a genre focused on, and essentially *about*, the self, as the work of Gordon Braden, among others, attests. Braden notes both the characteristics and the history of the genre to demonstrate this claim. The use of a prologue, which sums up the storyline, takes emphasis away from the suspense of the "action" (40), putting the focus on the speakers and their dialogue. Characters employ "bombast" (49) and "hyperbole" (50) in their speeches to express a selfhood that extends far beyond the boundaries of the individual body, which makes the spatial aspect of my investigation a fitting lens through which to view Sidney's and Cary's plays. The careful construction of metrical form in these speeches also marks it as a self-consciously "high" art form, distinguished by theorists of the day such as Philip Sidney, from popular writing, and

facilitating the display of poetic and technical skill of its aristocratic practitioners. Braden cites the origins of the genre in Greek tragedy, and in a society that valorised military heroism. In fostering an individual who constantly strove to outdo his peers, for the sake of an expanding empire, Greek (and Roman) culture moulded a subject whose nature simultaneously posed a threat to the civil order, if his aggression became uncontrollable. In such a milieu, the impetus was to ever-further dilation of the self, so that the language of cosmic domination comes into play. As Braden says, “Greatness competitively measured must continually expand to maintain itself, and must in time knock against ultimate boundaries” (48). Conflict with the governing authorities is a logical inevitability, as is, perhaps, the anger that is the driving force behind the inflation of the self, and behind the genre generally (42). Stoicism, the attitude of fortitude and impassivity against the onslaughts of both fortune and tyrants, which Seneca also theorised extensively, poses in some ways a countering effect to this set of influences (70). Regarding this view, Straznicky asserts, “The material political location of the proponents of stoicism ... is one of disempowerment, and the ideal of self-control, self-sufficiency, and immunity to the assaults of any external force is consequently a strategy of empowerment, an attempt to locate the center of power in the self” (“Stoical Paradoxes” 110). As a “rhetorical drama” (Braden 65), the genre creates its effects through language, which makes it ideal for the needs of the elite closet dramatists of the early modern period. As Braden helpfully posits, “Senecanism bequeaths to the later times some extraordinary standards for the self’s ambitions and some ways of realizing those ambitions dramatically in a rhetoric of psychic aggression that seemingly allows a character to make himself and his world up out of his own words” (62). This is an important trait, when the plays of the neo-Senecans could, and would, have been read in private spaces, as Straznicky points out (“Reading” 368). It also makes the genre particularly suited to aristocratic

authors, whose access and relation to political authority informed their identities in ways that were particular to their class.

The Politics of Suspicion: Tyranny and Selfhood in Neo-Senecan Tragedy

Mary Sidney's choice to translate Robert Garnier's play *Marc Antoine* (1578) for *The Tragedy of Antonie* marks a strategic political gesture, since, as Hannay points out, despite her social position (and perhaps, too, because of it) Sidney's right to write was limited by cultural proscriptions having to do with gender (*Phoenix* 32). As her dedication to her brother, the "Angel Spirit," shows, above, she authorised her original textual production through the much-celebrated Sir Philip to a point. Her translation of the psalms—a controversial source text itself—finished the project he had begun, and likewise drew on his gendered standing to legitimate her writing. In selecting a source that can be seen as perhaps even more open to a variety of interpretations, which the French play presented, Sidney was going one daring step further, and capitalised on the act of translation to put her at one remove from the original, as Patterson's investigation of such strategies in the period attests, as noted (57). In the case of *Antonie*, Sidney could shield herself from censure through her distance from the original that was implied by the act of translation, and yet engage with the politics of the moment. As she prepared the text for presentation to Elizabeth, coupling it with her translation of Philippe Mornay's 1576 Stoic tract *A Discourse of Life and Death*, also from French (Hodgson-Wright 435), she could construct an extra-textual dialogue with the queen concerning Elizabeth's failure to adequately equip her forces fighting against Catholic foes in the Lowlands, as Alison Findlay points out; seeing herself as a suitable counsellor to Elizabeth, Sidney puts forward a text that is, as Findlay puts it, "an intervention into national politics, since it implicitly advises Queen Elizabeth to defend the Protestant spirit of her kingdom, in whose cause Philip Sidney had died" (22). This

framework contributes helpfully to a reading of *Antonie*, one aspect of which involves its portrayal of figures who neglect their martial and political duties for personal pleasures.

Intriguingly, the play's dialogue and rhetorical mechanisms shed light on how the forces of containment informed the possibilities for the conception of (aristocratic) selfhood in early modern culture. The backdrop to the action is the series of military coups that brought Antonie to power in Rome with Caesar Augustus and Lepidus, in the "crisis" period of the Roman Republic. At this point, Caesar had already cut out Lepidus from the triumvirate, in an act that anticipated his similar action against Antonie. The play picks up at this point in the struggle for power: Antonie has followed Cleopatra and her forces back to Alexandria, having fled the scene of Caesar's definitive siege at Actium before it ensues, in what is known historically as the moment of inception of the Roman Empire. From the beginning of *Antonie*, which opens with the eponymous protagonist's rant against the inconstancy of his queen, Cleopatra, the play foregrounds the complex ways subjectivity is interwoven with deceit, secrecy, and mistrust. Because of the translator's ability to communicate through the work, and especially because of the early modern view of translation as original composition, I refer to the playtext from now on as hers.

Sidney's text employs the rhetoric of spatial self-conceptualising that Seneca's work features. But in the play, we see in Antonie the fascinating progression from a self constructed by means of military strength, conceived through the forces under his command and conquered peoples and territory to the self that is aware of a nearer, more intimate other—a self defined still in spatial terms, but around whom the most keenly felt boundaries become personal rather than geo-political, through his relationship with Cleopatra; this transition comes across in Antonie's dialogue with others, and through the Senecan convention of self-address—an especially notable

aspect of the drama devoted to subjectivity (Braden 68). And while the play presents important ideas about the subject through the male hero, the female ruler becomes the more prominent one. Despite the dramatic power of Antonie's emotional experience in the last days before his death, the Egyptian queen's presence takes over the text when she "enters," allowing them both the status of protagonists; this technique underscores their union as intimate lovers, and begins the process of creating for the reader the impression of a subjectivity that is shared between them—a view that Raber also supports. Raber notes that in doing so, the play departs from the conventions of classical Greek tragedy, which operates by "subordinat[ing]" all characters to the hero (59). Cleopatra becomes the focal point of the drama, with her own trajectory entailing her struggle to come to terms with her love for Antonie while establishing a certain image of herself. In Cleopatra's scenes of self-fashioning, she asserts a corrective to the hyper-masculine Roman view of her as a woman with especially porous boundaries, represented by Caesar, his general Agrippa, and even Antonie, who misconstrues the reasons for her actions. She exploits the social obsession with women's chastity to enhance her subjectivity, turning the compulsion for women to prove the security of their borders into a display of her own kind of self-containment and her authorizing power.

In my discussion of containment (and expansion) imagery in the play, I find some useful observations in Donald Freeman's examination of similar themes in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Freeman's concerns are different from mine, but his comments regarding the playwright's employment of metaphorical constructs offer, nonetheless, some intriguing suggestions when we think simultaneously about subjectivity. Freeman announces his intent to use the "theory of cognitive metaphor, which constructs metaphor as mental projection from a schematized representation of bodily or enculturated experience into abstractions" (443). In other

words, figurative language conjures up both mental images and broader, embodied feelings in the audience members about what is happening in the drama, connecting them to the characters and events, and shaping those connections in the imaginary in a powerful way. He is expressing the idea that audiences respond to, and understand, “containment” imagery in terms of subjectivity, drawing on their own feelings of the forces of enclosure. Freeman discusses the Roman-Egyptian divide—the characterization of the former as masculine, rational, and rigidly disciplined as opposed to the sensual, emotional, more “liquid” Egyptian realm—and he observes the Roman world’s inability to “contain” Antony after his association with the Egyptian queen. These remarks are suggestive regarding the poetics of selfhood in Sidney’s text, as here, too, Antonie’s excessive emotionality and love-sickness show him to be unguarded, unbound, in one sense, but aware of being intensely restricted in another. Indeed, Sidney’s text may have been the, or one, source for Shakespeare’s play, as it predates the popular work, and may have encouraged him in presenting Antonie through this technique.

The play begins with Antonie’s long opening speech, in which he laments to himself in spatial terms his current state of diminishment, expressing the initially expanded and subsequently shrunken dimensions of himself that came of his involvement with Cleopatra. Sensory details and imagery contribute to the impression of Antonie’s contraction, as well as the breadth of his past political force and presence. In the first several lines, we hear that all the sources of power—human, natural and supernatural—threaten and press in on Antonie from all around, reducing him to the point of extinction, a sense that is amplified through anaphora: “Since cruel heaven’s against me obstinate; / Since all mishaps of the round engine do / Conspire my harm; since men, since powers divine, / Air, earth, and sea, are all injurious . . . It’s meet I die” (I.1-7). The hostile “conspir[acy]” that he feels surrounding him presents a dramatic contrast

to the scope of his former might as a military leader; using second-person address to himself, he recounts how “on every side / Thou mad’st . . . the earth with soldiers swarm!” (I.83-4), how in his memory “Euphrates’ banks do tremble / To see at once so many Romans there; / Breath horror, rage, and, with a threatening eye, / In mighty squadrons cross his swelling streams” (I, 85-88). He and his armies had completely overpowered what was in their path, so that nothing could be “seen but horse and fiery sparkling arms; / Nought heard but hideous noise of muttering troops” (I.89-90). He had been able to stretch himself outward, claiming what he saw ahead of him and taking it on as part of himself—as an extension of himself. His military forces represent the extent of matter and power he equates with himself—the *timê* that Braden explains as the definition of the heroic self (10)—and through his command of them, Antonie had been the one, in former times, to pose the “threat” to others—to make them mistrustful of him—rather than the other way round, as the case is now. Such is the measure of subjectivity, the only possibility for its definition, until the point of the subject’s awakening to the awareness of self to be found through personal, affective human interaction with another, and subsequent redefinition.

The metaphorical projection of “containing” structures that serve to delimit and define the self comes across in large-scale terms in the spread and control of land by a self shored up by a military under its command; but these descriptions are juxtaposed with the rhetorical passages that render the self in terms of a different kind of containment—of self and an other on whom the self depends for its stability. This personal or “private” structure, which “contains” both people—Antonie and Cleopatra—is vulnerable from within, subject to having the integrity of its boundaries undermined if either party is unreliable, and betrayal is imagined as a leak or break in the walls of the protective structure. The play dwells on the characters’ fixation on the integrity of this structure far more than it does on the resolution of these fears. As Evelyn Gajowski

observes in her discussion of Shakespeare's love tragedies, which include, of course, *Antony and Cleopatra*, "to experience the happiness of love is to experience the fear of its loss" (24).

Mistrust is central in Antonie's scenes, and made more complex because of Cleopatra's simultaneous position as his lover and his political ally. His speeches intermingle his concerns for his political losses and his agony over Cleopatra's duplicity—but he reiterates his feeling that her perceived treachery is much worse for him as a lover, on emotional terms; that is, it diminishes him from within rather than from without.

The descriptions of his geographic conquests, above, suggest the way he had at first expanded himself through the Egyptian queen, and how his conception of himself is deeply tied to Cleopatra. He had annexed her land by entering into partnership with her against her enemies, bestowing on her as gifts some of the lands he had subsequently conquered, as Caesar reports in discussion with Agrippa later (IV.86-7). Their union made them both greater than they were singly, which is dramatically underscored in these material terms—evidence, again, of the *timê* proper to classical, military subjectivity. But while their relationship had started on the world stage, and was represented by the land amassed between them, at the point at which the play begins, Antonie has begun to consider their personal relationship as distinct from the international political theatre, and as a private experience. The spaces of the self evolve. He repeats the idea at numerous points that he was joined so closely to her that they had become one, sharing the same bodily borders: this image comes in the first few lines when he talks about Cleopatra as she "in whom I lived" (I.5). However, believing that she has betrayed him, he experiences the opposite effect of their liaison. She is still part of him, but in a detrimental way; he claims that she dominates him now, and works harm from within him as he thinks of her, remembering "that face whose guileful semblant doth / (Wandering in thee) infect thy tainted

heart” (I.111-12). Antonie bemoans the way love for Cleopatra renewed its force to overcome him, after he had once escaped her influence (I.100), in his recollection of his experience: “[Cleopatra’s] [s]weetness, allurements, amorous delights,/ Entered again thy soul” (I.102-3). Again, the idea of living “in” one another, common in Petrarchan and other discourses, as noted above, resonates with the issue of agency, of mastery over oneself, and the danger of penetration, infiltration, by a harmful other. Through such language, Antonie shows the destabilization of self brought about by relationship, moving back and forth between his experience of being defined through the state and his awareness of his emotional self in relation to Cleopatra.

As a dialogical counterpart to the discourse of affect presented by Antonie and Cleopatra, others in the play—philosopher Philostratus, friends, servants, and chorus—put forward contrasting views, against which readers can weigh the protagonists’ remarks. In the third act, for example, Philostratus’s assertion that love is at the root of the disastrous events in history brings together the personal and political in yet another way. He avers that “Love, Love (alas, who ever would have thought?) / Hath lost this realm, inflamed with his fire. / Love, playing Love ... hath ashes made our towns, / And ... with deaths our lands have filled” (II.43-8); more aptly, for *love* we should substitute *distrust*. Just as the pamphlet-writers articulate the precarious position of women in the culture, Antonie conveys in this speech his own sense of being simultaneously hemmed in by malicious forces and unprotected from these forces, the opposite in terms of subjectivity—or sovereignty—to the ruler, who epitomises the martial style of individual, autonomous, and fortified selfhood. Antonie is particularly subject to harm because of the special way Cleopatra—because she is a woman—can gain access to him at close quarters; *love* is coded as sexuality as well as affection. The political is being used to underscore and explain the dynamics of the personal experience of connection. Antonie’s feelings of the martial kind of

subjectivity are constantly blended with the newer sense of selfhood defined through affective ties. Those allies who formerly gathered around him, shoring up his boundaries, now draw away from him, leaving him open to assault by Caesar; they then turn on him “as rebels” (I.126), creating the opposite situation in joining forces with the Roman leader, who “enwalls [Antonie] round” (I.128). Antonie’s awareness of a complete overturning of his position relative to power comes across explicitly in his address to himself (which is always witnessed by the chorus), describing his situation: “Caged in thy hold, scarce master of thyself; / Late master of so many nations” (I.129-30). These passages are accompanied by the recurrence of expressions of Antonie’s feeling of being likewise attacked by Cleopatra, but because of his attachment to and desire for her, rather than through the political turn of events. Instead of being with him in a place of shared safety, which relationships of trust provide, Cleopatra now attacks him from within their mutually held receptacle and simultaneously from outside of him, along with all other forces seeking to undo him. His feeling is that she “doth me pursue” (I.6), when, surely, it is he who has followed her back to Alexandria, and this confusion shows the mutuality, the blending of the two of them so that he cannot tell where or how his own borders define him.

In communicating his diminished state, Antonie expresses the commonly held notion that women are deceitful and that their chastity is precariously preserved, and it is against these notions Cleopatra must prove herself in the play. Her inconstancy—which is understood as the openness of her bodily borders—results in his borders being compromised. Her speeches centre on countering his—and anyone else’s—suspicions that she has betrayed him, as she creates the view of herself as chaste. Antonie reiterates the early modern idea, as noted above, that a woman could gain power over a man through her sexual appeal, “entering” the beholder, more particularly, through his eyes (Dixon 35); he credits Cleopatra’s “poisoned cups” (I.82) for his

succumbing to her control. He avows in numerous places, that she alone “[s]hall glory in commanding [him]” (I.38), and counsels himself, “In wanton love a woman thee misleads, / Sunk in foul stink” (I, 120). So women are “always already” untrustworthy. In his belief that Cleopatra has turned against him and allied herself instead with her former lover Octavian, Antonie declares again the proverbial assumption regarding gender: “by nature, women wavering are; / Each moment changing and rechanging minds; / Unwise who, blind in them, thinks loyalty / Ever to find in beauty’s company” (I.145-8). Ironically, though, Cleopatra’s womanish deceit works to solidify her authority rather than dismiss her, as his speech focuses largely on her, evoking her presence, and his language throughout this long passage conveys her continued power over him and the depth of his undoing by her. He presents himself as stripped down, devoid of authority, whereas she retains hers. The play is structured so that her wantonness is first suggested and then refuted, in a pattern that repeats: in the first and third acts, Antonie maintains and expands on his view that she has betrayed him. However, she takes possession of the image of herself that others perceive, asserting a strong sense of herself, and perhaps attesting to Mary Sidney’s intent to represent Elizabeth as a similarly powerful and stable female presence.

Action-Reaction: The Other Side of the Story

The “dialogue” is created between Antonie and Cleopatra, although they never share a scene, and I note, with Raber, that their being kept apart serves to increase the impression of their connection (60), infusing their speech with emotion aimed at the absent other, who is always the subject of their concern. But also importantly, their dialogue allows Cleopatra to contravene the version of herself that Antonie’s self-pitying antifeminist rants present. The queen expresses less of a concern with her vulnerability to pernicious forces than with ascertaining her good

reputation, and in doing the latter, she establishes herself as a substantial being, using the rhetoric of containment to draw around herself the firm borders demanded of women but simultaneously denied them, by nature. In a number of ways, she wrests authority and agency from the situation of her downfall. First, in her opening lines, whose anaphora matches that of his earlier speech, she anticipates and articulates the accusations that Antonie (and presumably others) makes against her, expressing them as if she is repeating them in disbelief that her reliability could be doubted: she begins, “That I have thee betrayed, dear Antonie, / My life, my soul, my sun? I, had such thought?” (II.51-2). She shapes the dialogue between others and herself with a series of questions she poses by ventriloquising their voices, which she then answers in a lengthy and emphatic speech that includes a question to Antonie in return: “And did’st thou then suppose my royal heart / Had hatched, thee to ensnare, a faithless love? / And changing mind, as Fortune changed cheer, / I would weak thee, to win the stronger, lose?” (II.163-6). As we know, that is exactly what Antonie had supposed, and Cleopatra further seizes control in her reference to Fortune, who was personified as a woman and often compared directly to women in just such a way as Cleopatra suggests; matching his words from the first scene so closely, the queen acknowledges that the power lies with her to bring about his downfall, but repudiates the charge the more strongly for enunciating it in her own words, just as she emphasises her constancy through the suggestion of Fortune’s whimsical nature.

