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# A World Within Herself: Mapping Space, Bodies and Texts in Early Modern Women's Writing

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A World Within Herself: Mapping Space, Bodies and Texts in Early Modern Women's  
Writing

by

Marie E. Molnar

A Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

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in

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Marie E. Molnar

A World Within Herself: Mapping Spaces, Bodies, and Texts in Early Modern Women's Writing

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## *Abstract*

This project investigates the ways in which women writers from the early modern period in England redefine, recreate, and reject previously circumscribed literary and material spaces. The restructuring of space and the project of textual and physical mapping that these writers take up contribute to the development of agency and authority of female characters in their texts.

The first chapter examines the spaces in which the narrators of Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet Nosegay* and Amelia Lanyer's "The Description of Cook-Ham" find themselves confined and how those places can encourage both creative and authoritative practices. My discussion of Mary Sidney's *The Tragedy of Antonie* and Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* in the second chapter focuses on how women in public positions of authority struggle to delineate private spaces and private selves. These two closet dramas expose how masculine discourses of empire and gender complicate women's efforts at self-definition. Mary Wroth's long prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, features two female protagonists whose sense of self is predicated on their experiences as mobile or stationary characters. Chapter three describes how Urania's narrative of travel and quest and Pamphilia's of constancy in love and rulership both produce narratives based on a conception of personal geography. The fourth and final chapter on Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* unfolds the consequences of a fantastic travel narrative that concentrates on the female body. Not only are the discourses of travel, authority, dominion, and gender important here, as they are in the preceding chapters, but also the discourse of materiality. Cavendish's Empress reaches a heightened awareness of her self as a physical and

intellectual being; that awareness enables her to exert great control over her subjects and enemies, even to the point of widespread destruction.

Recognizing women's ability to claim autonomy over their own bodies, over the places they inhabit, and over the texts they create is essential not only to the reading of works by women, but to the reading of early modern literature. The issues of gender, genre, and geography in early women's writing open up new ways to read texts by women, a process that, in turn, can lead to new readings of canonical texts.

## *Chapter One*

### *Stasis and (Self) Contained Spaces in the Poetry of Isabella Whitney and Amelia Lanyer*

In writing about the "enclosure of the body" in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, Peter Stallybrass points out that the "surveillance of women," which is enacted by male members of the household, "concentrated on three specific areas: the mouth, chastity, the threshold of the house." These three areas are frequently collapsed into each other and the connection between speaking and wantonness is common to legal discourse and conduct books (125, 126). A woman's "silence" and "closed mouth" are a "sign of chastity" and "in turn, homologous to woman's enclosure within the house" (127). The destruction of enclosure, the transgression of boundaries, and the interrogation of class and gender hierarchies take place with the construction of women as, for example, insatiable sexual creatures or religious heretics, so that the "rejection of enclosure" accompanies the "validation of the female grotesque" (142). What Stallybrass draws here is not a simple equation between the broad category of "woman" and the domestic realm, but a complex mapping of female physical, spiritual, and social integrity onto the household space. In order to remain chaste, that is, to preserve a purity of mind, soul, and body, a woman cannot participate in the world beyond the confines of the domestic space in ways that are not sanctioned by whoever (father, husband, brother, or other masculine figure or institution) is responsible for her surveillance. The loss of surveillance and the dissolution of the metonymical relationship between women and the domestic sphere produce a space, Stallybrass claims, for the emergence of the grotesque female body, the unbounded, uncontained female body that exceeds the physical

boundaries of the household and the rhetorical ones that define women as "silent, chaste, and obedient."

Yet, what happens when the "rejection of enclosure" and "loss of surveillance" takes place in the writing of female authors during the early modern period? Stallybrass's article makes no effort to examine how texts by women writers during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century deal with the transgression of boundaries that try to demarcate domestic space and women's bodies within that space. However, it is in the writing by women of the period where those borders are crossed that notions of both enclosure and surveillance are interrogated, all in significant and often dramatic ways. As a result, the domestic space that tends to be associated with the regulation of the household economy, the production and nurturing of children, and the constriction of women to the roles of wives and mothers (or, in the case of daughters, future wives and mothers) receives the least attention in these female-authored texts. In works by Isabella Whitney, Elizabeth Cary, Mary Wroth, and Margaret Cavendish, the traditionally defined domestic space is not the primary location and the space left by that absence is not consistently filled by the appearance of the "female grotesque." Instead, what takes place is a series of multiple enclosures and openings on both the physical and rhetorical level that allow female authors and characters to redefine, recreate, or reject traditional female or domestic spaces. What results is a vision of multiplicity: women govern, with varying degrees of success, the shape of the world around them and participate in that world in a number of ways, prohibiting a single definition of female behavior or space.