The text positions the individual interestingly at the intersection of Senecan convention and the debate over free will in the Protestant sensibility and under Calvin’s influence, as a debate that was settled only uncomfortably and indefinitely at the time of Sidney’s writing. As Allyna Ward explicates, the feminized Fortune and her power, as opposed to the agency “discovered” by humanists, to be channelled against her, could not be easily separated from the

idea of God's providence (41). As Ward notes, "Fortune's character – unsteady, unpredictable, and therefore unexplainable in concrete terms – suited the discussions of Divine Providence, which were constantly being altered to suit the relevant historical phenomena and ... varied even among the reformers" (42). We see this point of contention in Cleopatra's insistence on letting the gods off the hook, as she credits them for giving only "good haps, not harms" (II.234),³⁹ and in her adamance that she is at the root of the destruction that has befallen herself and Antonie, in direct contradiction to Eras' soothing reiteration of the providential view. Cleopatra's claim to direction and power over the course of events reflects, perhaps, a view of aristocratic agency as coming about through the individual's aligning herself with the gods, and in this way early modern Christian stoicism contrasts with its classical predecessor; proper behaviour (of which the upper class is most capable) brings about and maintains proper order, and in this way, the play directs Elizabeth to act in accordance with a moral imperative.

Cleopatra's concern for those under her care, her family and subjects, comes across, reminding readers of her identity as a mother and ruler, and the authority those positions give her. Immediately after Antonie's death, her self-incrimination comes across vividly, and her acknowledgement of how her actions affect others: "I / The crown have lost my ancestors me left, / This realm I have subject to strangers made, / And robbed my children of their heritage" (V.11-14). She dwells at length on her responsibility for Antonie's demise, addressing him in his absence: "you, whom I have plagued, whom I have made / With bloody hand a guest of mouldy tomb ... you whom I destroyed" (V.17-19). She voices the Protestant view in which free will can

³⁹ This assertion echoes Sidney's philosophy elsewhere, touching a chord, for instance, with her translation of Psalm 73, where we find that God "is only good, and nought but good impartes." The psalm's speaker broods over the difficulty of maintaining faith when one sees the wicked rewarded, and counsels herself until she finds reassurance of peace in surrender. Not only does the psalm evoke a connection with the rise and fall of powerful figures, but, it also echoes, in turn, a passage in Philip Sidney's *Astrophil*, as Margaret Hannay points out, which suggests a rich thematic background, having to do, in part, with love; Hannay draws out, as well, the implications of the psalm with regard to feminine subjectivity, and with women's "responsibility to others" ("Joining the Conversation" 125) that comes across in this passage, also resonating with Cleopatra's perspective.

be exercised within limits, and this idea perhaps, again, is meant instructively—and critically—for Elizabeth. Further, not only would Elizabeth’s responsibility for the realm be invoked, but also the idea of a wider-spread responsibility and necessarily a corresponding agency for women.

Cleopatra turns the idea of “leaky borders” around, giving the impression that it is Antonie who has caused a rift in her boundaries, through her association with him. As the more substantial of the two, formerly, she became less through their merging. She points out the position she is in, using logic to persuade those who might doubt her, when she asks why she would betray him, for “did I not sufficient loss sustain [in the union]?” (II.168). She directs the discussion about who she is, and addresses directly the question of her trustworthiness, exploiting rhetorical skill even while at the height of—and perhaps in conjunction with—her emotional outburst. While Straznicky argues that Senecan drama offered no model for women besides the whore (“Stoical Paradoxes” 119), she forgets about the sympathetic and chaste, if sinful, lead character of *Medea*—one of Seneca’s two “best” plays according to Braden (42). The two female protagonists can be compared usefully. Martha Nussbaum says, in language particularly fitting to my focus here,

[S]he [Medea] loves. And any person who loves is opening in the walls of the self a hole through which the world may penetrate ... Seneca’s language, far more graphically physical than the language of Greek tragedy, reminds us that a life given over to love cannot avoid having holes in it ... The invasions and the corruptions of the self that come with passion can be corrected only by further violations. (231-2)

Indeed, “further violations” must be involved in *Antonie*’s denouement, but they play out in surprising ways.

“I did it, only I”: *Skirting Custom and Surpassing the Gods*

In Eras, her attendant, Cleopatra has a convenient sounding board against whom she can continue to configure herself. Responding to Eras, she takes responsibility for Antonie's loss of direction and ultimately his destruction, recalling the scene at Actium, when he, "careless both of fame and army's loss, / My oared galleys followed with his ships, / Companion of my flight" (II.207-9). When Eras tries to mitigate Cleopatra's sense of guilt, the queen responds unequivocally, "I am sole cause. I did it, only I" (II.212). Further, she refuses to let Antonie take the blame for bringing her into the battle at sea, and therefore defies the directive by which women—even women rulers—were not to follow their own initiative and had to play the part of a fragile courtly beloved, positioned outside any martial action rather than involved in it. She replies to Eras' suggestion of Antonie's culpability—"Should he then to war have led a queen?" (II.215)—by asserting her presence at Actium as an act of her own volition: "Alas! This was not his offense but mine" (II.216). Perhaps more brashly yet, Cleopatra takes responsibility away not only from Fortune, but from the gods, as well. She faults herself for the outcome of events, rejecting Eras' suggestion that only divine powers can effect the results of human action. Indeed, not only Eras puts forward this view, placatingly observing that "the gods have willed it so" (II, 273), but others do as well, including Lucilius and Caesar himself, and the chorus reiterates the idea at length at the end of the first act. They note, for example, "Nature made us not free/ When first she made us live" (I.173-4). To defy this group, who represent commonly held views and centres of authority, is surely for Cleopatra to exert her own will in a most significant way. Indeed, her character does so, perhaps, deliberately in *contrast* to the chorus, who, as members of a military unit, cannot, by definition, be anything but subjects dominated by an other. Through dialogue and positioning in relation to others, Cleopatra presents a model of subjectivity in

possession of agency and authority, even while her claim expresses the “conventional literary and social codes” that make her guilty simply by virtue of her sexuality (Raber 63).

Cleopatra is also driven, however, by mistrust. Interestingly, Cleopatra admits that the motivation that impelled her to participate in the battle was not valour, but jealousy. She insisted on accompanying Antonie to the battle, against his wishes, simply because she didn't trust in his fidelity to her, and suspected that he would return to Octavia (II, 230). In the “container” model that is active here to conceptualise their relationship, Cleopatra's actions can be understood as an attempt to prevent a tear in their shared being—as if her physical closeness in proximity will help to ensure nothing punctures the contours of their mutually held emotional stronghold. Despite her temporary loss of self-control, her claiming of responsibility strikes us as a powerful gesture towards self-sovereignty—of agency and of recognition of her guilt. Here, again, the personal level of the love relationship is underscored in large-scale events and the lovers' attempts to secure each other through spatial means; the mistrust that compromised the union of the lovers is dramatically represented by the movement of many military boats on the water and in the downfall of the empire that they had claimed between them, but the drama presented for the audience is a personal one. The circumstances present them with the need to respond to temporary doubt of the other.

“Perjured love”: Countering Distrust

In both the first and third acts, Antonie maintains and expands on his belief that Cleopatra has betrayed him, and it is only through third-party narration, later, that we know of his eventual change of heart. Cleopatra, for her part, devotes much of her speech to establishing her chastity, and her “actions” are carried out for the same purpose. In the play's portrayal of the last throes of the couple's love and death, their union in a shared self is brought across in dramatic terms, in

the image of the dissolution of their borders and their merging, made possible by the awareness of their precarious alliance with the other.

The reputed instability of women's bodily borders implies that it is women's nature to transfer or "transport" their affiliation from one man to another. Antonie's language shows both his willingness to believe in Cleopatra's deception and the difficulty she faces in "proving" her chastity. This idea is underscored by the "fluidity" of Cleopatra's travelling by sea, moving with her ships through the liquid medium in unpredictable ways—a feature that resonates with the "watery" nature of Egypt and the Nile, with which she is repeatedly associated (here as in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*) in contrast to the Roman world (Donald Freeman 449). Having interpreted her departure from the battle off the coast of Actium as a sign of her premeditated betrayal and her deliberate conspiracy with Octavian, Antonie expresses the jealousy that, he says, tortures him more than any other of his troubles: "Yet nought afflicts me, nothing kills me so, / As that I so my Cleopatra see / Practice with Caesar, and to him transport / My flame, her love, more dear than life to me" (III.15-18). He will not be convinced otherwise by Lucilius' arguments, despite the evidence in her favour that Lucilius points out. In particularly suggestive connotations associated with the image of the feminine self as a container that is either closed or open—chaste or incontinent—Antonie links Cleopatra's ambition to her depravity, saying, immediately after he confesses his jealousy, "Too wise a head she wears, / Too much inflamed with greatness, evermore / Gaping for our great empire's government" (III.20-23). Sexual desire, called up first in the suggestion that Cleopatra is "inflamed," is unacceptable in a woman, and is linked with her desire for power; she is *gaping*—not only wide open to men's attempts to penetrate her body, for the sake of rewards of sexual gratification and power, which are both ways she could expand the borders of herself, but also so insatiable that

she is unable to fill herself to her edges. Both kinds of desire—political and sexual—are represented in the image of her mouth, open, ready to ravenously consume the wealth and power beyond her own borders, and her body, also open, ready and eager to take in the means—any and all means—to that wealth and power. Cleopatra’s history works against her in her previous alliance with Octavian, in a connection similarly both sexual and political. Cleopatra’s sexuality makes all the difference to Antonie—it evokes his desire for her and his jealousy, and, because of assumptions about the feminine gender, it makes him willing to believe that she is inconstant. While the expression *to gape for* could be used of both men and women, it took on certain connotations when applied to the latter. Antonie himself expresses an ongoing state of indeterminate closure, in his admission to Lucilius that “a cureless wound I feel” (III.46), caused by his doubt in his lover. Cleopatra’s *gaping* represents a breach in their relationship, as well as a sign of the queen’s unacceptable aspirations, particularly as the term was used to suggest an immoral kind of striving—the desire for worldly things rather than spiritual fulfillment. But in terms of social decorum, as well, a woman, “forgetting all modestye,” could have “gapte out a laughter,” for example.⁴⁰ Her unchaste gaping presents an especial threat to their association.

The *gape* is also associated with *gap* (*OED* 1.4a) which denotes a lack, or space, a tear, and the unknown. Certainly what is imagined regarding Cleopatra does not offer the basis for either a relationship or for a secure sense of being; a connection with such an other of unknown contours and proportions cannot allow one to define one’s own borders. Significantly, nor does it allow one to monitor the outgoing and incoming “traffic,” which the male partner was supposed to be able to do; the woman was to be subsumed by him, and so contained. Here, Antonie is subsumed by Cleopatra, emotionally, and he experiences the unverifiable soundness of her borders as an undermining of his sense of himself.

⁴⁰*Nest of Ninnies*, 1608, qtd. in *OED* 2.1e.

Cleopatra also takes pains to avoid appearing to be *light*, which is another important term in the contested image of the queen that detracts from the stability of both her and her lover. Cleopatra forestalls the accusation by averring to Charmion that she will not trade political sides to save herself and those near her, as the maid suggests, but that “[n]ot light, inconstant, faithless should I be, / But vile, forsworn, of treacherous cruelty” (II.347-8). Used of women to imply their wantonness (*OED*, 3.14.b), the term is rich with connotations, many of which resonate here. It means that a person isn’t firmly settled on the ground, that her bearing is not sound or sturdy, and so she is liable to be “swayed” by others. For women, the idea that they can be lifted off their feet, that they can easily lose their footing, points directly to their being sexually accessible. It also includes the idea of being porous, full of holes, as in soil (*OED* 3.9a). Cleopatra understands that she needs to give herself weight, to make herself appear as whole, complete, and entire unto herself as possible, letting no one “in” but the few (or the one—for her English audiences) to whom she remains faithful and with whom she creates a contained relationship that is closed to others. For this reason, she is so adamant that she has been true to Antonie.

In sharp contrast to the emerging model of subjectivity that comes across in Cleopatra’s speeches, Caesar and Agrippa’s dialogue is completely taken up with their articulation of the externally defined self. Their frame of reference is the empire, and their topic—Antonie’s demise—expressed in terms of the grand-scale enactment of power. The Roman, military perspective is epitomized in their exchanges, with Caesar revelling in his ascendance to the ultimate position of sole ruler after his defeat of the other triumvirs: “at this day the proud exalted Rome, / Despoiled, captive, at one man’s will doth bend: / Her empire mine, her life is in my hand, / As monarch I both world and Rome command. / Do all, can all” (IV.13-17). Agrippa echoes this view, remarking on the aptness of individual rule in its reproduction of divine rule,

and noting the tendency for rulers to distrust their co-rulers: “Now as of heaven, one only lord we know, / One only lord should rule this earth below. / When one self-power is common made to two, / Their duties they nor suffer will, nor do; / In quarrel still, in doubt, in hate, in fear” (IV.144-8). He hesitates to condone Caesar’s establishment of Caesar’s borders through violence, but we see how Roman ideology culminates in Caesar’s insistence that he must eliminate those he is about to conquer in the conquest against Antonie, in order to declare his power: “Murder we must, until not one we leave, / Which may hereafter us of rest bereave” (IV.154-5). This idea of the self distinguishes the more personal, *relational* conception, demonstrated by Antonie’s embrace of an intimate other as the final completion of self, after his internal struggle. The drama of Antonie’s growth takes over the scene, when the men’s conversation is interrupted by the messenger delivering the news of his death. Caesar’s self-interested motivations are clear when he claims to be moved, saying his “breast doth pant to hear this doleful tale” (IV.334), and he tries to take credit for the outcome, asserting, “I am the cause despair him so compelled” (IV.211). However, the affecting narration of Antonie’s self-wounding and subsequent recognition of Cleopatra’s constancy and reunion with her soon takes the focus away from Caesar. Caesar attempts to reassert Roman values at the end of the scene, giving the order to have Cleopatra brought to him, using deception if necessary, for his own aggrandizement, “That by her presence beautified may be / The glorious triumph Rome prepares for me” (366-7). He evokes the *timê* of warrior self-definition—the goods associated with the individual’s power. But in between these examples of violently guarded, self-enlarging sovereignty we hear the moving sequence of events in Antonie’s death, in which concern for the other takes precedence.

“Wrest out of his conceit that harmful doubt”: *Truth in Deceit*

Antonie still refers to public opinion in framing his feelings, but, again, it seems that these are simply the terms he has at his disposal to express his care and admiration for Cleopatra. According to the narrator, once Antonie is given the (false) report of Cleopatra's death, he expresses his faith that they will be together after death, that "one tomb shall us conjoin" (IV, 251). Assured of their spiritual union, he reportedly laments that he has not acted as well as she: "I grieve, whom men so valorous did deem, / Should now than you of lesser valour seem" (IV, 252-3). His self-conception is tied firmly to her. Antonie's last words praise the servant Eros for refusing to slay his master—Antonie himself—and instead Antonie fatally wounds himself in a "[m]ost noble act" (IV, 260). Antonie is belatedly conscious of his inappropriate request of Eros, since, as "his man," Eros was unable by social prescription to carry out the order (IV, 260). Antonie's momentary forgetting of the divisions entrenched through a strict hierarchical class system, in his appeal to the other man, fits well with his other indecorous actions—which tend to involve his refusal to recognize the rigid boundaries and taboos of Roman society.

Elsewhere, as well, Antonie demonstrates a relational way of being, as opposed to Caesar's violently obtained tyranny, choosing his alliances apart from the specifications given from "above." He has a particular interpretation of what it means to be "joined" to another in a specific relationship within the structure of the social system. And as important as *trust* is in the establishment of these relationships, it is not the consistent, stable marker of virtue in the way we expect in this early modern English / ancient Roman world. First, Lucilius, who is Antonie's "sole comfort ... only *trust*, [and] only hope" (III, 1-2, emphasis added), stands out as the lone one of his subjects who has remained loyal to him, as the others "draw them back, showing they followed me, / Not to partake my harms, but cozen me" (III, 11-12). Antonie refers briefly to the history of his and Lucilius's bond, as he remembers his own former greatness and his

“conquering” of Rome; at the time of the siege, Lucilius had saved Brutus by pretending to be the other man, and, Antonie says, “There sprang the love, the never-changing love, / Wherein my heart hath since to yours been bound ... *For* your Brutus, Antonie you found” (III.99-102, emphasis added). Understandably, Antonie admires Lucilius for his bravery, but somewhat ironically, their relationship is based on Lucilius’ capacity for deceit; he trades one “friend” for another, and Antonie must—and does—believe that Lucilius will transfer loyalty from the old to the new, and not, after that, to another ally. Having proven that he can move his faithfulness from one to another, Lucilius gives Antonie reason to doubt that he can remain true to Antonie alone. Antonie has taken a chance, it seems, and he has judged (correctly, as it turns out) that his comrade will remain true to him; nevertheless, their friendship begins in deception. The luck or “good hap” of this union shows that Antonie wants to trust, and that one has to trust, in spite of there being no guarantee of that trust being rewarded, in order to allow for the relationships that support him; unlike Caesar, he seeks authentic relationships, rather than being guided by a policy of elimination for potential threats.

There is some similarity in Antonie’s instincts to accept Lucilius in friendship and to open himself to Cleopatra. Certainly, his response to discovering her only actual deceit—which is in sending him the false information about her death—shows the same willingness to forgive her for it that he showed to Lucilius upon the discovery of his honourable lie for Brutus. Describing Antonie’s death for Caesar and Agrippa, the messenger Dircetus reports that after Antonie had stabbed himself, in agony he had begged his men to finish him, “Until a man from Cleopatra came, / Who said from her he had commandment / To bring him to her, to the monument. / The poor soul at these words, even rapt with joy / Knowing she lived, prayed us him to convey / Unto his lady” (IV.277-82). Happily accepting the news that Cleopatra was still

alive, Antonie shows his own character in contrast to Caesar's, but also the position women are put in because of the emphasis on their chastity. Because for women trustworthiness is linked to—or equated with—chastity, the queen takes a great risk in sending a lie to gain access to Antonie, in a bid to convince him of her fidelity. Cleopatra has to take extreme measures to prove herself chaste, which includes lying, the very thing that signals woman's lack of reliability. She recasts the terms by which her borders are defined as secure.

The dynamic of friendship informs the relationship between Antonie and Cleopatra, which is reinforced through Lucilius's relationship to Antonie. The men's speech regarding friendship echoes Cleopatra's earlier words to Eras, when she defends her loyalty to Antonie. Cleopatra asserts in Act II that Antonie's misfortune is all the more reason to remain bound to him: "A friend in most distress should most assist" (330). Explaining his own reliability to Antonie, Lucilius avers, "Men in their friendship ever should be one" (III.117). Antonie, in turn, calls Lucilius "steadfast as a tower" (III.111). Their exchange reiterates the model of salutary containment that (male) relationships provide, just as Cleopatra does in her numerous references to her simultaneous occupation of intimate space with Antonie, such as when she refers to herself as "I, who am his heart" (V.344), and when she claims, "He is myself" (V.352). The similarity between Antonie's closest "others" suggests that his relationship with Cleopatra is not limited to sexual desire, or based on his attraction to (and repulsion for) the exotic "dark" Egyptian lady, but one of mutual loyalty and deep commitment, akin to homosocial friendship that is so valorised in the period, as Shannon shows. Indeed, Shannon's research on friendship invites us to note that their bond has overcome the "difference" between them stemming from their opposing political associations of the past and their genders. Their shared subjectivity speaks to Antonie's willingness to open himself to the "other," despite her not reflecting back a mirror image of

himself, as friendship theory of the period set out that the friend should (Shannon 17-53). And, conversely, his friendship with Lucilius resembles the shared containment of the romantic love he has with Cleopatra—and in both cases, at the end, the borders are intact. Mistrust gives Antonie occasion to ponder his relationship with Cleopatra, and to reconfirm its solidity; she is the emotional receptacle of his life and being. He is not ultimately governed by his self-defensive mistrust, as Caesar is, but accepts Cleopatra even though she deceives him, and accepts Lucilius despite their alliance's basis in deception.

Similarly, Cleopatra's affiliations with her female companions are important in her self-substantiation. The lovers never share a scene with two-way dialogue, and the closest they come is when Cleopatra addresses Antonie after he has died in her arms, in the last act. She appeals to her "sisters" for help throughout her ordeal, and they, like Lucilius, voice the intention to share the fate of their companion: "think you madam, we from you will part? / Think you alone to feel death's ugly dart? / ... We'll die with you," Charmion avers (II.423-4, 427). Despite this claim of solidarity, though, both Charmion and Diomedes bring to our attention the fact that they have little choice in the matter of their end; Cleopatra's demise means the deaths of her people, including the likely end (or enslavement) of her attendants and most her family, unless they can be smuggled away. But the point of her choosing Antonie to place her loyalty with, over any of the others in her care, is the unequivocal establishment of her chastity, which she is determined to settle. Diomedes and Charmion affirm Cleopatra's subjectivity in their admiration for her, and they express the complexity of the bonds Cleopatra must consider: Diomedes emphasizes for the audience both Cleopatra's power in terms of her effect on men and her charismatic presence, and also makes believable the likelihood that Cleopatra could persuade Caesar to accept her as an ally and lover again, so that Cleopatra's refusal to do so underscores her fidelity to Antonie. It is

Cleopatra herself who acknowledges the possibility that Caesar may not be persuaded to take her back, and so, again, she is the one to speak the words others might have used in judgment of her. As she is insisting on her intention to remain true to Antonie, she imagines what others would say of her: “had I him exchanged / For Caesar, then, men would have counted me / Faithless, inconstant, light” (II.337-9). She allows her listeners to hear the pragmatic aspect of her decision, showing, perhaps, that she has struggled with the notion of transferring her loyalty: “Leave him, forsake him (and perhaps in vain) / Weakly to please who him hath overthrown?” (II.345-6). She manages to keep her grasp on chastity, her firmness of body, while conveying some sense of her responsibility for those who will suffer with her.

The women are also important for verifying and backing up Cleopatra’s claims of devotion to Antonie. For example, Diomedes describes Cleopatra grieving over Antonie’s mistaken distrust: “Darkened with woe, her only study is / To weep, to sigh, to seek for loneliness. / Careless of all, her hair disordered hangs; / ... Her fair discovered breast with sobbing swollen / Self-cruel she still martyreth with blows” (II.491-8). Cleopatra echoes this language when she bids her companions to take her place at the end, suggesting the closeness and connection between herself and the women. She beseeches them, “Weep my companions, weep ... / Martyr your breasts with multiplied blows, / With violent hands tear off your hanging hair” (V.191-6). They can be present with her in the tower without threat to its soundness. That they can take up the emotional role she asks of them is telling of the nature of their bonds. Again, as Shannon shows, friends are so like, their thoughts and emotions are identical—and these bonds cross the lines of social class, so that the servant/mistress relationship is mixed with that of friendship, as Judith Weil notes could be the case (11). Cleopatra’s final speech is to them as much as to Antonie. She asks them to be witnesses to her constancy to Antonie, and to her

blending herself into him in a final move towards sharing the intimate confines of their last space—a wish she repeats often during the course of the play. Following on her desire “[t]o be in one self tomb, and one self chest / And wrapped with thee in one self sheet to rest” (V.175-6), she cries to Antonie in her last moments, “Fainting on you [...] forth my soul may flow” (V.208). At this point, he is the one whose borders *gape*, with his mortal wound, which makes him open to symbolic union with Cleopatra. The women’s presence, with its emotional correspondence to that of the distraught queen, boosts the authenticity of Cleopatra’s last words and actions.

As these instances illustrate, the dialogue in the play reveals the importance of material evidence for proof of the characters’ declarations, and this pattern sets the stage for Cleopatra’s actions at the end, in sealing herself in the tower that serves as a material representation of her “extreme” chastity. For example, Cleopatra’s demonstrations of allegiance to her husband are recounted by Lucilius as he defends her to Antonie; he observes that the “dole she made upon our overthrow, / ... Her poor attire when she devoutly kept / The solemn day of her nativity, / Against the cost and prodigal expense / Showed when she did your birthday celebrate, / Do plain enough her heart unfeigned prove” (III.37-43). Further, when, desperate to convince Antonie of her fidelity, Cleopatra contrives to send him word of her death, her words disclose the same assumption: “Tell him, my soul burning, impatient, / Forlorn with love of him, for certain seal / Of her true loyalty my corpse hath left” (II.443-5). Even Caesar’s plan to have Antonie killed rather than simply to strip him of authority speaks to the early modern requisite for palpable confirmation, as Antonie shows: “Never will he his empire think assured / While in this world Mark Antonie shall live” (III. 167-8). Again, when the messenger Dircetus brings word to Caesar and Agrippa of Antonie’s death, he takes care to include sensible evidence of his report, saying, “[I] took with me this sword, / Which I took up at what time Antonie / Was from his chamber

carried to the tomb, / And brought it you, to make his death more plain, / And that thereby my words may credit gain” (IV.329-33). But just as all of these examples show, reports and signs are not proof positive of what they can only suggest; they can be manipulated, with some being more suspect than others. Like the handkerchief for Othello, when he suspects Desdemona’s betrayal, Cleopatra’s “long close talks” with Caesar’s servant Thyrus at one time made Antonie unsure of her. Her final gesture, sealing herself in the tower and pulling Antonie inside it with her, is one that dispels any doubts of the integrity of her borders and the exclusive access she allows to him.

Such overt and painstaking actions are eschewed by the Judean princess Mariam in the play by Elizabeth Cary, but chastity figures significantly nevertheless. This heroine deals with the same prescriptive laws of social decorum as Cleopatra does, as well as a somewhat similar situation, but with quite different feelings and tactics. The undependability of words, as proof of the truth when mistrust is involved, comes to the forefront in *The Tragedy of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*. Just as it is fitting for one to withhold trust at times, when evidence does point to deception, especially in the high-stakes political game of the early Roman empire, one also risks a loss for refusing to credit others for their trustworthiness—and women’s potential, and often-cited, inability to patrol the borders of their bodies, here as in Sidney’s play, makes them automatically suspect. It is not surprising that Cleopatra goes to such dramatic measures in *Antonie*, and Cary’s play, again dealing thematically with mistrust of the other, takes the fanatical preoccupation with women’s chastity and containment to its logical, and dramatic, extreme.

“Friendly Trust” and Unfriendly Fate

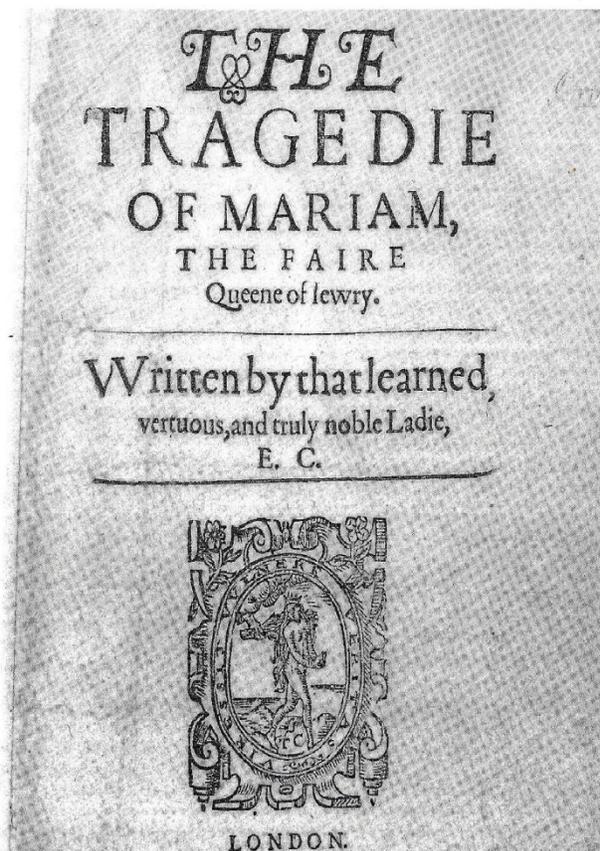
There was no shortage of suffering in Elizabeth Cary’s life, and it is tempting to read into her play the details of her family life and her experience of the duplicitous activities of court life,

when we encounter the play's engagement with familial and marital conflict in the royal court of ancient Judea, as S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies admit they cannot help doing (46). Cerasano and Wynne-Davies give highlights from the biography written by her daughter and evidence from the author's own writing to show that Cary's parents were domineering, and that her married life was unhappy. The tyrannical and abusive figures of the play might bear some resemblance to her mother-in-law, who, when Cary's husband was away at war in the Lowlands at the start of their marriage, severely controlled her movements and restricted her opportunities to read and write (43). Later, her conversion to Catholicism in 1625—brought to the attention of King Charles by self-serving acquaintances at court (186, n.3)—resulted in her separation from her Protestant husband and her subsequent poverty, despite her association with the Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria. However, other critics point out that Cary's dedications to the play warmly acknowledge her sister-in-law and her husband (Raber 39), and that the writing and much later publication of the play occur before Cary's falling-out with Henry Cary, her spouse (Straznicky, "Profane Paradoxes" 109). And despite her early conformity to her husband's Protestant views, and his dramatic reaction to her Catholicism, Cary seems to have been less constrained in her writing than Sidney, producing many original texts and translations, as Heather Wolfe's biography of the noblewoman shows (2006). The play was published in 1613, and although her daughter and biographer claims that this only occurred because the manuscript was stolen (a typical "cover" for seeking publication), Cary wrote that she scorned such excuses. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies point out that other notable writers of the day lauded her work, and at least one—John Davies, a member of the "Sidney circle"—encouraged her to publish (45). If the play is not a veiled depiction of her own hardships, being a member of a family in a variety of roles, including as the wife, sister-in-law, and mother of eleven children, would have given

Cary insight into family dynamics and also how they could be analogous to those between monarch and state, following the contemporary ideological comparison. Like Sidney, she must have seen the efficacy of how Senecan form “uses the tensions of family relationships to express problems of political identity” (Raber 40). And she, too, employs the play’s dialogue, in *Mariam*, to express female subjectivity through its rendering of intimate relationships and spatial positioning.

The frontispiece of the published play—the only one of the present group of closet plays to be printed—intriguingly includes the figure of a woman or goddess, in miniature, which tells us something of the perseverance of this image and the degree of universality it held in the English imagination. Again an ideal, the nudity of the figure passes censure with its pretensions of classicalism and its authority derived from tradition. It retains a sexual element while representing the moral integrity of the text’s message: the primacy of chastity as a female virtue.

Did Cary agree to this image, we wonder, especially considering the ease with which publication could slide into a sign of sexual misconduct for women? Perhaps the problematic



nature of chastity and its definitions in the play are suggested; or, perhaps it is a publisher’s mark, not deliberately connected to the play’s content at all. If so, the image incidentally underscores the ideology of women’s earthly, base nature and their need to be controlled because of their bodies’ instability.

Fig. 5 Frontispiece, *Tragedy of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*, 1613

It also suggests the idea of seeing and being seen, of the requirement for women to be transparent, to be what they appear, and to appear virtuous.

The Tragedy of Mariam, written shortly after *Antonie* between 1602 and 1604 (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 47), is set at the same point in history as Sidney's play, and we can note that Mariam's homeland of Judea is among the war prizes Antonie reportedly in that dramatic work to have won for Cleopatra (IV.83). In this one, as the "Argument" sets out, Antonie has bequeathed the kingdom to Herod, along with the hand of the Judean princess Mariam, for whom Herod has left his former wife and children. At the play's opening, Octavian has overthrown Antonie and summoned Herod to Rome, and the Judean ruler's future is uncertain. He has been compelled to travel there before to answer charges that he murdered Mariam's grandfather and brother, the men ruling Judea when Herod arrived, on both occasions leaving instructions for Mariam to be killed if he failed to return. The possibility of his death, then, makes Mariam rejoice, on one hand, and regretful on the other, and initiates reactions in the other characters who are directly connected to Herod at the court. These include his brother, Pheroras, his sister, Salome, and their current and potential spouses. Herod's unexpected return exposes the instability at the foundation of his reign. The unscrupulous Salome, willing, like Herod, to employ deception and violence against others, is the only one able to achieve her desires under his reign. Unwilling to perform the role of an obedient wife to a tyrant, Mariam provokes his anger; goaded further by the lies Salome tells him about Mariam's infidelity, Herod sentences her to death. Her execution and the silent defiance with which she approached it are reported to him, as he realises that he was mistaken in believing the accusations against her.

Again, as in *Antonie*, the main, heterosexual relationship is complicated by mistrust on the part of both spouses, suggesting that the culture of deceit that tyranny breeds foments paranoia and suspicion. Unlike Sidney's play, though, the focus is not on the romantic devotion of lovers but the difficulties of a marriage based on compulsion and duty on Mariam's part, and complicated by Herod's unrestrained ambition. The play portrays the difficulties of accessing agency under monarchical governance, through the depiction of unequal relationships, and using the issues of distrust and the discourses surrounding gender, which dictate the need for women's containment. Mariam models a subjectivity that counters Senecan expansion of the self through domination, the only way to assert the self in relation to others that the genre typically offers, by constituting herself through the development of her inner substance. She attempts to establish a space for herself independent of her prescribed "place" in the system of the play's world, and by implication, sends a warning about English politics.

The model of marriage in which the woman is subsumed by her husband offers a way to represent the problems with unquestioning obedience to the king. One difficulty of Mariam's situation is that her distrust of her husband makes him more willing to believe she has been unfaithful to him, because she will not mould her behaviour to suit his demands. He interprets as rebellion any protest she makes regarding his actions. Her own suspicions have to do with his treachery against her family members, rather than that his love for her is unreliable. As Maureen Quilligan points out, the notion that the assault on Mariam's relatives is a valid reason for her to bear hostility toward him is verified in Caesar's aggression towards Antonie for mistreating Caesar's sister Octavia, whom Antonie had married and abandoned (127). Mariam's identity is defined through her familial network, not just by her marriage to Herod, and to sever these connections, as Herod has done, reduces her, demanding that she become a mere part of him,

contained entirely by him, and indistinguishable from him. When she discovers that he has arranged for her death if he should die—a demand consistent with her existence as merely an aspect of himself—her anger expresses an attempt to assert her autonomy from him, which is difficult to do under the principle of coverture that defines marriage in such spatial terms. Her words are telling on this point: “Might Herod’s life a trusty servant find, / My death to his had been *unseparate*” (I.49-50, emphasis added). In Herod’s behaviour we see his desire to expand himself to encompass Mariam in the Senecan mode of self-projection and domination—representing the subject in relation to the monarch.

The institution of monarchical rule allows the possibility of the early modern subject being “swallowed up” by a ruler whose interests are his own rather than the general good of the community (Braden 10). The classical idea of *timê*, the material goods and area that mark the identity, power, and worth of the martial subject (Braden 10), emphasises this idea in an even more significant way than coverture, in that the woman becomes more of an object than she does under early modern law as a wife; her subjectivity is effaced as she is dehumanised. Herod’s elimination of Hyrcanus and Aristobolus, her grandfather and brother, is another indication of his projection of himself in the classical Greek sense; as Braden says when describing the background of Senecanism, “if greatness is inescapably competitive, then the standards for achievement will keep rising, including the level of power with which ambition will be satisfied” (12-13). That she would literally cease to exist when Herod does presents vividly the idea of total domination. Further, she is not permitted to have her own judgment or beliefs, as Herod tries to insist that she believe him innocent of her family’s murders. The killing of her close relations gives Mariam a specific reason to assert herself against Herod, and highlights that rather than just a wish to expand her own individual power, she acts out of loyalty to them, in contrast to Herod.

Suspicion of an intimate other, needless or otherwise, destabilises one's borders rather than bolstering them, as homosocial friendship does, for example, and other kinds of associative self-enhancement that join people in one secure figurative body. Herod's reaction, to counter this debilitating effect—which is based only on his fear—is to disavow his connection with Mariam and to destroy her, in order to reaffirm his own boundaries. In contrast, Mariam tempers her emotional judgments with careful reasoning, so that she represents the early modern ideal of a self-monitoring, self-contained individual that the humanist subject, and certainly the monarch, should be. Her subjectivity comes from inner resources rather than the overcoming of others to further her power, as noted above, and Cary places this idea at the play's opening, when Mariam's first words express her measuring of an earlier incorrect assessment she made of Julius Caesar, another powerful figure in the international political theatre. Noting her former reaction to Julius Caesar's⁴¹ tears at the death of Pompey, whom Caesar had had killed despite their friendship, she rues that she was mistaken in her judgment, saying "now I do recant" (I.5). She remembers that she had first construed his show of emotion as a false display of humanity—presumably for the sake of building public opinion in his favour. But reflecting on her own emotional ambivalence at the news of Herod's death, at which she, too, shed tears, she understands that Caesar's grief could have been genuine: he had admired Pompey, while hating him for the threat he posed. "Now do I find," she says, "by self-experience taught, / One object yields both grief and joy" (I.9-10). Caesar's actions affirm her sense of the validity of her own divided feelings, so she derives emotional authority from his; further, she puts herself in a high enough position that she is his judge. Like Caesar with Pompey, Mariam similarly has reasons to both love and loathe Herod: he is her sovereign and husband and has been kind to her in the

⁴¹ Quilligan interprets the line as referring to Antony as "Rome's last hero" (I, 2) rather than Caesar, whom S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies cite, deriving from Plutarch's *Caesar*, Book XLVIII (n. 1, 188), but the point is the same, whichever of these two men Cary means to indicate.

intimate spaces of their married life, but has is also a threat to her family and herself. She acknowledges her emotions and gives them credit: “These thoughts have power his death to make me bear, / Nay more, to wish the news [of his death] may firmly hold. / Yet cannot this repulse some falling tear / That will against my will some grief unfold?” (I.51-4). In working through her struggle to be fair in her assessment and treatment of Herod, justifying the reasons for her emotional dilemma, she models the process the well-governed individual uses to assess others. She substantiates herself through inner development rather than the kind of ambitious self-projection—the domination and containment of others—that characterises selfhood for Herod.