The following chapters examine the ways in which women writers from the early modern period redefine, recreate, and reject previously circumscribed literary and

material spaces. The restructuring of space and the project of textual and physical mapping that these writers take up contribute to the development of agency and authority of both the narrators and of other female characters featured in their texts. Put bluntly, *where* you are affects *what* you say and do, *how* you say and do it, and *how much* control you have over the saying and doing. Starting with Isabella Whitney's *A sweet Nosgay, Or pleasant Posye: contayning a hundred and ten Phylosophicall Flowers* (1573), and ending with Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, called the Blazing World* (1666), this dissertation looks at a century of imaginative writing by women and, in particular, at how the discourse of space, place, and mobility affects the emergence of an authoritative, female voice in the literature of the period. The farther female speakers move from the domestic realm and the more drastic the restructuring of space, the greater the potential for an increased sense of agency. Yet, even this potential is complicated by the fact that women are not always the ones responsible for their movement out of traditional domestic and female spaces.

One of the important critical trends in the study of early modern women writers addresses the ways in which these writers participate in and are implicated in various systems of masculine authority. Studies by Elaine Beilin, Tina Krontiris, Barbara K. Lewalski, and Wendy Wall examine the early modern ideologies of class, gender, authorship, and genre that shape the ways women participate in the textual economy as patrons, translators, and writers. Critics Gary Waller, Mary Ellen Lamb, and Maureen Quilligan see familial connections as highly influential in Mary Sidney Herbert and Mary Wroth's ability to participate in the masculine dominated textual marketplace. In the absence of familial connections, class affiliation and socio-economic status enable

women writers to create a space for themselves in works by Amelia Lanyer, who functions not as a patron but as a client of multiple noble female patrons, and in those by Isabella Whitney, who functions as the only member of the non-gentry whose work is represented in this project.<sup>1</sup> The study of physical space has gained some critical attention in examinations of Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam* (1613), where the distinction between private and public begins to dissolve. Critics of Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*, where the protagonist is sometimes seen as creating a female utopia and where a materialist view of the natural world is presented, also address some aspects of physical space in that work.<sup>2</sup> The fullest examination of physical and textual spaces in early modern women's writing is Sheila T. Cavanaugh's *Cherished Torment: The Emotional Geography of Lady Mary Wroth's Urania*. Cavanaugh's study details "the personalized cosmography that Wroth crafts within the *Urania*," including elements of geographic and dynastic affiliation, pilgrimage, and the emotional wanderings of "lost children."

Aside from Cavanaugh's work, however, the interaction between female authority and authorship and the physical places in which those qualities arise or are prevented from arising has not received a great amount of critical attention. This project extends the work done by the feminist critics who examine how women writers participate in religious, socio-economic, political, and literary institutions. Yet, my work uniquely explores the difference that spatial location makes to the creation and sustenance of

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<sup>1</sup> For Lanyer and Whitney criticism, see Barnstone, Benson, Coiro, Ellinghausen, Hammons, Jenkins, Marquis, Schnell, and Wall.

<sup>2</sup> For criticism of Cary and Cavendish, see Bennet, Clarke (1998), Fletcher, Gutierrez, Jowitt, Leslie, and Trubowitz, and Walters. For an intellectual biography that focuses on Cavendish's life as a writer and member of the scientific community, see Battigelli's

female agency and authority. In none of the works examined in this dissertation is the domestic space the predominant female space. While there are houses and homes that female characters occupy at different points throughout the various texts, more often than not these authors choose to place their female characters outside the domestic realm. If, as Peter Stallybrass claims, the early modern woman's "silence" and "closed mouth" are "a sign of chastity" and, "in turn, homologous to woman's enclosure within the house" (127), then the movement of women outside the enclosure of the domestic space as both characters and authors is significant. Lanyer's narrator speaks about a country house that will never be her own or be the utopia she wishes it to be; Cary's Mariam spends most of her time outside her husband's house; Wroth's Pamphilia tries to find her way out of the complex labyrinth of romance. The women in these works structure their authority around the places that they occupy and the mobility they have to move from one space to another. The ability to move from the private to the public sphere is one of the physical conditions necessary to develop a public voice. The ability to create a restrictive or isolated space or to choose to leave behind such spaces also demonstrates agency; while the outside world might seek to contain women in the works of many authors, the *choice* to be contained is one not often granted to women. My work here locates female authority or lack of authority in concrete, physical spaces and examines how female-authored texts throughout the early modern period become more and more aware of how to negotiate the politics of space.