Mariam’s grasp of a broader understanding of emotional ambivalence contrasts sharply with that of other women in the play, who lack the ability to ground themselves on their own moral judgment but are swayed either by dominant others or selfish, and self-defensive, motivations. The dialogue of the three main women establishes their separation from one another, as they are each aligned with a different “other” through whom they identify themselves. At this point, Salome and Alexandra both misinterpret Mariam’s tears, reading them as confirmation of their own fears, which relate to their own precarious positions in the polity. Salome construes Mariam’s tears as a gleam of desire, as ambition, saying to her and Mariam’s mother, Alexandra, “More plotting yet? Why, now you have the thing / For which so oft you spent your suppliant breath. / And Mariam hopes to have another king, / Her eyes do sparkle joy for Herod’s death” (I.209-10). Alexandra is incensed for the opposite reason: “What means these tears? My Mariam doth mistake / The news we heard did tell the tyrant’s end. / What weep’st thou for thy brother’s murthrer’s sake?” (I, 79-81). These women make Mariam’s constancy to Herod and to her idea of virtue more conspicuous through their changing alliances. Salome

assumes Mariam is as grasping at power as she is herself; Alexandra draws attention to how Mariam should be guided by political efficacy, discounting the notion of her emotional response to her husband's loving behaviour.

Alexandra's outrage at the deaths of her son and father comes across in her lengthy speech that her daughter's tears elicit, but her fidelity proves to be less an indication of her adherence to loyalty as a virtue than as a political tactic, even though we don't doubt her grief. She shows elsewhere that she, like Salome, is ambitious, seeking alliances with whoever she thinks can advance her and her family the most. She reminds Mariam that she sent a picture of both her son and her daughter, Aristobulus and Mariam, to Antonie, hoping to contract a marriage for Mariam, and regrets that the beauty of the two of them together had overwhelmed him, with the result being that, instead, he fell under the power of Cleopatra (I.191). While she frames this gesture as an attempt to restore her family to its rightful place, as their lineage entitles them to positions of authority, she cannot look beyond this goal to determine whether such a course of action is moral or not, nor does she seem to balk at how she uses others to rise politically; it is Mariam who points out in protest against such a plan that it would involve adultery. Mariam avers that she would not make the compromises that Cleopatra has had to, which represent the violation of chastity: "Not to be empress of aspiring Rome / Would Mariam like to Cleopatra live. / With purest body will I press my tomb, / And with no favours Anthony could give" (I.199-202). In citing the numerous other suitors for Mariam's hand (I.211-18), Alexandra draws attention to the competition for "position" not only among men, but among women, as well, with both deriving power and wealth through marital alliances. These unions often involve the annexation of territory, as an extension of the human "bodies" involved. Alexandra supports the view of women as tradeable commodities, and her actions have exposed

Mariam, “opened” her borders to Antonie and potentially other men. She has put Mariam on the market for exchange, showing how the consolidation of power operates. She also shows how daughters’ are denied subjectivity and reduced to their bodies, until they gain power over their own daughters’ bodies and wills.

The absence of any other guiding principle for Alexandra’s existence distinguishes her attitude dramatically from Mariam’s, and recalls, again, the kind of subjectivity to be gained only through dominance over others. Alexandra’s indictment of her daughter at the end—the “strangest aspect of Mariam’s sacrifice” in Quilligan’s opinion (131)—can be explained by Mariam’s refusal to act in a politically strategic way that would benefit her maternal family, and also perhaps suggests the insecurity and unsubstantiated selfhood that Alexandra herself suffers from. Her disgust with Mariam also suggests fear, as her failure to further her family’s fortunes through her daughter leaves her with nothing upon which to secure herself. Calling Mariam’s death “too too good” (V.41), Alexandra underscores her frustration with her inability to manipulate the situation through her daughter, and, it seems, she speaks from a desire to save herself, through adding her voice of castigation to Herod’s as if to agree with him in his assessment of Mariam’s behaviour. Not only does she not call out the wrong done to her daughter, as we might have expected after her ethical stance regarding her son’s and father’s deaths at Herod’s hands, Alexandra even gives up her emotional connection to her daughter, disavowing Mariam after Mariam declines to affiliate herself with the politically astute party. Mariam herself, taking exception to the way she is pedaled to Antonie, observes distinct standards of behaviour in defining herself as chaste, which is underscored by Alexandra’s dismissing of those standards and her preferring to exercise the power she has over her daughter’s boundaries for political ends.

Salome, on the other hand, represents the ultimate example of the uncontained female and the destruction that results from the ruler's failure to control those in close proximity to him. She is the conventional "whore" of Senecan tradition, enlarging herself through spreading her body among men. Through her unrestrained sexuality she shows the havoc created in the realm when those close to the sovereign are permitted to pursue their wills, and to trample across the boundaries defining their positions. She acts purely for selfish reasons, using her political position to work the downfall of others in the competitive pursuit of power also typical of Senecan drama. The access to power she does have, as the king's sister, has given her an unwillingness to bear the confines that women were subject to, but no standard of behaviour that she can use to direct her actions toward in place of conforming. We might recall Knowles's observation here that "proximity symbolised power; proximity was power" (11). She shows how mistrust can be exploited—especially when it involves women's boundaries (we can think of Iago in *Othello*, and Arcas in *Love's Victory*), as she manipulates others using their insecurities. She fears Mariam as a rival for power, through Herod, which is why she explains Mariam's tears of grief for ambition, and finally brings about Mariam's death through calumny. She replaces her husbands, one by one, beginning with Josephus, who had been the one to reveal to Mariam Herod's order to have her killed upon his own death. Telling Herod of this betrayal, and making it seem like a sign of Mariam's transgression, too, was an easy way for Salome to be rid of Josephus so that she could marry Constabarus, against whom, in turn, she contrived a plot. Mariam calls her to account for this deception, seeing through Salome's actions: Salome has "used the art / To slander hapless Mariam for unchaste" and to "free herself" (I.257-8). Indeed, she uses "the art" to obtain what she wants while deflecting attention away from her behaviour that would be read as distinctly wanton.

Salome's exceptionally passionate hatred of her current husband is commensurate with the anger that drives the Senecan genre (Braden 10). In the process of arranging for Constabarus' elimination, plotting with her new lover Silleus, Salome manages to convince her other brother, Pheroras, to tell Herod of Constabarus' secret harbouring of an enemy's sons. She conveys her experience of constraints as unbearable, illustrating an early modern and female version of Senecan subjectivity that defies limits. She also conveys through her selfish actions the idea that subjects who resist the hierarchically arranged boundaries are sinful. She shows her willingness to deceive and even destroy others in order to escape these bounds. Her transfer of loyalty for political ends is equated with her transfer of her body from man to man, and represented in her having brought about the death of Josephus and in her pursuit of a formal divorce from Constabarus. In this desire, she crosses gender boundaries and pursues male prerogative, since men but not women were permitted to divorce their spouse. Employing the language of liberation, she declares, "I'll be the custom-breaker, and begin / To show my sex the way to freedom's door" (I.309-10). Valid as her point is regarding the unfairness of the legislation, she incorporates in this speech and elsewhere the idea that she is only guided by her own desire: "My will shall be to me instead of law" (I.454) echoes her selfish assertion that "[t]he law was made for none but who are poor" (I.312). In portraying Salome's rejection of the marriage bond that ties her to and subordinates her to another, Cary takes up the stock character of the whore and uses Salome's unbridled sexuality to illustrate how the powerful set themselves outside the social and legal systems that regulate the community. Her stated intention to lead other women to "freedom" represents a threat to the structure of social system based on their containment through marriage and chastity, presenting her wish as an excuse to move from man to man.

But if Salome feels the pinch of constraint, and experiences marriage as an unwelcome “yoke,” Mariam is not immune to similar discomfort, and acts (though so differently) to resist the circumscribing forces that hem her in. Although Mariam accepts some limitations, even she experiences the squeeze of restrictions on women that are “too too” tight. Salome feels great vexation with the forces that bear on her, and so she seeks to evade these forces through any means she can—often at the expense of others. Mariam expresses the feeling that the tighter the restraints on her become, the more she is compelled to throw them off—even acting in ways she would not have formerly; referring to Herod’s restriction of her movements while he was gone, she says, “blame me not [for defying her husband], for Herod’s jealousy / Had power even constancy itself to change; / For he, by barring me from liberty, / To shun my ranging, taught me first to range” (I.23-6). She suggests that the fanatical insistence on controlling another’s movements produces an opposite effect to the one intended; the effect of too much restriction, of extreme compression, makes that person overflow her bounds elsewhere, and secretly.

Mariam’s approach comes across in contradistinction to Salome’s passing herself among men and crossing the boundaries of the social order. Mariam’s singleness becomes established, but not through her claiming domination over the heavens and exceeding all limits, but rather through centring in herself a substantial concentration of being. This entails fortifying her boundaries, as noted above when she protests against Alexandra’s plan to use her sexuality to expand the power of the family. Showing that she locates value in virtue, she repeats numerous times that she is chaste. Upon hearing of Herod’s safe return, for example, she reiterates that her stance against him is for moral reasons rather than selfish ones: she proclaims, “I know I could enchain him with a smile ... I could overthrow them all [her enemies] ere long” (III.169-70). This is the language that characterises the conventional heroic self. Foregoing this action, she admits

to no fear of the consequences because her chastity is her “fair defence” (III.173), and she asserts “[m]ine innocence is hope enough for me” (III.180). However, knowing her borders to be firm is not sufficient in the competitive world she occupies with conniving others.

As a critique of tyranny, the play shows the impossibility of alliances that dissolve the borders between two parties and build up the subjectivity of both through their joining or at least bring them closer to one another, in the culture of betrayal that the tyrant creates through his unrestrained passions. Unlike in the early modern model of friendship that Shannon explores, as I note at the start of my project, the characters tend to be rivals or else, in a distorted version of friendship, act in collusion with one another to bring about the violent demise of their competitors, as Salome does with Pheroras and with one and then another of her lovers. Rather than creating mutually beneficial spaces, the women relate to one another by constructing barriers between themselves. Mariam expresses the idea that people should seek connection through friendship, as her grandfather, Hyrcanus, reportedly had, to his unfortunate destruction. Hyrcanus had accepted Herod’s promotion with good faith, which Alexandra remembers in her bitter recrimination of Herod, for the king had then slain Hyrcanus, who “did in him most friendly trust” (I.98). The “friendly trust” of Hyrcanus indicates the letting down of defences, so that Herod had had the opportunity to overcome the other man when allowed to be close to him. Mariam does not fare much better in her attempts to establish bonds between herself and the other women with whom she might have found mutual support, but she is conscious of the disappointed potential. At Salome’s critical comments near the beginning, in which she offers Mariam “only scorn” (I.230), Mariam reacts with anger, saying, “Scorn those that are for thy companions held!” (I.231). Later, when Herod’s first wife, Doris, disparages her, accusing her of adultery, Mariam offers her respects to the other woman, and asks Doris for mercy, appealing, it

seems, to the office of motherhood that they share: “Oh Doris, now to thee my knees I bend. / That heart, that never bowed, to thee doth bow; / Curse not mine infants, let it thee suffice / That heaven doth punishment to me allow” (IV.603-6). Although she does not directly decry Herod’s actions against the other woman, Mariam does show Doris a respect that acknowledges the first wife’s situation; her willingness to open herself to friendship with Doris—and Salome, earlier—corresponds to Hyrcanus’ similar readiness to give Herod a place, to shift the order and positioning of individuals to accommodate him into the social and political system. Like Hyrcanus, Mariam seeks open cordiality and mutuality with the women around her, in contrast to Alexandra’s hostilities, to Salome’s scheming, and to the duplicity shown by Doris as she and her son plot violence against Mariam and her children.

These divisions between women, who are represented as occupying the same domestic space, are emphasised through their involvement with their inability, and unwillingness, to uphold one another’s sexual reputations. In this narrative, women are put in the position of undermining each other’s chastity, such as when Alexandra advertises Mariam to Antonie, when Salome lies about Mariam’s infidelity to Herod, and when Mariam herself cannot help being made Herod’s wife in spite of his marriage to Doris, which makes Mariam guilty of adultery. Against the model of chastity that they could have drawn on, based on women’s solidarity in constructing and protecting one another’s borders, they are set against one another, to pull down those constructs. In discussing the play, Shannon observes the commonly referenced image of chastity in the period, in the figure of Diana and her attendants, drawn primarily from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* (82). In this spatially conceived story, Diana and her women have deliberately sought out a grotto in which to dwell, surrounded by the forest growth, where they protect themselves from both the physical presence of men and the male gaze. The place is sacred to the

goddess, which, Shannon points out, emphasises the seriousness of Actaeon's act when he breaks in. Significantly, to guard Diana from this male invasion, the women gather around her, creating a wall with their own bodies to shield hers. Shannon asserts the relevance of this story to how chastity is understood in the period: "Here, in its most frequent source version for the Renaissance, this manifestation of Diana locates powerful female chastity in a sacred, enclosed, or withdrawn realm, while also populating that space with a plural female company, a voluntary 'band'" (82). Shannon notes the lack of female associative connections that women can rely on to enhance their subjectivities in the competitive world of Cary's play, in which they compete as do the men, for power; this they often do through their sexuality, to gain access to authority through the men. The conflicts that are portrayed between the women throughout the drama emphasise their distance rather than a pulling together in any kind of intimacy. As Shannon observes, "Not only is women's friendship conspicuously absent in the universe that the drama depicts; even a basic neutrality between women is precluded by a patriarchal social organization that directs women's anger toward each other" (Shannon 84). This dynamic weakens women's ability to establish themselves as subjects, with their mistrust of one another making the household realm they jointly occupy a place of insecurity, where they face exposure rather than finding refuge.

Yet another woman in the play—the slave woman Graphina, whom Herod and Salome's brother Pheroras wants to marry—brings out some of the obstructions in the way of women's subjectivity, and her involvement with bodily comportment prepares the audience for the outcome of Mariam's disobedience of Herod. Graphina expresses both that women's silence conceals many possible kinds of private thoughts, and that speech does not mean much from those who do not have authority to speak their minds freely. When Pheroras tells her their plans

to marry can go ahead, since Herod is believed to be dead, he bids her, “[m]ove thy tongue, / For silence is a sign of discontent” (II.41-2). Graphina explains the reasons for her reticence: first, “If I be silent, ‘tis no more but fear / That I should say too little when I speak” (II.49-50); she is full of gratitude for his kindness toward her and wonder at his love for her, and acknowledges that words cannot express emotion fully. Adding her hopes that her “steadfast love / And fast obedience” (II.70-71) will be enough to “requite” his treatment of her, she recognizes that she cannot enhance Pheroras’ situation politically or publically, and emphasizes that in their private life, she will conform to the role of an obedient wife all the more diligently. In this aim, she may also mean that she fears that she may not say enough to thoroughly please Pheroras when he finally commands her to speak, if that is what he wishes; she wants to do exactly what he desires of her, perhaps out of love but surely also with the consciousness of his power over her. In her final words, “I will not promise more than I can prove” (II.72), Graphina reiterates the limitations on what she can offer her husband-to-be, but also, having just outlined the fact that he could have forced her to do whatever he wished because of their relative positions, she perceives her inability to give her promise when she has no power to substantiate it; others can always compel her to do their bidding.

The signs of women’s private thoughts become a focus of scrutiny in a climate of fanaticism over their chastity. Graphina’s obedient silence must turn to vocalization when she is commanded to speak, or she risks Pheroras’ reading of it as a cover for derelict thoughts. Likewise, other outward signs of women’s reactions must be appropriate to the situations they face. Tears, for example, betray one’s allegiances, as we have seen, above, and accusations can follow. Blushing is another indication of women’s worthiness and purity, and Salome introduces this association while reflecting on how she has overcome the feelings that make women blush.

After revealing that she had disposed of her first husband by telling Herod that Mariam and Josephus were involved in an illicit relationship, she resolves to be rid of her current husband in an equally duplicitous way: “now, except I do the Hebrew wrong, / I cannot be the fair Arabian bride. / What childish lets are these? What stand I now / On honourable points? ’Tis long ago / Since shame was written on my tainted brow, / And certain ‘tis, that shame is honour’s foe” (I.279-84). Now, she says, “shame is gone and honour wiped away, / And Impudency on my forehead sits / She bids me work my will without delay, / And for my will, I will employ my wits” (I.293-6). When her husband, Constabarus, reproaches her later, his words recall her speech: “I blush for you, that have your blushing lost” (I.378), indicating that blushing is firmly affixed to virtue. Salome tries to make the same claim about Mariam later, saying to Herod, “[Her cheek is] very fair, but yet will never blush, / Though foul dishonours do her forehead blot” (IV.404-5). The lines illustrate another paradoxical aspect of the strictures on women’s behaviour, which is that women’s failure to blush is a sign of their loss of modesty, but it is also a proof of innocence. Salome turns the lack of visible evidence of Mariam’s shame to proof of her guilt. Honour is shown to be socially constructed and liable to manipulation. In a culture in which women’s words were neither permitted nor trusted, and in which they were subject to surveillance of their private thoughts, any sign they gave could be interpreted as an indication of their wrongdoing. Blushing, though involuntary, was a form of obedience that could be read on the body—obedience to the social conventions that defined virtue.

Like blushing, a woman’s smile was an indicator of inner virtue, required of her but only under special circumstances. Unlike blushing, which is involuntary, a smile is a deliberate show of some inner feeling, and its meaning is indeterminate; as such, it attracted the interest of the early moderns. A smile was required of women to indicate their compliance with their husband’s

orders in the play; for example, Pheroras requests a smile from Graphina, when he wants her to dismiss her misgivings and feel the joy he does at the prospect of their wedding (II.73). In a more problematic situation, Herod begs a smile from Mariam, encouraging her with the promise that he will not suspect her of other transgressions if she complies: “Yet smile ... And I will all unkind conceits exile” (IV.142-3). He invites her to come near him, but she insists on re-establishing her distance, protesting the order that she mould herself in opposition to the tenets she believes in: “I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught / My face a look dissenting from my thought” (IV.144-5). With the impossibility of knowing what lies behind another’s demeanor, what the culture required was actually a woman’s concealment of her thoughts; she was to appear to be in agreement with her husband, in order to fit seamlessly together with him. Mariam’s insistence on having her own opinions and her refusal to hide them with an agreeable smile—to contain them—make her too much her own woman, separate from Herod, and therefore there is no place for her in her society. In the last scene, Nuntio narrates for Herod the proceedings of Mariam’s death, he includes the fact that she refrained from speaking, but “smiled, a dutiful, though scornful smile” (V.52). Like Anne Askew’s smile at her interrogators, the smile here is both “dutiful” and of questionable meaning. Because through it Mariam complies with Herod’s earlier order, she is indeed “dutiful”; but because she expresses her “scorn,” as well, she uses the requirements for women as a tool with which to convey her adherence to her own convictions. She appears to obey while expressing resistance at the same time, showing her inner defiance and difference, using a form of “rhetorical” silence, which was becoming available as particularly a woman’s tactic in the period, as distinct from engaging in (male) persuasive rhetoric, Christina Luckyj points out (173).

Perhaps even more controversially, the play imparts that beauty itself is a “show” or sign of sinfulness, which makes Mariam’s claim to be chaste unbelievable for Herod and justifies his confinement of her. The idea behind the convention is the disparity between inward constitution and outward appearance, so that the falseness of beautiful women by nature made their enclosure necessary. Constabarus characterizes all women (except Mariam) as evil, having realized that Salome has brought about his death sentence; he rails at them at their “angels’ outward show” though “none of you are inly beautified” (IV.321-2). This passage reminds the audience of the traditional link between beauty and promiscuity, before the events unfold in which Salome has the poison sent to Herod purportedly by Mariam. Even though Mariam denies having a connection to the poison and denies her involvement in a relationship with Herod’s counsellor Sohemus, her claim “Mariam says not so” (IV.193) is met with disbelief. Herod immediately accepts the report of her treachery, and repeats the notion that “[a] beauteous body hides a loathsome soul!” (177). He amends this view at the end, when he realizes his mistake because of the butler’s suicide, but the idea is a new one, and takes him by surprise: “Her heavenly beauty ’twas that made me think / That it with chastity could never dwell” (V.243-4). The body is a shell, and the doubtfulness with which virtue might “dwell” within it required men’s containment of them. Women’s integrity is unacknowledged because of preconceived notions; Herod’s fears have been the basis for his judgement of her, and it is rather the suicide of the butler in shame at his involvement in bringing about her death, not Mariam’s own word, that convinces Herod of the truth.

“Ridge-Walking”: What lies beyond the boundaries for Mariam

Mariam shows repeatedly that she willingly disregards certain boundaries, although she guards her own diligently through her commitment to chastity. She does not follow the logical

lines of behaviour necessitated by the law of coverture, by which she must take the shape her husband dictates for her, according to his own. Upon his safe return, for example, Herod greets Mariam as his “best and dearest half” (IV.88), reflecting both his affection and the model of the combination of “two into one” in the joined heterosexual couple. Such a model, as Frances Dolan points out, allows for “one head” only, but Mariam insists on using her own, and doesn’t “fit” into the mould set out for her. To do so would require her to adopt the lie that Herod persistently tries to make her accept—that his actions against her grandfather and brother were justified and accidental, respectively. Instead, she aligns herself with truth, showing that she adheres to her own standards rather than being confined by the marital relationship. Indeed, the Chorus’s rhetorical questions convey in quite unequivocal terms the idea of coverture that is supposed to apply to Mariam as a married woman: “When to their husbands they themselves do bind, / Do they not wholly give themselves away? / Or give they but their body not their mind, / Reserving that, though best, for others, pray? / No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own, / And therefore should to none but one be known” (III.233-8). The idea of trespass is ironically inherent here, with the next line’s assertion that if the wife speaks to others besides her husband “she usurps upon another’s right” (III.239). As Margaret Ferguson points out, Mariam’s crime becomes one involving “property” and the violation of ownership over it (58).

The Chorus specifies the significance of what she does, highlighting the danger of such a decision in terms of her physically demarcated limits: “When she hath spacious ground to walk upon, / Why on the ridge should she desire to go?” (III.221-2). She should enjoy the relative freedom she has through Herod’s indulgence of her, they claim, which is indicated by the generous size of the area she is allotted. This language of embodied occupation of space suggests the opposite of containment as a negative matter: straying beyond the edges of the area

designated for one's occupation—one's "position" in the social structure—one would experience a fall one from a dangerous height. To strive beyond the borders, which is coded by the Chorus as Mariam's seeking "glory" (231) through speaking her mind, is to lose one's "footing," and find oneself without any boundaries, without a "place." Later, when news of her fate is delivered to her, Mariam avers that she had not realized the extent of the danger she was in, believing that her adherence to virtue would ensure respect from others; but as witnesses to her decision to abide by her moral position, we understand that she would not have changed her stance even if she had known the outcome: she swears that she is comforted by the "shelter [of] mine innocence" (III.171), and declares that even to "sit in safety from a fall secure, / [and] To have all nations celebrate my birth, / I would not that my spirit were impure" (III.176-8). While the narrative ultimately conveys her inability to bring others to account for their actions, it also features Mariam as a woman who maintains her subjectivity apart from her husband, and who cannot be shaken from her convictions, even by such great rewards as Herod would offer her if she had obeyed him. She cannot accept the "freedom" of the space he allows her to jointly occupy with him. So she finds herself "outside" the structure, as there is no place for her under the terms she demands.

"Chaste, and chastely deemed": or Elizabeth Cary's motto: "To be, and seem"

Pinpointing the precise nature of Mariam's disobedience is problematic, and suggests the complexity of the expectations placed on women's behaviour. When she defiantly confronts Herod about his actions against her family, he declares, "I will not speak, unless to be believed!" (IV.138), showing that he expects to control her very thoughts—those private areas that constitute her inner self. The Chorus, representing commonly held opinion, reiterates this notion, adding a further caveat that underscores the model under which women are subsumed: after

marriage, women's "thoughts no more can be their own, / And therefore should to none but one be known" (III.237-8). But the Chorus's observations do not accurately reflect the circumstances, for it is not that Mariam fails to keep her deviant thoughts exclusively between herself and Herod, but that she insists on communicating them to him at all. As Quilligan notes, "She does not fail in chastity (in which she has, indeed, put too much faith), or in the proper observation of privacy in her speech, but in disobedience" (126). This section, in which the chorus repeatedly cites the idea that women should speak their thoughts to their husbands alone, confuses the issue of Mariam's error, illustrating that one kind of action taken by a woman is conflated with another. This is the dangerous ground on which Mariam treads, and Cary cleverly exposes the ideology according to which women's behaviour in one area is suggestive about her integrity elsewhere. When the chorus maintains, for example, that a wife, "though her thoughts reflect with purest light, / Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste" (III.241-2), we see how her confiding in someone (Herod's counsellor Sohemus in this case) is read as wantonness.

The question arises here about whether concealment for women is actually desirable, and even necessary. The question is unanswered at the end of the passage, when the chorus again makes the problem appear cloudy:

And every mind though free from thought of ill,
 That out of glory seeks a worth to show;
 When any's ears but one therewith they fill,
 Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow.
 Now Mariam had (but that to this she bent)
 Been free from fear, as well as innocent. (III.247-50)

While Mariam's conversation with Sohemus in the scene before the chorus comments suggests it is this interaction they refer to, that is not what incenses Herod. In the next scene, in which she and Herod argue heatedly about her withholding herself from him sexually, it is her insistence on *not* concealing her true feelings that he finds unacceptable. As the chorus says, if she had concealed her true feelings from him, she would have "been free from fear." The "one" to whom she is meant to limit her speech seems to be herself; however, as Ferguson rightly notes, even "such silence or self-censoring would not have any practical efficacy unless it were accompanied by sexual surrender and its psychic corollary" the split between being and seeming which Mariam terms 'hypocrisy'" (53). I find Ferguson's words especially suggestive as she speculates about the reasons for the chorus's equivocation, which, she thinks, occurs at the point when Cary addresses her own position as a female maker of literary texts: "However we construe the injunction that wives should reveal their thoughts to 'none but one,' it is clear that the chorus draws around the wife a circle of privacy so small that she would err by *circulating* a manuscript, much less publishing it" (53-4). Ferguson's metaphorical language picks up, perhaps unconsciously, on the disparity between men's and women's power and the actual "spaces" that they respectively occupy. Under the principle of coverture, Mariam has the opportunity for enlarging the area she occupies, for a "spacious" existence, if she shared in Herod's authority. The "room" synonymous with position in government, which is associated with the closets in the royal estate as Knowles reminds us, also refers to the large tracts of land associated with the country estate. The expanses of the aristocratic family's property represented in a material way the "premises" of authority (54). Ironically, the politics of the family involved lack of space for women, and, in *Mariam*, the limits of that space are vividly outlined.

The male paranoia about the porosity of female boundaries that Herod expresses, when Salome tells him Mariam has been unfaithful, goes together with the idea that mistrust threatens that “shared” self, shrinking and diminishing it, allowing it to “leak out” through the insecure borders of her body. This principle cuts both ways, as the ruler makes everyone under him insecure if his boundaries are unstable—if he is under threat of subversion by his own emotions, as Herod is. As Shannon observes, “Herod’s capriciousness generates a community sense of contingency and provisionality” (76), which Cary conveys, in part, by the repetition of the term “wavering” (just as water and fluidity are repeatedly associated with Cleopatra and her Egyptian homeland in Sidney’s *Antonie*). As subjects, Shannon also notes, it was risky to become bound with someone who lacked constancy (76). Herod’s person represents the realm—just as in early modern ideology the English monarchs did: James, as Cary was writing the play, Elizabeth, in Cary’s lifetime, and Henry VIII before her, who was frequently compared to Herod, according to Ferguson (56). The interpersonal dynamic between husband and wife in the play calls up these monarchs’ use of surveillance to detect heresy or sabotage from within the state, and the possibility for corruption and deceit through the “spy” network itself, which Salome’s actions recall, as she works through pretensions to inform the king about secret betrayals. The fanaticism with which the monarch might act to contain all threats, and the way it makes the king vulnerable to exploitation, comes across in Herod’s orders that Mariam must die when he is no longer there to supervise her. Secret thoughts, privacy, and concealment, and security of the male person (Matchinske 93) are bound up with the notion of chastity.

The discourses defining chastity in the period made it a useful term for describing a number of aspects of constancy and relationship, as Shannon points out. Men too could be chaste, retaining their constancy to each other, in friendship, and to moral principles (specifically

drawing together to uphold these principles) under pressure from the state to condone self-indulgent acts of the monarch. Shannon sees in the play the construction of Mariam's chastity as drawing on the models of male political fortitude and homosocial friendship, which are theorised as ideals. This is a fruitful observation, particularly the idea of chastity as "*associative*, not solitary": "Though often denied by friendship writers, virtuous female friendship shows a relation equally marked by self-sufficiency, refusals to flatter or beguile, and homonormative social relations, and it harbours in chastity's social form" (57). Although Mariam lacks the support of most others around her, including all of the women, her chastity is upheld socially by Herod's counsellor Sohemus, who advises the "[p]oor guiltless queen" (III.181) to obey Herod, after she admits to him her vow to forsake Herod's "bed" (133-4); he continues to praise her despite her avowal, and the Butler's suicide at the close of the narrative indicates that both men recognise Mariam's constancy, although they are without the power to save her and they, too, lose their lives. While Mariam is not joined in friendship with these characters, especially not in the way homosocial friendship entails the dissolution of boundaries to result in a shared, enhanced subjectivity, the idea of others as supporting her boundaries through witnessing her constancy is operative here.

Mariam's loyalty to her murdered family members and to the moral order is the basis of her chastity, and her insistence on these connections and her inner convictions grounds her as a substantial presence distinct from Herod. Her "Stoicism" at the conclusion—her silence and the coolness with which she approached her execution—signals that rather than being passively effaced by him, she derived further strength through accepting her fate. Straznicky points out that patriarchy and stoicism figure passivity differently as far as its "feminization," attributing it to women as a weakness, in the first discourse, and to men as a precondition for heroism in the

other (127, n. 62); Straznicky claims that in this presentation of Mariam's "stoic" fortitude, Cary inverts the traditional characterisation of women as acquiescent, showing with Mariam's silent "scorn" her resistance to, and superiority over, her persecutors. Straznicky's work affirms my view that Mariam increases the sense of her stability, of the integrity both of her borders and of what kind of being "dwells" within them, through her own direction of her constancy at the end. Straznicky's discussion includes the revealing words of an early modern commentator to highlight the way Mariam's appropriation of "male" solidity makes her stance unacceptable:

Joseph Hall defines the unconstant man in terms that are reminiscent of the definition of a constant woman: "He is so transformable into all opinions, manners, qualities, that he seems rather made immediately of the first matter, than of well tempered elements; and therefore is in possibilitie any thing, or every thing; nothing in present substance" ... The possession of "present substance" in a woman, however, signifies illicit desire. (128)

Women *should* be "nothing in present substance," so that their husband can mould their opinions and behaviour, can "temper" them; Mariam's possession of her own thoughts and desires is coded as wanton because it marks her straying beyond the limits of her husband's control. Cary does redefine the virtuous woman as very much "present" and composed of "substance," and as directing her own affiliations rather than as a vacuum open only to her husband's input. As a substantial "presence," Mariam insists on occupying her place fully and intentionally, and defining that place herself, and it is this that is not permitted. The failure of Mariam's attempt to find a space for herself warns Cary's readers about the threat of tyranny, about the conditional nature of individual autonomy even for those close to the monarch, and about the importance of "political" constancy, but it also conveys the issues regarding women's role that were being

worked out during the period, perhaps particularly with the Protestant emphasis on male prerogative in the household.

Chapter Six

Friendship, Courtship, and Spaces Under Siege in

Pastoral Tragicomedy and Domestic Comedy

The high-ranking but also unstable, dominated, or “compromised” subjects of the tragic plays are portrayed in intimate, affective relationships but are fashioned on a grand scale, through evocations of great geographical expanse. But in the comedic work of another two of writers I examine, the “spaces” of the self are focused much more in localised domestic places. These are the pastoral surroundings that so closely resemble the lands around the country estates of the gentry—of which Lanyer’s Cooke-ham was one—in Mary Wroth’s *Love’s Victory* (c. 1620), and the inner rooms of the aristocratic manor itself, in Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish’s *The Concealed Fancies* (c. 1645). The marital relationship upon which the establishment of the aristocratic household depended is still crucial to the shaping of gendered subjects in these comedies, but the “sharing” of the self can involve affiliation with others in non-hierarchical ways; in the courtship rituals depicted, friendship and community complicate the heterosexual relationship, affecting how the plays’ interpersonal connections and female subjects are spatially configured, and how authority is negotiated. The problematic and related issues of chastity, women’s private (or not-so-private) thoughts, and women’s claim to subjectivity “outside” the boundaries of male identity, which come across so strongly in *Mariam*, also appear in Mary Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*. In one of closet drama’s other manifestations, pastoral tragicomedy emerged as a new genre in the early seventeenth century, and Wroth was the first woman to take it up. Male-female partnerships and their attendant risks to women (as well as to men) are likewise the focus in the comedic play *The Concealed Fancies* by Jane

Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley. The Cavendish sisters set their “household” drama directly in the aristocratic estate, and the storyline traces the situation in which they were actually imprisoned for a time by the parliamentary forces during the Civil Wars. They show their awareness of codes regarding women’s behaviour, as this later play focuses on the courtly codes that both express love and hide antagonism between the sexes, in one of two plots that make up the story. In both plays, the women’s vulnerability in relation to men runs through the otherwise light-hearted plays, conveying the writers’ concerns regarding their gendered social positions.

The theme of chastity and privacy appears in Wroth’s work in the presence of the often-evoked figure of Diana and her followers that signalled these ideas. One of the female characters, Silvesta, dedicates herself to Diana after being disappointed in love, and, once committed to chastity, she goes on to play an important role in the drama. Wroth’s approach is comedic, but her incorporation of the sequence of events leading close to death for two of the main characters indicates that Wroth was working in the new genre, the pastoral tragicomedy, whose “mixed” nature was legitimised for English writers, Lewalski notes, through its currency at other European courts and its derivation from the classical “pastoral eclogue” (89). Its heyday was in the early years of James’s reign, from 1608 to 1616 (Wynne-Davies 49). Pastoral tragicomedy’s basis in a politically expedient classical tradition suggests its potential for early modern writers’ similar engagement in critique. Demonstrating that it was a “mode” that “interpenetrate[ed]” other genres, Lewalski points out it was viewed, by Philip Sidney and others, as advantageous “for moral teaching and for covert political commentary” (90). And while Joyce Green Macdonald does not dispute Lewalski’s finding that the genre grew out of classical models, she argues that Wroth employed Ovidian myth, which holds much darker and sexually threatening implications for women (and men), rather than the “Virgilian” pastoral background (which

includes many other writers) that Lewalski details (449). Lewalski and Macdonald both contribute to our understanding of Wroth's play, both acknowledging Wroth's serious political engagement with the issues surrounding containment and heterosexual partnership. The traditions they draw attention to, respectively, operate and coexist simultaneously in the play: there does seem to be an impulse towards cooperative relationships that gestures—though not so certainly as Lewalski suggests—toward the establishment of “an extended egalitarian community ... a community in which friends aid, console, and even sacrifice themselves for each other” (95); however, also present is an awareness of the deeply powerful social forces that work against women's supportive alliances and threaten their ability to attain independence or agency.

The tension between these influences makes for a dynamic text, with Wroth's negotiation of social forces that limit women, and her “opening” of her characters to each other through emotional bonds and sexual desire that bring them close together. Critics have attempted to make sense of some of the topical connections between the play's characters and their real-life counterparts, observing both the textual details that suggest such parallels and Wroth's practice of doing so in her other work that draws on pastoral conventions, the *Urania*. Indeed, it was this aspect of her writing that resulted in the romance's suppression shortly after it was published in 1621, after Lord Denny (in James's court) took a particular characterisation as a personal insult (Lamb n.p.). The repetition and recycling of characters from the *Urania* in Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, which I discussed in an earlier chapter, and in the play, is a feature that Macdonald sees as a mark of similarity between Wroth's oeuvre and Ovid's, which Macdonald describes as his “loosely associative narrative style of theme and variation” (456). Like Wroth, Ovid reuses characters and relates them to one another in different stories. Notably, the frequency of virgin rapes in the first part of the *Metamorphosis*, for example, is part of this

style, and at least one of these episodes links directly to Diana and her own myth of discovery by Actaeon and her subsequent rage and punishment of him by transforming him into a stag. For the writers, this carrying-over of themes and concerns suggests both personal and cultural preoccupations, and Wroth's incorporation of Diana into her pastoral play, as Macdonald convincingly argues, brings with it the suggestions of danger to women's borders.

The allegorical suggestiveness of the play has encouraged critics to speculate about the themes of women and love as informed by Wroth's experience with William Herbert. As I note in the last chapter, her feelings for her cousin and the consequences of their attachment seemed to have figured largely in her life, both for emotional and practical reasons. And as Hannay notes, the Sidney-Pembroke estate at Wilton was a working operation focusing on wool production, and so was really a sheep farm (*Phoenix* 114), which may have fed into Wroth's choice of the mode, and which locates the text within the extended family network and readership of that estate. Editors of the play Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, as well as Gary Waller in *The Sidney Family Romance* and Wynne-Davies in "Here is a Sport," have noted the allusions to actual people in Wroth's life that she makes through the characters. In these critics' formulations, one allegorical reading, among the two or more that Wroth typically creates, is that Musella is a stand-in for the author, that Rustic, the man to whom Musella is betrothed against her wishes, represents Wroth's husband, Robert Wroth, and that Philisses is her cousin William Herbert. Wroth's experience of an unhappy marriage, forbidden love, the illegitimate sexual relationship with Herbert and the birth of their children, and her subsequent exile from court and society speak to the actual, and serious dangers that haunt the courtship rituals of the play.