The negotiation of space in the works of Wroth and Cavendish includes the traversing of space, the movement from one land to another that comprises narratives of

travel, adventure, and the romantic quest. The critical tradition that examines the discourses of travel and mobility in the early modern world tends to deal with texts that are both authored by men and, primarily, feature male characters. John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" exemplifies this mode of male travel, where the female, "fixed foot" of the compass is not only the stationary one, but also the one around whom the "wandering" foot circumscribes his journey. Men create maps and texts; women are mapped and written into texts. Indeed, in Donne's "To His Mistress Going to Bed" women become both the map and the mapped land, an "America" and a "Newfoundland" waiting to be explored and conquered. This trope of travel gets repeated throughout both literary works of the early modern period and critical examinations of those texts, and even a work such as Constance Relihan's *Cosmographical Glasses: Geographic Discourse, Gender and Elizabethan Fiction* defines the intersection between gender and geography as a way to construct masculinity. In *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition*, Karen R. Lawrence demonstrates how most critics, including Percy Adams, Paul Zweig, Michael Nerlich, and Vincent Craponzano, "encode the traveler as a male who crosses boundaries and penetrates spaces" and in whose writing the "female is mapped as a place on the itinerary of the male journey" (2). The writers that Lawrence mentions and the texts they examine all take for granted that the figures that have the greatest amount of mobility and agency are male figures. Instead of accepting this viewpoint and its corollary--that women are always the stationary figures--as true for all texts, even those authored by women, Lawrence recognizes that the literature of travel gives women the chance to "explore pressing issues of personal and historical agency, problems and (and opportunities for) women's cultural placements

and displacements" (xi). Thus, women do not simply write travel narratives or participate in the practice of travel, but they use the discursive practices associated with these activities to help them discuss and create the other forms of agency not accessible to them at particular cultural moments and the space or lack thereof available to them during those moments.

This project seeks to fill the spaces left open by Lawrence's study, which begins with one of Cavendish's tales of exilic wandering and ends with the questions of travel addressed by post-modern women writers. Similarly, this project also expands on the work done by *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing*, a collection that, like Lawrence's book, highlights the impact of gender on travel writing and its intersection with race, class, politics, religion, and history, but addresses those issues in the works of women writing in the nineteenth and later centuries. Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages* provides a frame for looking at the ways in which women write travel narratives in a textual and cultural environment that attempts to inhibit female mobility. The following chapters also take into account the female literary tradition that both precedes and includes women writers of the late seventeenth century to trace the development of a rhetoric of female-authored textual mapping and mobility. My inquiry into travel focuses on the experience of early modern women authors and how they make use of narratives of time, space, and place to explore issues of agency similar to those that Lawrence points out above. Even those texts that feature women who do not travel widely, who perhaps move from private to public realms, do present female characters who occupy multiple discursive spaces, and the kinds of agency those texts explore are often associated with movement between, among, and within physical and textual spaces. In

an age when colonialist and imperialist projects are remapping the world and redrawing the boundaries between selves and others, it is important to see what other territories are being mapped out in early modern literature by one of those "othered" groups. Literature by women writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries helps to map out previously uncharted literary territory by demonstrating how women made use of both private and public space, how they were and were not able to move through those spaces of their own agency, and how they were able (or unable) to locate themselves physically as authors and agents.

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Isabella Whitney's "Wyll and Testament," the piece that closes the author's *A sweet Nosgay, Or pleasant Posye: contayning a hundred and ten Phylosophicall Flowers*, offers a picture of London at the middle of the sixteenth century. The poem depicts the city through a process of mapping that takes place as the narrator describes the legacies that she leaves to London. The "Goods and riches" (E2r) that the narrator bequeaths to her city are those that can already be found in the city and, as the narrator tells her audience, can be found in specific places in London. As a result, the narrator not only presents a list of goods and services of which she can make herself owner and distributor, but also lets the reader know in what areas of the city and on what streets they can procure those goods and services. The narrator lays out the city that she knows, locating herself in and associating herself with select places in London, thereby establishing her narrative authority through her knowledge of these locales. Her ability to depict these