Wroth's combination of "kinds" in pastoral tragicomedy, too, suggests the complexity and tensions involved in women's role in marriage. Discussing Shakespeare's drama, Evelyn

Gajowski poses in positive terms the relationship between comedy and women's well-being, identifying the link between the creation of a salutary environment for women's autonomy within the genre. Citing Marcia Rieffer's work, Gajowski observes "that the world of comedy and the world of patriarchy are, if not mutually exclusive, incompatible and antithetical" (21). She adds, "The stronger the forces of patriarchy operating in a particular dramatic world ... the less likely are the chances for comic resolution" (22). While we might be pleased to agree that women do not tend to die for their resistance to male rule in comedy, Gajowski does overlook the fact that the so-called "happy ending" in this genre—which typically involves a wedding—so often involves the woman's acquiescence to the patriarchal order. Still, the genre would seem to offer the possibility of women's attaining their desires—or at least their ability to choose whom they will marry, for example, and possibly to negotiate the way power will be distributed between themselves and their husbands. Comedy, then, might be hoped to offer women scope for working around and past the constraints of a rigidly-ordered society. Whereas the heroines in Sidney's and Cary's pieces were, in an important sense, defeated by the forces of patriarchy, both Wroth's play and the Cavendish-Brackley dramatic collaboration portray at least an ambiguous possibility as far as women's ability to make space for themselves rather than being confined, and to bring about the satisfaction of their desires rather than being subsumed by the interests of men.

Private relationships between shepherds and shepherdesses take centre stage in Wroth's household drama, and the risks associated with heterosexual partnerships—unrequited love, the possibility of infidelity, and the loss of self-sovereignty—are the primary sources of the conflict. In *Love's Victory*, the characters are paired up in couples, with some exchanging of partners and realignments taking place before the end. The emphasis on social interaction among the group of

young men and women includes their participation in flirtatious games which demand rhetorical performances of each player, offering a structure in which a particular form and set of rules must be observed, but that requires creativity in the responses the players construct. This structure suggests some freedom of movement for women, which is underscored by its having a woman, Dalina, as instigator of the games.

Mistrust, which is a term repeated numerous times in the dialogue, plays a surprising role in the development of relationship, as it does in *Antonie*, and secrecy is shown at times in the comedy to have a proper place, but one that is also vexed, in the social performance of courtship. Wroth presents a surprisingly light-hearted piece, particularly when we recall the sonnet sequence that dwelt on the deeply felt disturbance that love brings to the self. Wynne-Davies suggests that the play expresses the positive outcome of Wroth's involvement with her cousin William Herbert, as it was written years after the sonnets, and likely at the point at which her love for Herbert, hopeless while she was married to Robert Wroth, was finally freely returned and consummated, after her husband's death in 1614 (49-51). With this allegorical background, it is possible to read the title, as Wynne-Davies suggests, as showing "both the triumph of the gods over rebellious mortals, as well as the vindication of true love over the social acceptability of arranged marriages" (50). But the mistrust that occurs between characters in numerous relationships, both heterosexual and homosocial, while it fulfills the purpose of creating dramatic conflict, also works, as Macdonald argues, as an expression of the insecurities caused by the patriarchal order and a social structure that creates anxiety about women's "private" being. Macdonald's view is helpful in her assertion that the text "is Wroth's attempt to engage with and defuse the sexual and emotional danger that the pastoral mode could pose for women" (449). Wroth features the pleasures of intimacy, but also the risks associated with being "seen" or

“known,” as the myth of Diana codes the sexual relationship for women. Women’s “inner” purity is shown to be a social concern, and their guardianship of their bodily boundaries important, but Wroth’s characters manoeuvre within their world through particular kinds of alliance with others, so that the play works on both of these levels.

Secrets and Lies: For the Sake of Self, For the Sake of Others

Love is personified in the play as the mother-son duo of Venus and Cupid, who conspire against (and work for) the characters by putting barriers in the way of the harmonious coming together of the various characters into marriageable pairs. These gods appear throughout the piece, furthering the suspense by plotting to add more difficulties for the members of the troupe. Their roles suggest a connection between the text and Petrarch’s *Trionfo D’Amore*, Wynne-Davies notes, and she adds that Mary Sidney had translated all or part of his *Trionfo della Morte*, which may also have contributed to Wroth’s poetics, and brought her in contact with both sources. In the play, Venus and Cupid contrive much of the conflict, with the exception of the imminent marriage between Musella and Rustic—whose character is suggested by his name—which was arranged by Musella’s now-deceased father and specified in his will, and which her mother insists on honouring. We assume, for example, that the gods are behind the otherwise unexplained fact that Philisses falsely believes that Musella, whom he secretly loves, is in love with his friend Lissius in the dynamic that opens the action. While Venus and Cupid might be seen as forces bent on causing mayhem for their victims, they offer us reason to understand the difficulties they create as a beneficial aspect of love; delay increases pleasure, they say, echoing the Petrarchan tradition that makes its way into the play in the dialogue. But further, their power, of which they intermittently remind the audience, their “victory,” means that no one is exempt

from love's influence, and if women cannot escape from it, they must agree to lose their command over themselves, as Macdonald also notices (455).

The decentring, destabilizing experience of love makes the early modern lover aware of his or her lack, of the desire for completion through union with another; such an experience is painful, but also offers the lover the chance to find the potential happiness of shared fullness and intimacy, as the repeated idea of "bliss" and "pleasure" strongly suggests in the script (II.179-80 and elsewhere). Lissius, for example, begins the tale contemptuous of love, observing his friend Philisses suffering, and declaring, "That's not for me" (I.ii.71). He disparages women, telling Musella that he pities Philisses, "that man can be so fond / As to be tied t'a woman's faithless bond" (II.i.66-7), and adding that he and the other shepherds should love women "like our sheep" (I.i.68). However, his rejection of women on principle is undermined when he succumbs to the draw of Simeana, Philisses' sister. The language of Cupid and Venus evokes the conventional Petrarchan paradoxes of love—the "pleasing pain" (I.iv.16) and so on—as part of what it means to understand love. Cupid lists the arrows in his arsenal as "Love, jealousy, malice, fear, and mistrust" (I.iv.39), but concludes, "Harm shall be none, yet all shall harm endure / For some small season, then of joy be sure" (I.iv.41-2). Lissius' initial dismissal of love's power attracts the attention of the gods, who resolve to try him because he has obtained Simeana's love too easily; they concur, "Without much pain, few do Love's joys respect; / Then are the sweetest purchased with felt grief, / To floods of woe sweet looks give full relief" (III.iii.14-16). Love is deepened by the suffering undergone by the lover. When Venus and Cupid discuss their plans, they express the idea that they must humble people to their power, overcoming the pride people have otherwise—people have a misconception of their own control over their emotional lives, which real love, it is suggested, must conquer in order to be authentic.

This notion, repeated and reinforced during the course of the play, conveys to the audience that love is worthy of one's attention, and validates the experiences of both sexes of deeply felt bonds with the other.

This idea is supported in the use of the words *freedom* and *liberty* to specify different ideas at different times, communicating a view of selfhood that is less individual and more relationally understood. They are unfixed terms, variously meaning unencumbered by love for any number of reasons, secure in divine love (because of disappointed earthly love), and lonely and bereft. Silvesta, who also sees and pities Philisses, tells us she once loved him but was spurned by him, and explains that she has taken religious vows to escape her suffering: "Slavery and bondage with mourning care / Were then my living, sighs and tears my fare. / But all these gone now live I joyfully, Free, / Untouched of thought but Chastity" (I.ii.121-4). To live the life of a religious ascetic—to be a nymph of "Dian," for Silvesta (I.ii.88)—is one of the few ways out of the torments of love, but with obvious drawbacks for the young people; it is also the relinquishment of hope for happiness in one sense of love, and not a "victory" of the passionate desire for the other that the play's title celebrates. Forester, who loves Silvesta in vain, parts from her company saying, "Now to displease / Myself with liberty I may free go, / And with most liberty, most grief, most woe" (II.i.60-62). The ultimate freedom, when one is disappointed in love, is death, with the lovers Musella and Philisses seeking suicide at the end because of Musella's impending marriage to Rustic; in desperation, they decide to go to the temple of love, with the intent, as Musella says, to "bind our lives, or else our lives make free" (V.i.88). The negative associations these passages give to liberty build up the impression that love is better than independence. That the lovers are delivered by the gods of love after taking the poison provided by the loyal Silvesta, and that Musella is freed from her commitment to Rustic, attests

to how the generic conventions of comedy allow for women's achieving their desires. In the *deus ex machina* denouement, bringing about the comedic conclusion, love can do the impossible. The speaker shows clearly that being "bound" to another is preferable to "freedom," and suggests that the early modern self found its ultimate form in affiliation—in sharing borders—with another. And despite the appeal of freedom from tyranny, which is associated with political enslavement, it is not the autonomous individual that is presented as an ideal, but the lover, more fully complete in relationship to an other, more happy albeit not "free."

In their attempts to bring about this state, women face the prohibitions on their speech that associate silence with chastity, and that code their forwardness with men as "opening" themselves sexually. The instances in the play that feature this dynamic suggest connections to Ovid's tale of Diana that Macdonald notes in her argument. A woman's exposing of her desire for her potential lover invites him into the space that must be maintained around her, and that communicates her social borders. These prohibitions appear in Wroth's play as obstructions to women's ability to pursue the partner of their choice. For example, it is easy for Lissius to upbraid and rudely dismiss Climeana for being too forward in her attempts to tell him of her affections; he is preoccupied with his new-found and hopeless—he thinks—love for Simeana, and dispatches the former with a conventional accusation: "Is this for a maid / To follow and to haunt me thus? You blame / Me for disdain, but see not your own shame! / Fie, I do blush for you! A woman woo? / The most unfittest, shamful'st thing to do! (III.ii.184-8). In a more successful instance, Musella regrets to Silvesta that she cannot clear up Philisses' mistaken belief that she is involved with Lissius, stopping herself from speaking to him when she wishes to because of the impropriety it would indicate: "Sometimes I fain would speak, then straight forbear, / Knowing it most unfit; thus woe I bear" (III.i.77-8). Silvesta does not argue with this

view, saying, “Indeed, a woman to make love is ill” (III.i.79), and suggests an alternative to direct emotional and spoken communication. Musella should go where Philisses habitually walks and attempt to engage him in conversation, and to subtly coax out the truth through offering herself as “but kind” (III.i. 86). This plan does prove effective, with their rhetorical banter acting as a process of gently and gradually allowing access to intimacy with one another, and overcoming distrust, which, Musella suggests before their conversation, might not have come about if straightforward talk had been permitted, “since causeless jealousy hath so possessed / His heart, as no belief of me can rest” (IV.i.46-7). The necessity of her subterfuge exposes the limits on the behaviour of the woman who loves, as well as the covert strategies women contrived—the feigning they were required to resort to—to achieve their desires. Indeed, this woman’s deliberate vocal restraint and her placing of her physical body in the vicinity of her beloved, instead, seems a particularly risqué act, but one that, because of her unverifiable intention (to all but herself and Simeana) she can work to gain her interests.

The dangers associated with sexuality, with being “seen” and “known” by men, that Ovid’s myth of Diana makes so clear, come across in subtle ways in the play. Macdonald notes Wroth’s importing of the name *Arcas*—the lying villain in her drama—from the classical tale, as one point connecting the concerns of the play to the serious social implications of the myth. In Ovid, Arcas is the baby born from the rape of one of Diana’s followers, Callisto, and for her “crime,” though she was powerless to stop her attacker’s sexual violence, the nymph is disgraced and shamed. At some point following the rape, which Callisto keeps to herself, the other nymphs pull away Callisto’s clothes when they notice her behaving as if she is ashamed, exposing the truth of her condition in the display of her body (457). This scene, we could note, is a disturbing reversal of the gathering of women around Diana as a protective shield against Actaeon’s

intrusion into the grove, earlier. Because she is blamed and punished rather than avenged, the “risks” to women based on their sexuality are built into the environment even of the pastoral world, as Macdonald shows.

The idea of women’s refusal to be seen and known, which Macdonald points out in the scene between Lissius and Simeana, is instructive when we look at other points in the play, as well. The shepherdess has told Lissius she would rather be “blind” than be seen by him in the future, and Macdonald offers this insightful observation that links Wroth’s play to the violence in Ovid’s work:

If the mistress is seen, exposed to the experience of her lover's desire against her will, she will “blind” herself—that is, renounce even her involuntary capacity for response to him. If being known, even against her will, was what resulted in Callisto's pregnancy and disgrace, then this nymph’s blinding herself—refusing to see, as well to be seen and intimately known—is tantamount to a kind of unsexing, a refusal of social and even biological imperative. (458-9)

I suggest that Musella’s situation, which replicates Wroth’s allegorically, provides another example of male-female tension that conveys the dangers and stakes for women. First, as the group decides what “sport” they will engage in, Musella dismisses Lacon’s suggestion that they tell each other about their experiences in love: “And so discourse the secrets of the mind! / I like not this; thus sport may crosses find” (I.iii.25-6). In the delivery of songs that they agree on, and under this guise of comedic entertainment, Rustic sings a farcical song to his reluctant fiancée, Musella, in effect displaying her by listing her parts in his performance. He is happy, he begins, when he can “see” her, and praises her “whiteness”; her eyes she keeps shut, virtuously; her “cheeks are red / Like ochre spread / On a fatted sheep’s back” and her “paps are found / Like

apples round” (I.iii.55-71). This objectification demonstrates his vulgar use of the private access he has been granted in the marriage arrangement, and suggests a troubling betrayal of privacy in his exposure of Musella. Later, to reassure Philisses that Musella loves him, Lissius raises the issue of her inner desire again, saying that they could “spy” her feelings by observing her: “Her eyes cannot dissemble, though her tongue / To speak it hazards not a greater wrong; / Her cheeks cannot command the blood, but still / It must appear, although against her will” (II.ii.43-6). These two men hope to “see” her inner desire, which in this case will bring about a happy union between her and the man she loves, but the danger suggested by Rustic’s song adds a threatening dimension to the story’s portrayal of “simple” people engaged in courtship.

Another instance in which the problems of trust are posed, but in which they are overcome in surprisingly liberating ways, comes when the consequences of Arcas’s lie to Simeana take effect, and he has made her believe Lissius is romantically linked with Climeana. Musella settles her friends’ discord through logic that does not deny the intimacy of friendship between the genders. In the decisive scene, Musella and Simeana debate the possibilities for what might have occurred between Lissius and Climeana, while he remains “*prostrate ... grief-stricken*,” according to the stage directions (IV.i). Simeana explains her belief that he has betrayed her, according to the report she has been given by Arcas: “My back but turned, she [Climeana] was his only joy, / His best, his dearest life, and soon destroy / Himself he would if she not loved him still; / And just what he had vowed his heart did kill, / For my disdain, he shameless did protest / Within one hour to her caused his unrest!” (IV.i.243-8). Musella dismisses this information with the idea that Lissius was observing appropriate social codes of conduct, and tells her friend, “’Twas but his duty kindly once to speak / To her, who for him would her poor heart break” (IV.i.255-6). She adds, “Let him discourse and smile, and what of

this? Is he the likelier in his faith to miss? No, never fear him for his outward smiles, / 'Tis private friendship that our trust beguiles" (IV.i.267-70). To the report that Arcas had seen Lissius and Climeana "sit too privately, / And kiss, and then embrace!" and that "in her ear [he did] discourse familiarly, / When they did think it should from me be hid" (IV.i.275-8), Musella counters, "'What if he did?" (IV.i.276). She offers a different interpretation of the events, echoing the suggestion that also appears in Sidney's and Cary's plays of "how one may conjecture if one fear; / All things they doubt to be the same they fear" (IV.i.279-80). Before she points out Lissius' figure sprawled nearby as a final—and emotionally convincing—proof of his devotion to Simeana, Musella asks rhetorically, "Though private, must it follow he's untrue, / Or that they whispered must be kept from you?" (IV.i.281-2). The scene shows that there are acceptable ways of being close to members of the opposite sex without compromising chastity or loyalty to one's lover. Because there can be an explanation for the behaviours that bring heterosexual friends together, and even excuse their playful demonstrations of physical affection, Wroth shows that honesty does not have to be tied to women's bodies in the fanatical way contemporary discourse made it out to be. She deflates the tension surrounding the integrity of women's borders in presenting Lissius as a faithful lover to Simeana while allowing Climeana's intimacy with him (although the point might have been harder to make if it had been Simeana's honesty in question rather than Lissius'). The episode conveys the idea of the innocence of heterosexual intimacy and "private friendship" to underscore the virtue of all the characters except for Arcas, who spread the slander and who is eventually sentenced to "shame and infamy" (V.vii.152). Wroth's play loosens the boundaries in place by convention that otherwise kept women apart from men but suspect in their encounters with their male social peers; the play permits women's social selves in close relationship with both other women and with men.

Fancy, is to be with Deliberation grounded; with Constancy reteined; Wanton Fancy is a wandering Frency; How it may checked, if too wilde; how cheered, if too coole; an attemperament of both. (Braithwaite, Argument, Chapter 6, *The English Gentlewoman*)

Those relationships appear as well in the Cavendish sisters' *Concealed Fancies*, composed two decades later. Written during or close to the time the women were imprisoned in their family home of Welbeck Abbey when it was taken by parliamentary forces during the Civil War, the play seems to reflect issues of security on the level both of the sisters' personal safety and of the country's political administration. It draws on the conditions of the imprisoned women during the siege to emphasize the characters' position in relation to the men who seek to conquer them through marriage. The characters Tattiney and Luceny presumably represent Cavendish and Brackley themselves and could have been played by them if the work had been performed, as editors Cerasano and Wynne-Davies speculate. The sisters use the danger and uncertainty of their experience of political danger and associate it with the vulnerability of women in attempting to attain satisfying marital arrangements—or, in Luceny's words, their efforts to shape their marriages so that "man and wife ... draw equally in a yoke" (II.iii.37-8). In responding to the world-in-crisis which put them in close proximity with parliamentary soldiers holding the manor at Welbeck, Cavendish and Brackley create characters who must confront men in the same undefined relationship to them, who reside with them temporarily at the manor under circumstances that seem to threaten dissolution at any moment. The walls of the castle are analogous to the "walls" around the women's bodies that preserve their chastity against unscrupulous men, the male "penetration" of their home that the parliamentarians threatened.

The duress that this situation creates impels—and allows—the women to upend the codes that normally keep everyone in his or her “place.” More prominently presented than the rough soldiers, whose presence reminds the audience of the circumstances of the action, the men who court the heroines are represented as selfish and anxious to exploit the women. The dubious natures of these men, Courtley and Presumption, make it necessary for Tattiney and Luceny themselves to present and enforce the conditions under which their suitors may acquire their hands in marriage, due to the absent male family members in the characters’ lives; as Ros Ballaster notes, this became a necessity for women during and after the wars, when circumstances meant that the men loyal to the king might not have returned from battle, or might have been rendered unable to perform this kind of familial duty for a number of reasons, within the changed political and economic conditions (235). The beginning of a marriage is crucial in defining how it will continue, the play suggests, and so there is some urgency communicated in the characters’ determination to demand—though through somewhat indirect means—respect from their future husbands, and at least some assurance that such consideration will endure. With humour and clever play in their rhetorical and gestural strategies, the denouement, though satirical, shows that the women succeed, relying on and encouraging each other to persist in shaping the relationships with their husbands, who would otherwise exploit them and emotionally abuse them. The heroines’ alliance is more prominent than the heterosexual relationship that they each must deal with, and they create an intimate space between them in the household, into which the men occasionally enter but which the women command.

Evidence of the kinds of treatment in store for the women as wives of Courtley and Presumption comes across in the men’s banter at various times, suggesting the stakes involved in these arrangements for the women. If at first the suitors’ ideals are quite close when discussing

the characteristics they would wish in a mistress, both using the terms “pretty,” “stately,” and “wit[ty],” these attitudes veer apart as the courting process becomes more frustrating for the men. After being rebuffed by Tattiney, Presumption tells Courtley his intention to “follify” his future wife, to keep her away from the culture of London, isolated from her social network and dominated by his family, and to ensure her submissiveness by compelling her to do the duties of her office, bearing children and attending to the accounts of the household (III.iii.28-44).⁴² The men objectify the women, desiring them for their bodies or their wealth, and plan to manipulate them for pleasure, since men have the power over them.

Luceny foresees the danger of abuse and imprisonment that lurks behind the courtship of the men, and expresses the motivation behind her treatment of her suitor as desire to escape such a fate. She refers to the possible outcomes of her resistance to Courtley, after marriage, as either “My destruction or my happiness” (II.i.45). In its negative version, their married life will mean, she says, that “I shall be condemned to look upon my nose whenever I walk; and when I sit at meat, confined by his grave wink, to look upon the salt; and if it be but the paring of his nails, to admire him” (II.i.47-52). This picture makes abundantly clear the notion of “confine[ment]” that the social order, founded upon the subordination of wives to their husbands, justifies. In her imagined obedience to the demands made of chaste married women, she calls up directives to women to keep their gazes to themselves. Examples of popular texts promoting this idea in the period include Richard Braithwaite’s *The Description of a Good Wife; or, A Rare One Amongst Women* of 1619, which offers a young man marital advice: “Chuse a fixt eye, for wandering looks display / A wavering disposition” (qtd. in Parker 103). Another is Barnabe Rich’s *My*

⁴² As editors Ceresano and Wynne-Davies point out, these abuses mirror those used by Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. They also recall the behaviour of Anne Clifford’s husband toward her, as she reports in her diaries. It would seem that Presumption’s list reflects the opportunities for “punishment” of their wives aristocratic men had at their disposal, and on which they acted.

Ladies Looking Glasse (1616), which explains that a good wife stays at home, but “the pathes of a harlot ... are moovable, for now shee is in the house, now in the streets ... her feete are wandering, her eies are wandring, her wits are wandring ... [and] she is full of words” (qtd. in Parker 104-5). We also hear of the need to keep one’s eyes lowered as a sign of chastity in Margaret Cavendish’s writing, when she describes her experience at court, and the great care she took to consistently keep a bowed head. The famously prolific author, who was not much older than her husband’s daughters, referred in her biographical writing to the Duke of Cavendish’s attraction to her because of her shyness and silence. She writes that at court she was afraid her naiveté would allow her reputation to suffer, and, because she feared such an outcome would bring “dishonour” to those in her direct social and familial circle, with her “indiscreet actions”; she says, “I durst neither look up with my eyes, nor speak, nor be any way sociable: insomuch as I was thought a natural fool.” She would rather this, she claims, “than to be thought rude or wanton” (qtd. in Matchinske 1). Through the social pressures that limit her gaze, a woman’s existence is ideally not only “confined” to the household spaces, to the metaphorical space as part of her husband, but to the tiny area of the world immediately around and below her body. Her world is limited, it would seem, to only her body.

These attitudes vary in extremity among the characters, so that Courtley and Presumption have a foil in characters like Corpolant, who attempts to buy first Luceny and then, successfully, Lady Tranquility. He reduces the women to sexual objects with his offer of money and title in exchange for their hand in marriage; as he says as he proposes a toast to the absent Luceny at the prospect of betrothal to her, “If she would but love, she should have all my wealth” (II.i.61-2). Later in the scene, becoming drunk, he quips, “I love a canny brave Scotch jig, / And afterwards a wench by me to lig” (II.i.89-90); the lines might be a traditional rhyme, but they further

establish his—and a prevailing—attitude about women nevertheless. It is fitting that the avaricious Lady Tranquility agrees to marry him at the end, with his “bag of gold” repeatedly being mentioned in their short discussion; the last words of the dialogue are hers: “Sir, you look a great plump bag I swear, / So if I shake you well I need not care” (V.iii.14-15). This language perhaps consciously calls up the character Shakebag in the anonymously authored play *Arden of Faversham*, and resonates with the materialistic motivations active in that piece, as well as its crossing of social class that proves destructive; sexual desire—or excess—is associated with cupidity, representing the furthest extreme from romantic idealism. Luceny refuses outright the licentious advances of Corpolant, but she and Tattiney must also confront the artificial language of courtship that men use to entrap them in illusion, as they are aware of the ways men can exploit them within marriage. The women show that they are aware of the risks posed by both the high register of artificial courtly codes and the base attitudes of commercial exchange that Corpolant represents, and they attempt to protect themselves from both of these methods men use to gain access to women.

In order to secure their well-being after marriage, the two heroines support each other in rhetorical performances that go against the prevailing conventions of civil conversation between the genders. Critic Katherine Larson explores their alliance, noting “the play’s preoccupation with women’s creative and aggressive conversational alliance” (127). Larson links the rhetorical daring of the women with the popular trend that encouraged confidence in women of the gentry, in salon-style gatherings that fostered and featured witty conversation. In her discussion of the play, Larson keeps this practice in mind as a helpful background to explain the dialogue: “Overturning conventions governing decorous interchange and appropriating the *honnête* notion that assertive wit can coexist with and exemplify virtue, Cavendish and Brackley construct a

highly manipulative code of conduct in the play that compensates for their political vulnerability and their isolation from the court” (127). But while Luceny and Tattiney’s verbal dexterity may correspond with descriptions of the behaviours practiced in the salon gatherings of the English nobility, it is possible that the playwrights’ strategies in this piece are quite different; indeed, in some notable ways the heroines Luceny and Tattiney do not resemble aristocratic gentlewomen. Larson suggests that their unconventional responses to the advances of their prospective lovers, Courtley and Presumption, might have been learned from Henrietta Maria (182, n. 28); records support the idea that the queen drifted toward a casualness of manner, as well as having a tendency for imperious and fractious behaviour, which does accord with the women’s performances. However, it is also possible that the characters mimic the opposite kind of model—that they adopt, in addition, lower-class women’s attitudes (or their impressions of how women of other classes might behave), partly for humour, partly to show the effects of the Wars—and the imagined effects should the outcome heavily favour the parliamentarian forces—and partly, perhaps, to actually incorporate empowering habits of speech and behaviour. For their direct models, the women didn’t have access to court, but they could observe the servants and other lower-class women with whom they came in contact, and the concerns—real or imagined—that necessarily took precedence in these women’s lives. A number of details give credence to this notion, pointing to the playwrights’ creativity in finding models, from the limited number available to them, to draw on in creating alternate identities for themselves.

Numerous details suggest that Luceny and Tattiney are satirized for behaviour unfitting for women of their social position. First, their neglect of the duties associated with household management suggest that they are either ignorant of the expectations for mistresses of a household or unwilling to conform to the role that requires them to take charge of the running of

the house. Gravity, the cook, complains that the women will “neither chide nor commend” in response to his work (I.iii.10), and Jack, the kitchen boy, who has taken the cook’s menu for the women to approve, tells Gravity that they are still asleep. Later, when Courtley coaches Presumption in how they should behave towards their marital partners, he argues, “Your mistress and mine, though they have great portions, are not to be tutored like a rich citizen’s daughter, or a great heir. They are of other breedings” (III.iii.81-4). While the comment could suggest the snobbish distinction between the gentry and rising bourgeoisie, with the former being superior to the latter, the idea of “other breedings” is ambiguous, and slips in the possibility that the women do not follow the codes of social class that constrain them, but that they act outside of those class distinctions, authorizing themselves to construct their own guiding principles. The men, Courtley sees, should not try to “tutor” them or dominate them through bullying (and pursue them for their wealth), but should approach them in a different way. Being “out of place” in terms of social position means the women cannot be restrained by the codes appropriate to their particular class.

Building the idea that Luceny and Tattiney are anomalies as mistresses of a noble house, Cavendish and Brackley use the names of their characters to reinforce the joke that the women take up behaviours unsuited to the position. The etymological associations of *Luceny* with *light* would be widely recognized, and would suggest that she exposes the “hypocritical language” (I.iv.74) of her suitor when he uses courtly codes that she knows are far removed from reality. Her name also links her to Lucian, the satirist and writer of dialogues from the classical era (Bunson 329), who was well known in educated circles during the period, and evoked allusively to describe “a witty scoffer” (*OED*). The sound of her name, as well, especially since it seems likely the play was staged (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 129), suggests that her character is *loose* in some way, possibly in her eschewing of the social constraints that threatened to limit her

and other women in marriage, but with a sly wink to the audience, perhaps, regarding the flouting of directives to women to be chaste and contained. Her sister's name, Tattiney, is also intriguingly polyvalent. Tats were dice, especially ones used to cheat with (*OED* 2.1), and further associated with dishonesty through terms such as *tat-monger*; *tat* was also “coarse canvas ... used as sacking” (*OED* 3), and so linked to lower-class activities; additionally, *tat*, *tats*, and *tatty* referred to a rag or rags, and also to tangled, matted hair; unsurprisingly, then, *tat* also referred to “poorly made or tasteless clothes. Hence, a shabby person, a slut” (*OED* 5). It is little wonder that Dickens found it an enticing term when naming his misplaced waif Tattycoram in *Little Dorrit*. A *tatler* is someone who tattles or chatters, dealing in illicit information; a source from 1611, for example, cites the activity of tatlers as “speaking things they ought not” (*OED*). Both women's names support the references they make to presenting themselves to their (future) husbands in an unconstrained way. Luceny reports, for example, that she had met Courtley dressed “in a slight way of carelessness” (I.iv.6-7); she later mentions the “innocent freedom” she intends to continue with him after marriage (II.iii.134); and Tattiney notes the “careless garb” (II.iii.149) she intends to put on after marriage, with *garb*, as Larson and the editors note, indicating both manner and dress. Other names are evocative, as well, such as Lord Calsindow, a name that perhaps teases and critiques their father, the Duke of *Newcastle*, recently widowed, for marrying the much younger Margaret Lucas. The wordplay that the authors deal in encourages the reader to imagine the delight they took in the provocative connotations of their invented sobriquets, and lends them the power of assumed aliases in behaving in a freer way. They play with the notion of garb—in both senses—as something that acts as a protective border between their chaste bodies and others, suggesting perhaps that they wish to be more intimate with their husbands than convention has established, and that doing so might involve an insult to their

husbands, and a challenge to male authority. It also may suggest the characters' intention to use their bodies and sexual enticement through a display of bodily casualness, in order to control their husbands rather than be controlled themselves—a suggestion that may be incorporated for comic purposes in the play.

“The taking of Bellamo”

Other details add to the satire that juxtaposes a “high,” idealistic sensibility with a baser outlook, showing that the women are justified in using creativity—including the language of base, materialistic values—to deal with the men who court them. The tone that the playwrights create is decidedly “low,” contrasting sharply with a piece like Wroth's, in which Petrarchan discourse plays a prominent and seemingly straightforward part. *The Concealed Fancies* incorporates sexual innuendo and conducts its romantic strains showing cynical attitudes towards love, and particularly towards women. The siege of Ballamo—the “taking” of it—is allegorically presented in the background as a representation of the women's fortifications around themselves, and the wooers' attempts to break down their resistance, as noted above. When Corpolant and Colonel Free discuss the political situation around the castle, they rate its chances at holding out: Corpolant declares, “'Tis a very strong place” (II.i.75), to which the Colonel replies that the best strategy is to refrain from acting aggressively; Corpolant agrees, saying they should instead talk appealingly to their foes, suggesting the steps one might take in seduction. The passage is a gesture toward courtly convention, but Corpolant's character takes away any idealisation of women, and the female characters, aware of the men's earthy, materialistic desires, must respond in like manner. In any case, the two attitudes towards women are not simple opposites, but different expressions of the same view; as Evelyn Gajowski points out, both have a prominent spokesman in the Renaissance, idealism being aligned with Petrarch and denigration with Ovid.

Noting C.S. Lewis's observations, as well, she stresses the connection between "[m]asculine idealism and cynicism about women," and asserts that "Petrarchan and Ovidian discursive practices" both objectify women (19), but in different ways. It is the difficult task of the women authors and their characters to work against both kinds of practices in order to obtain some form of subjectivity, and satisfying emotional relationships, for the women in their marriage alliances.

We see the authors playing with these "discursive practices" in the heroines' language throughout, and leaning towards "Ovidizing" of their subjects. Deflating the Petrarchan-styled overtures their suitors make to them, Luceny and Tattiney take the power away from these codes to contain them in the role of a submissive courtly lady. When Courtley asks Luceny to give him something she owns for a token, the traditional sign of a lady's favour, for example, she admonishes him, saying, "I thought you had learned better manners than to offer to plunder me of my favours" (I.iv.93-4). Again, refusing to recognize the codes, she acts unlike an aristocratic lady, and escapes those codes. Later, she talks about marriage in baldly economic terms, pointing out to her husband that if the woman brings more money into the marriage than her husband, then surely he must obey her rather than the other way round (Epilogue 48). The writers' adoption of a practical and at times a lower-class identity puts into action a radical kind of poetics. Their awareness of what they are doing is also suggested by the special efforts that the sisters make in the prologues and the epilogues to soothe any negative feelings that their father—the play's dedicatee—may have. We might recognize a special plea for generosity in Tattiney's anxious address to her father at the end, for example, over "Not knowing how you will now censure me" (An epilogue, in particular to your Lordship 121). That the writers have Lord Calsindow secretly wooing and then marrying the young, attractive Toy, Lady Tranquility's "gentlewoman," shows their daring in satirizing themselves and their father, as well, and

suggests the radically different identities they cast for themselves and for him through the crossing of class lines. In showing the class differences as a descent onto a lower level, one of crass materialism and sexuality, they critique the new order that the Wars threaten to establish, satirizing what they imagine might come, but they also simultaneously draw tools from the behaviours unbefitting gentlewomen of their social class.

The Taming of the Tyrant: “Monkey Love” and Shared Power

In the rather open ending of the play, Luceny and Tattiney have flouted the conventions that might have brought them under the control of selfish, domineering husbands, and use different, but equally artificial rhetorical means to obtain control over themselves. Clearly, they manipulate their husbands, but the alternative, as the dialogue throughout makes abundantly clear, is the women’s submission. And as Courtley argues to Presumption, the result of a man’s bullying to subordinate his wife is that he will “hate her within two or three years” (III.iii.76-8), rather than continuing to enjoy her—and he suggests that the men really desire love as the basis of the marital relationship. Presumption persists for a while longer in his plan that pits husband and wife against one another, but by the end it is less clear that he means to dominate Tattiney. The last conversation between the heroines takes place after they are married, and shows their commitment to keeping their hold over their husbands. When Luceny, the older sister, reminds Tattiney of their pledge to maintain control, to “continue my own” (II.iii.108; Epilogue 3) as she puts it, they tell each other of how they have thwarted their husbands’ attempts to dominate them, using a form of counter-manipulation. They have out-manoeuvred the men, according to the anecdotes they tell. And they do so not out of malice, but to keep a balance of control that will ultimately preserve the passion and respect the men have for them.

To accept the terms of marriage, a woman acquiesces to her husband's rights over her, and it is through this arrangement that women can be exploited; only in the courtship phase of the relationship do women have the upper hand, and the women in the play express their view that they must preserve that dynamic. They wish to continue as "mistresses" rather than wives, they say, which allows them freedom to practice certain behaviours that in turn will keep their relationship as passionate as it was in the premarital stage. The distinction between the two identities comes across in numerous places, including a brief but somewhat disturbing scene that exposes the roles of wife and mistress as performances, and that highlights the insecurity of women's position in relation to marriage. When Toy, Lady Tranquility's gentlewoman, for example, confides to the maid, Pert, that Lord Calsindow has secretly courted her, Pert raises the possibility that he may exploit Toy; he may marry Lady Tranquility, according to social convention and expectation, but indulge in an affair with Toy. Lady Tranquility could give her approval, and, it is suggested, Toy would be compelled to acquiesce. Toy retorts that she would work this situation to her advantage, and gain the gentleman's favour by acting a mistress or wife, whichever was required. Pert tells her that some women play the mistress *and* the wife, in turns, "not only to confirm love, but [to] provoke love" (IV.v.58-9). Toy knows Pert is referring to Luceny and Tattiney, and expresses her reluctance to serve "she-wits," whose behaviour as Pert describes it is so like her own, in their mutual use of rhetorical skills to free themselves of the oppression of male domination, and to obtain, instead, men's admiration and love. While Toy is at a disadvantage because of her relative lack of the power accorded by status, as Pert's *impertinent* suggestion shows, she shares Luceny and Tattiney's discernment regarding the functioning of successful relationships. As Tattiney happily says at the end, "His mistress, this you may see is an equal marriage, and I hate those people that will not understand matrimony is

to join lovers” (Epilogue 84-7). Luceny’s pre-wedding comment to her maid that she will perform “monkey love” conveys her intention to act or mimic the role of wife, but to continue playing a “mistress”—denoting “both a woman in authority as well as a woman who is courted and loved” (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 211, n.51). Through these repeated expressions of their desire for the marital relationship to resemble one between mistress and suitor, the characters announce their wish for the continued freedom to use language—the wit they value so keenly—in their interactions with their husbands, to give the female speakers a measure of power and bring about the equality that Luceny mentions early on, quoting from the Bible: “to draw equally in a yoke.” It is further suggested, through the references to looseness in clothing and manner, that the women desire greater intimacy with their spouses, in spite of—or rather, because of—the way they use coded language in their dealings with the men. Courtley’s earlier complaint that Luceny is “a wench that doth so truly see” (I.iv.111) proves to be key to her happiness—or at least, the suggestion of it. Like the women in Wroth’s play, Tattiney and Luceny employ word and action to make the world respond to their interests, and both plays carry the possibility that they can do so to at least some extent.