areas of London *and* to distribute as legacies the goods and services rendered there comes from the production of *knowledge about* those areas; being able to demonstrate knowledge of these areas enables her mapping project, and the map of the city, in turn, enables the sense that she can travel throughout the city, at least via the process of textual cartography. Through the writing of the *Wyll and Testament* certain parts of the city open up to the speaker and grant her intimate enough knowledge to catalog and distribute the goods, services, and inhabitants of those sections of London. As a result, it is the *writing* of the *Wyll and Testament* that opens the world (or, part of it) to the speaker and allows her to map out a world beyond the confines of the domestic, private space.

The creation of the *Wyll and Testament*, a document that through its very title demonstrates an acute awareness of its own textuality, grants the speaker both narrative authority and the ability to shape the world around her. Because the poem points out specific, recognizable places within the city, the mapping device is explicit and allows the reader to view the narrator as incredibly knowledgeable, through travel or other means, of her surroundings. However, this same device, that of delineating boundaries and of designating ownership and authority within those boundaries, can be applied to texts that deal with more static spaces. The earlier parts of Whitney's *Nosegay*, in particular "The Auctor to the Reader" and "Certain familier Epistles and friendly Letters by the Auctor with Replies," participate in a similar project of mapping where the depictions and discussions of both physical and textual spaces contribute to the construction of authority. Unlike the wide-ranging view of London that we get in the *Wyll*, these sections of Whitney's work depict an almost claustrophobic sense of space. The narrator remains confined to a single geographic area--that of her place of residence-

-and only through the media of reading and writing do new worlds and possibilities open up for her.

A similar sense of static space and containment characterizes Amelia Lanyer's "The Description of Cooke-Ham," a poem that, like Whitney's *Wyll and Testament*, concludes a longer work by the author. Coming at the end of Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* (1611), "The Description of Cooke-Ham" presents a narrator who attempts not to open up city spaces, but to enclose an ideal, almost pastoral one. The ability to map out a space and then enclose it requires a kind of agency similar to the kind required for the expansion of space and the ability to traverse it freely. In each instance, the desire for specific physical *self*-containment and the desire to control textual interpretation govern the negotiation of boundaries. Yet, where Whitney's text demonstrates how physical enclosure can lead to an opening of the textual landscape, Lanyer's presents how enclosure can discourage artistic production.

A substantial amount of the criticism surrounding Whitney's poetry focuses on the author's relationship with her brother, Geoffrey Whitney, author of a book of emblems, and her work's relationship with both his literary production and that of other male authors, including Hugh Plat's *Flowers of Philosophy*, the work on which Whitney bases her *Sweet Nosegay*.<sup>3</sup> Criticism that moves away from Whitney's place as the sister of a male author or as the mere imitator of a one asks the more significant question of how an unmarried early modern woman of a non-aristocratic background and education establishes herself as an author. Thus far, the only critical work that explicitly addresses the idea of mapping and the politics of space in Whitney's works is Brace's "Teaching

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<sup>3</sup> See Lukic (2005) and Fehrenbach (1983).

Class: Whitney's 'Wyll and Testament' and Nash's "Litany in the time of plague," which presents various pedagogical methods to help students see the "Wyll and Testament" as a text that explores "concerns generated by the idea of the city as a middle class, economically oriented space" (280) and offers the extremely interesting, useful task of mapping out the London of the poem--a London of a primarily middling level economic, consumer class, distant from the centers of courtly authority. This project of mapping the spaces in Whitney's texts is useful not just for the vision of London that she creates, but also for the opportunity it gives the reader to look back through the rest of the *Nosegay* and examine what paths the narrator follows through geographic and literary spaces.

A series of multiple enclosures characterize "The Auctor to the Reader," the first of two prefatory verses to the *Nosegay* proper in which the speaker sets forth the conditions under which she produces her work. The processes of enclosure and containment that take place in the address to the reader function in both the textual and physical spaces featured by the poem. Throughout her introductory narrative, the speaker finds herself limited to very specific locales, either by choice or condition, and only through the practice of writing can she cause those boundaries to expand. As a result, the narrator's ability to create open, productive spaces depends on her ability to decide which texts remain closed or open and to what degree in order for her to generate textual material. The picture of female agency that Whitney's poem presents is one that functions in a narrow physical space, but has the ability to both complicate and be complicated by the texts with which she works. Control over literary interpretation can both constrain the speaker and allow her to exert similar control over her own readers.

In the opening lines to "The Auctor to the reader" the speaker depicts herself as "[h]arvestlesse," "serviceless," and "subject unto sicknesse" that prevents her from going "abrode" (A5v). The adjectives "harvestlesse" and "serviceless" locate the speaker outside a productive social and economic space: her lack of employment ("service") prevents her from generating both labor and wealth, and her lack of "harvest" marks her out as sterile during a time when there ought to be abundance and plenty. The narrator, whom the reader knows to be a woman from her letter to George Mainwaring that precedes the verse epistle to the reader, presents here a female body that refuses to fill prescribed gender roles. Despite the fact that sickness prevents her from going "abrode," from exchanging private for public space, and limits her, at least geographically, to sanctioned spaces for woman, it also helps to mark her body as subversive. The sick body is first imagined as a non-productive body, or, at least, as a body that does not produce healthy, expected offspring. Here, the body of the young, unmarried woman ought to be able to fulfill the role that society has set for a member of her socio-economic class--that of a mother, or a housewife. Yet, this speaker rejects those roles and turns, instead, to intellectual production.

No explicit association links the speaker's "home" to a traditional domestic space, and she participates in no traditionally domestic activities; instead, the home becomes an intellectual space. The speaker turns to literature, to reading and writing--activities she defines as ones for which she has "leisure good" (A5v)--for relief. Her leisure time also yields the opportunity for reading, a process that the speaker initiates in order her "selfe to edyfy" (A5v). Not only is reading an activity that requires leisure, but also one that can become a process of self-edification. The building up of personal strength, morality,

or spirituality that can result from the edifying activity of reading requires the free time that leisure, or, perhaps, illness, offers. A person in service, performing the duties required and participating in the kind of "harvest" that the speaker cannot, would not have the "leisure good" that the speaker does. Only those who have the wealth to live without having to work or those who cannot work possess this opportunity, though it seems significant that the speaker, who falls into the latter category, can call her leisure "good."

During this period of leisure, the speaker turns to study, then quickly rejects books on religion, history, and classical learning and instead of rejuvenating her mind through scholarship chooses "to refresh" her "muse," "cheare [her] brused brayne," and test the strength of her limbs. The speaker deems the books that present themselves, "Scriptures," "Histories," and works by "*Virgill, Ovid, Mantuan*," to be unworthy of her time and not capable of fulfilling her need for self-edification. Scripture requires the aid of a "Divine" for comprehension, works of history only depict the ever-present "follyes" of humanity, and the works of classical antiquity offer nothing to hold the speaker's interest or dispel her weariness. In effect, her casting aside of these texts closes them, both to herself and her reader, for the speaker refuses to participate in either reading or interpreting of these texts beyond the brief moments of perusal and subsequent dismissal. These examples of religious, historical, and classical learning and the literary traditions behind them do not prove useful, and the speaker does not waste her time with a rewriting or explication of such "canonical" texts. Instead, she turns from reading to exercise in the hope that it will inspire her to write.

This moment, when the narrator chooses exercise over study, signals a moment of simultaneous enclosure and opening, where the narrator has enough agency to cast aside

examples of established, masculine literary traditions and to remove herself both imaginatively and physically from the confines of her home. Freeing herself from the restrictions of a selection of texts that provide her with neither inspiration nor relief accompanies a move to free herself from the physical and societal constraints of the domestic sphere. The narrator creates an explicit link between the function of her mind and body--if study cannot refresh her mind, perhaps exercise can, and perhaps invigorated "limmes" can also lead to more invigorated reading and writing. However, overcoming society's control over women and its desire to locate their bodies in controlled spaces is not as easy as simply walking outside. For almost as soon as the narrator tells her audience "I walked out" she claims that she "sodenly" meets "a friend" (A6r). Whereas inside she has complete solitude and only her books for company, as soon as she goes outside, she encounters somebody she knows. One step into the outside world brings the speaker in contact with people who will tell her what to do and will encourage another set of limits upon her, for this "friend" does not greet her or exchange any pleasantries, but immediately scolds her:

I walked out: but sodenly  
a friend of mine mee met:  
And sayd, if you regard your health:  
out of this Lane you get.  
And shift you to some better aire,  
for feare to be infect:  
With noysome smell and savours yll,  
I wysh you that respect.  
And have regard unto your health,  
or els perhaps you may:  
So make a dye, and then adieu,  
your wofull friends may say. (A6r)