The title words of the drama convey much of the verbal and thematic doubleness and playfulness of the piece, and encapsulate its emotional concerns. Dealing with mistrust and secrecy in these particular circumstances, Cavendish and Brackley’s characters employ covert language and undercover machinations to overcome the impediments to their autonomy. The idea of *fancies* that they announce as driving the piece is overlaid with meanings suggestive of a multi-layered work with “concealed” messages and jokes. Among its many definitions, the term *fancy* refers to perception and “apprehension” (*OED* 1), but also to false impression, “an illusory appearance (*OED* 2); it has to do with the imagination, with the added suggestion of sight that is

“extravagant or visionary” (*OED* 4.a). In the context of the play, its designation as “a product of imagination, fiction, [or] figment” (*OED* 4.c) allows the playwrights to dismiss any serious claims they may seem to make about authority if they attract the “censure” that Luceny fears in the epilogue indirectly addressed to the Duke. That a *fancy* is “an ingenious, tasteful, or fantastic invention or design” makes the term a suitable one to communicate the women’s desire to define themselves as “wits.” Its relation to entertainment and pleasure is another layer transmitting the writers’ purported intentions. Moreover, the word’s associations with “caprice” and “whim” (*OED* 6) makes it appropriate as a vehicle for the idea of the heroines’ (and the authors’) exercise of their desires, but with the implied disclaimer that they are being facetious. *Fancy* as “inclination, liking, [and] desire” (*OED* 7), also a definition in circulation during the period, calls up the women’s emotional and sexual desire for the men who would be their husbands and lovers, evoking actual affective commitments that might be projected through the piece. The term appears in the work of the Margaret Cavendish, who married their father during this time, which attests to its currency; as Ballaster says of Margaret Cavendish and her plays, “In the absence of a material theatre the fancy is given free reign. The world of fancy and femininity for Cavendish is an aesthetic realm where fantasies of power can be played out despite the loss of material power in Cavalier / Royalist culture” (242). While Margaret Cavendish’s sprawling dramatic works are very different from the Cavendish sisters’ play set on their “home turf,” her incorporation of the term featured in the sisters’ title suggests the possibilities that “fancy” presented for women, both as a vehicle for the imaginative exercise of their authority and perhaps as a cover for daring artistic constructions. With their dazzling rhetorical use of the associative valences of their terminology, these writers substantiate women’s authority, even as

they underscore the difficulties the women face in obtaining subjectivity in relation to the men with whom they were intimate, and who could have such control over them.

The expected readership of the plays in this chapter was limited to a specific and elite community, whose aims were to maintain the authority and privileges conferred on it through traditional channels. The extra-textual dialogue that takes place between the playwright and her intended audience involves an identifiable and more homogenous reception than those produced in London's theatres, and the dramatist's address to her readers and dedicatees situate the work in a coterie of sympathetic supporters. The "spaces" of the self come across differently in the dialogue of the first and second "sets" of plays in my discussion, and intriguingly involve both the imaginative projection of self in cosmically conceived terms and the gendered subject's occupation of actual domestic spaces of the aristocratic estate. All, however, engage with issues of how the subject can be configured in relation to others, including, in all cases, an intimate other—whether intimate by the female subject's choice or obligation—whose authority must be negotiated in the gendered social terms of heterosexual partnership.

Conclusion

How, to borrow from Mary Wroth, could early modern woman, in her labyrinth of discourses, material spaces and emotional ties, turn, in order to substantiate herself? And where, how much, and how far? These are questions I sought to answer at the outset of this project. As I finish, I fear, like Elizabeth Cary's *Graphina*, that I have said too little, having covered so much ground, historically, generically, and thematically. One thing that is clear to me after my sustained attention to their practices across the genres is how important the other is—others are. As Mariam Fraser observes, echoing the view of many theorists, “the subject is not produced in autonomous isolation, but rather assumes its shape through, and is therefore dependent on, an identification with an ‘other’ (which is subsequently disavowed)” (29); I would add that while in some cases, the “other” is disavowed, in many other instances of the early modern subject's experience, the “other” continued to figure prominently and crucially. Certainly, those in relation to whom women writers define themselves and their fictional characters are not always adversaries, but nor are they consistently allies. Both attraction and aversion to the other, love for and fear of him, her, or them, all shape the way one experiences self and world. In the persistent signs of our need for these others, perhaps we can explain at least part of the pain of solitary confinement—even though it is used as a punitive measure against those for whom being with others is so terribly difficult. We need the other, we need each other, to know and validate ourselves—now as in the early modern era; but then, especially, the notion of the self as dependent on others was particularly powerful. The limning of subjectivity in the texts under consideration in my study comes through depictions of the speakers' relation to others, with a recognition that the relational foundations of the self are based on the emotional dynamics

involved in interpersonal interactions, and the acknowledgement of power that is conveyed in address and through spatial and bodied language.

In the cross-genre study I have undertaken, I have found that although genre presents writers with models to which they must, in at least some sense, conform, it also offers structures by which a writer could derive authority through her imitation of accepted styles and forms. The notion of genre is troublesome by nature, as it either tends to be understood as something that restricts what can be expressed, or as something that, because so many meaningful texts violate the principles of a given genre, dissolves altogether. John Roe explores the problematics of genre-definition in his essay on literary “kinds,” noting the prominence of Aristotelian taxonomy in the humanist-inspired literary theory of the period, and hence the tendency to rank the genres in terms of value, using notions of moral instruction and eloquence, for example, to do so. Roe concludes that despite guidelines set out by writers like Philip Sidney regarding the poet’s need to adhere to the conventions of a given “kind,” in practice, there was much “discontinuity” between model and product; even Sidney crossed the boundaries set out by tradition (12), combining and inventing in his poetics. Roe’s last word emphasises that writers were not seriously constrained by the weight of tradition: “Renaissance example shows that any good formulation of genre depends more on observing what is practised than on insisting what it must be” (13). A certain looseness and flexibility in practice clearly allowed for women’s voices to fit into, or in between, generic experiments and the mixing of forms that appeared in the period.

The writers in my study show their ability to carry strategies of legitimisation over the borders of genre. The silence of the early modern feminine subject, for example, can indicate not only submission to cultural directives, but also the mysterious inner depths of an emerging self. Likewise, gestures of indeterminacy such as the smile, which can be read as both acquiescence to

and defiance of dominant discourses and human others—as “rhetorical” gestures, as Christina Luckyj would say—appear in texts as different from each other as Askew’s Protestant testimonial, Cary’s historic *Mariam*, and the Cavendish sisters’ domestic courtship drama. The smile, then, is a thread that runs through the texts, employed by the textual heroines, indicating meaning—hidden, yet also conveyed; it communicates *something* to the observing (or reading) other, and so it establishes the connection between them, but what it signals is not always clear, and where there is ambiguity, a careful distance is also maintained, and the portrayal of a “smile” as one way relationship is conveyed through the evocation of bodily gesture.

Also, the experience or sense of imprisonment reappears in the texts, from the first one I examine to the ones a century later. We see this experience in Askew’s and the pamphlet writers’ depictions of being “open” to the assault of others but also confined in an unbearably small space—very solid, material spaces, for Askew. The labyrinth of Wroth’s sonnet sequence presents the feeling of being enwalled in another context, through a gendered experience of both love and artistic ambition. The pressures brought to bear on feminine subjects come across in the plays, for Sidney’s Cleopatra in *Antonie* and Cary’s *Mariam*, whose embodiment plays so prominent a role in the events of their eventual destruction; for Cleopatra, setting up material and symbolic boundaries to keep out certain others was as important as dissolving them in an affective sense, in order to merge with a beloved. *Mariam* and her sister-in-law, Salome, in Cary’s play both feel the constraints of marriage, and each reacts to the domination by a powerful other in her own way. These dramatisations of interrelation hold implications on a broader, political level, as well. Further, the pressures surrounding courtship rituals evoke the idea of imprisonment in the pastoral tragicomedy of Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*, in which the lovers almost lose their lives because of the arranged marriage that is planned for the female

protagonist. Such a feeling of a lack of choice comes across vividly in the actual imprisonment of the protagonists of *The Concealed Fancies*, which dramatises the situation of their being enclosed in their own home, at the same time as they are participating in courtship rituals, which has such striking suggestions regarding marriage and domesticity for women. While genre informs the different outcomes of these texts, these through-lines illustrate a continuity of concern and strategy. The expression of a subjectivity directed towards God, in Askew's Reformation memoir, also shows the contrast between the kinds of feminine selves being expressed and constructed in the mid-sixteenth century as compared to the mid-seventeenth century, when, for example, the Cavendish sisters assert their intentions to a disobedience quite different from hers, not only because it was more secular in nature. My study covers what I will refer to as a movement, then, from a self identifying itself through scripture and shared, communal, public belief to one with both individualistic and relational identifications, and one that could find language to negotiate power with others more readily. Megan Matchinske notes a similar developmental arc in her study of state and subject in the period, pointing to "a discursive shift from early sixteenth-century understandings of private conscience as individually generated and spiritually motivated, to civil-war perceptions of interiority as state-inscribed and gender-inflected – a site of civil and sexual invigilation and control" (5). Richard Helgerson, too, traces a basis for early modern identity increasingly related to the monarch, with the church figuring among other competing "rivals" as the "fundamental source" of those identities (10). These notions come across in embodied rhetoric throughout the literature I examine in my study.

The understating of self that was—and is still—so dependent on others for definition comes across in early modern literature as especially contested for women, whose access to self-shaping language was so circumscribed, and whose relations with others were largely prescribed.

They had to deal with directives for what sociologist Serena Petrella calls *erotic civility*, defined as part of a large “normative apparatus” (11) that puts pressure on both men and women to display “all the ‘proper’ and ‘licit’ characteristics and behavioral dispositions in human sexuality, be they related to the body, to gender, to orientation, to appetite, to reproduction, as well as to form” (11). In my study, I found some of the ways that the early modern interpretation of *erotic civility* (although this term was not in use at the time) acted on women in a particularly forceful way. In their practices, women writers both recreate and repeat cultural prescriptions for behaviour, exposing the complexities involved in authorizing one’s subjectivity, but they also show the possibilities for the assertion of agency within these limits—and, at times, through exceeding those boundaries.

As I proceeded with my study, I observed the validity of the view that the early modern self was profoundly conflicted. Shaped and brought into being through interaction with others, it was also a refuge from others, a place to retreat to; it was a self divided, anxious about its distinction from others, and alternating between its faith in the constancy and permanence of God and its doubts in the face of the vicissitudes of life—the corruption and suffering around it. We’ve seen how a speaker could link herself to another, aligning herself with one “higher” on the social ladder, in Aemelia Lanyer’s poetry, for example, in order to substantiate herself and to acquire the authority to speak. This relationality comes into focus in the literature by women writers in all the genres under study here. Conversely, when these relationships are called into question, when the loyalty of others cannot be ascertained, the self is dangerously threatened, due to the destabilizing effect of uncertainty. It is with the other in mind that I read, for example, James Kruzner’s observation that “[s]elves are vulnerable in constitution, incapable, on their own, of fully mastering either the passions threatening to undo them from within or the violence

threatening from without” (18). These anxieties were expressed in the writing, and more and more as a greater number of people gained access to the medium of ink. Walter Ong notes that the ability to write brought the potential for an “increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set” (103). Writing held out to people the opportunity to define themselves personally and to others, and always with the knowledge of another who heard or witnessed their words. Taylor uses the metaphor of dancing to describe the dialogic process with which identity is formed through interaction with others; I would suggest a musical metaphor, with speakers “trading fours” as they work within a structure that both / all understand, just as the term “improvisations” that Bourdieu uses (182) suggests a musical structure with openings for creativity within an overarching structure, with the need to listen to others in order to engage with the tools of communication. With this other in mind, whether hostile or sympathetic, women writers attempted to “write themselves” in their autobiographical work, their translations, poems, and plays.

Commentators on the history of the self consistently note the contrast in the way the modern self is an interior, autonomous being as compared with the early modern experience of integrated selfhood—one whose material, emotional, and spiritual aspects are not so differentiated as they were to become, and whose unstable borders leave her open to all kinds of harmful and helpful influences. We begin to see, in studies like this one, a development in attitudes and practices that define the individual self, while retaining the dependence of that self on others of some kind. Tracing this history, Taylor concludes about our own era, “Among the practices which have helped to create this modern sense are those which discipline our thought to disengagement from embodied agency and social embedding” (“Dialogical Self” 59). He adds,

“The subject is a monological one. She is in contact with an ‘outside’ world, including other agents, the objects she and they deal with, her own and others’ bodies, but this contact is through the representations she has ‘within’ ... What this kind of consciousness leaves out is the body and the other” (59-60). I notice that we do use language of the body to express our experience, but research such as Taylor’s (and my own) convinces me that we use it differently from the way an early modern person would. We say, for example, that a certain person “gets under my skin,” or that we resent the feeling that some dominant other is “breathing down my neck.” While this language can express something about our experience, it seems that it is not something as profound to our self-understanding as embodied language once was. James Kruzner, too, finds, in his study of early modern literature “how community – the experience of being-with – undoes, unsettles or makes unthinkable well-defined self-conceptions at least as much as it encourages such conceptions” (30). My work has been an attempt to tease out the early modern awareness of the body, to understand how they did understand themselves. As Terry Sherwood says as he discusses Spenser, the literature “plays on our sense of an individual person’s distinguishing bodily presence. Outline of figure, extension in space, beauty or ugliness of feature, the pressures of weight – all these features actively invade, and capture our attention as a language to be read for truths, deceptions, and ironies” (56). Sherwood has picked up on the spatial aspect of the early modern outlook, and expressed perhaps without focusing on the implications. But his comments apply to other texts and genres equally well, I think, if slightly differently in each case.

As much as this study has allowed me to answer some of my questions, it has also prompted more, at least some of which I hope to explore in the future. One of these concerns the self-substantiating practices of women, and perhaps men, who didn’t have the same access to the

opportunities for education, writing, and circulation of their work as those whose texts I look at here. Other kinds of documents could be examined with the same concern for how the writer situates herself in relation to other/s and to the discourses of her circumstances; letters and diaries, for example, housed in archival collections, present a tempting resource for such exploration. I would have liked to include Mary Wroth's romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, and the plays of Margaret Cavendish, which take the projection of self into the world and cosmos to a new and dazzling level. They beckon for another day.

The use of images of the female body for the "advertisement" of various causes and ideologies, too, suggests an area related but still not thoroughly examined. I end with a brief look at this idea, following the importance of women's visual form that was linked to the reception of women's writing. The image of Anne Askew that comes to "audiences" in the woodcut that accompanied her text in most of its published forms bears a likeness to later iconography of Elizabeth I, whose body is reproduced in various media to represent the political identity of the nation. We can perhaps trace the history of the use of the female figure in the images and sculptures of the Virgin Mary, its appeal carrying it far forward into the future, as well, which attests to its ongoing appeal as a visual stimulus and its symbolic versatility and efficacy. In fact, the history of the "map" of Europe as a queen, in Figure 3, links Askew's biblical association with Elizabeth's monarchy: "The woman represents the Mother Church, who is being seduced from the true path," according to the collector. These images trace a fascinating line of the continued utility of the female figure, with the sexual connotations that have accrued in association with woman's body becoming, if possible, more overt. The capitalist market has certainly realised the image's potential for the purposes of advertising products, but even its political associations can be adapted for the purposes of company promotion. In the film

industry's competitive advertising practices—which also involve issues of cultural authority—we can find the same kind of image, in Columbia Pictures' "logo," for example, and realise how it comes to be full of symbolic power. The company's presentation of the heroic female image resonates through some of the same specific details that made the woodcut of Askew so meaningful to early modern audiences, and it echoes some of the power of Elizabeth I's associations with broader political movements and agendas. In the five revisions Columbia's logo has undergone, the company has variously changed and then restored the original depiction of the rays of the sun that appeared to emanate from behind the figure's head, just as they do in the early modern woodcut. The women in both images wear Roman-style dress, connecting them to posterity and to the historically verifiable and revered status of the classical period—to timeless, enduring ideals. The figure in the logo is enhanced and expanded by its surrounding of cloud, that adheres to the shape of the woman's body, emphasising and sexualising its contours; indeed, the tapering pillar of cloud behind the female figure can also be interpreted as having phallic suggestiveness: the stack of cloud culminates at the top in the male-coded sun, which merges with the torch held by the woman. The company's purchase by the Coca-Cola corporation even elicits the description of the figure, on its website, as resembling a coca-cola bottle—an object sexualised in both male (phallic) and female ways. "Columbia's" pedestal has the stability of stone, like the wall behind Askew, but both images make the sky a prominent feature, which "places" the figure near the divine source of spiritual authority. These and other details link the figure in fascinatingly similar signification.

There are further links between these figures of the body, as well. Like the queen as earth in depictions of Elizabethan England—or "Britannia"—at the beginning of its empire-building project, "Columbia" is connected to a classical, divine past, as is the nude female figure on the

cover of Cary's published play. The women in the images hold objects, which is typical in emblematic portraits, with the cross sometimes clutched by martyrs and religious figures having been replaced, in Askew's historical and political moment, with the Bible, as mentioned above in Chapter one, and in "Columbia's" case, with the equally religious symbol of the torch. The movie company has incorporated the early modern coding of the so-called "New World" as a woman's body to be "enjoyed" by the specifically English men who "discovered" her treasures and sought to solidify and protect "her" borders—and their treatment of the actual indigenous women of the continent reflects this encoding in highly disturbing and horrific ways, as we now know. The details that the company could put into play to signal political authority include an American flag with which the figure is draped. The company later toned down this blatant imagery and replaced the flag with the plain blue sash of its current version, but the flag shows another way that the image could be adapted to particular interests. The gendering of the geographical and political areas of Britain and "her" colonies as sisters or mother and daughter gives them lasting identities in the surviving names "Britannia," "America," and "Columbia"—feminised versions of the men who famously "brought culture" to them—so that in the twentieth century, a company can capitalise on these associations to convey the power of other images and ideology it disseminates through its films. This is one reason the study of the texts in my project is important to our understanding of our own culture. At this time, many of the issues of gender that pervade the establishment of subjectivity can be read in subtle or extreme forms. The bodies of women are visual presences, but writing also brings them alive as thinking, feeling, embodied selves, as well. If we understand how the dynamics of selfhood were being worked out at this time, we can unravel the problems and shortcomings of our society, as well. I hope my project

can add to the ongoing conversation about these issues. And here, as Isabella Whitney writes, “finally I make an end.”

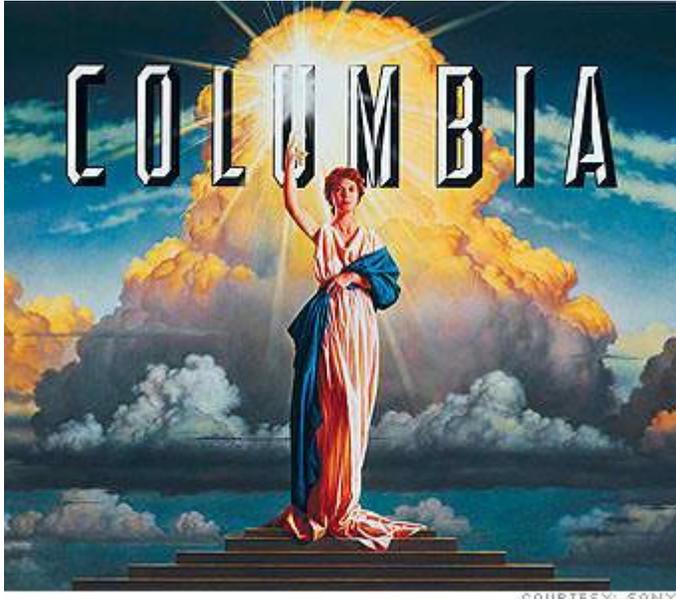


Fig. 6 Logo of Film Company Columbia Pictures, Inc.

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