The only information the speaker gives us about the person she meets is that it is a "friend" of hers, a term which can encompass family, friends, and acquaintances; a few lines later, the text reveals that the friend is a man. The first concern he exhibits is for her health and warns her that "if you regard your health: / out of this Lane you get." The narrator's friend calls upon her to pay more attention to her physical well-being and to move out of the public space of the "Lane" and to "shift" herself "to some better aire / for feare to be infect." Though she does nothing more than walk out into a lane that appears to be close enough to her home that it may very well be the one she inhabits, simply being outside and breathing in the air with its "noisome smells and savours yll" is seen as dangerous to the speaker's health. The friend she encounters cannot point to any tangible threat and instead uses a metaphor of contagion to describe the danger she puts herself in by removing herself from the enclosed, safe space of the home.

This metaphor--one of contagion and infection that cannot be controlled except by avoidance--is also one of penetration. The friend depicts the speaker's body, one we know to be affected by illness and, thus, already one whose integrity has been somehow compromised, as one that cannot resist the sounds, smells, sights, and tastes of the city. All her senses take in the noxious influences that characterize the lane into which she walks, and the diseases inherent in the "smells and savours" will easily find their way into her open body to spread infection. The friend the speaker encounters does not see himself as vulnerable to such influences and that belief, coupled with the notion that women's bodies, especially when brought into the public sphere, need to be closely contained and moderated, reaffirms a prevailing notion that women are peculiarly susceptible to the dangers of the public space.

These dangers extend beyond the noxious air that characterizes city life, however. Throughout Whitney's work, both the *Nosegay* proper and the texts that surround it, the language and metaphor of contagion are used to describe harmful moral and spiritual influences. Just as disease is spread by contagion and the resulting infection can compromise one's physical well being, so, too, can moral corruption be spread by contact with people, places, or even texts which already exhibit symptoms of corruption. In addition, the possibility of contagion, both physical and moral or spiritual, forces one to negotiate a set of boundaries in order to avoid contamination. Contagion functions as one of the mechanisms that encourage the system of multiple enclosures throughout Whitney's writing. Whether it be physical, moral, spiritual, or textual, the source of contagion is something that must be contained in order to preclude transmission of the disease. In turn, bodies susceptible to disease and minds to moral corruption (typically, female bodies and minds) must themselves be sequestered from the harmful influences that would compromise their health. As a result, both source and target must be isolated and those entities (bodies, texts, etc.) that cannot enact successful self-containment are forced to undergo systems of numerous enclosures that ensure their restraint. Both texts and bodies undergo this process of enclosure and thereby become maps and sites for the construction of multiple kinds of authority.

The narrator listens to the advice of her "friend" and replies to his assumption that she will cause her own death by remaining outside with the following words:

I thank him for his carefulnes,  
and this for answer gave:  
I'll neither shun, nor seeke for death,  
yet oft the same I crave.  
By reason of my lucklesse lyfe,

beleeeve me this is true:  
In that (sayd he) you doo a misse,  
than bad he mee adieu.  
For he was hastyng out of Towne,  
and could no longer byde: (A6r)

First, the narrator takes the time to explain her life--how she does not *intend* death, but often *wishes for*, "craves" it as a way out of her her "luckless lyfe." Here, it seems as if death really is one of the only options she has--the books she took up offered her no relief, going outside into the world only got her scolded, she's ill and has no place of employ. To this the Friend just gives her a cursory reply: "In that ... you doo a misse." And then he bids her "adieu" and leaves, because he is "hastyng out of Towne, / and could no longer byde." His ability to simply leave both the narrator and the city provides a stark contrast with the situation of the narrator herself. Despite his warnings that she not travel beyond the confines of her house in order to preserve her health, he himself takes the opportunity to avoid the "smells and savours" of the "Lane" by simply leaving town altogether. Healthy men, in this one short instance, are shown to have the opportunity to choose where they travel and what boundaries they can either set or expand for themselves; women do not. The disappearance of this male figure is just as sudden as his appearance, making his presence in the text representative of the mobility of men in the outside, masculine world.

The narrator, left "all sole alone," decides to return to her home after the departure of her "friend" and has "good Fortune" act as her guide (A6r). What is interesting here is that although the narrator is told that it is too dangerous for her to be outside, she is left to defend herself and to find her own way home without an escort. Although she could not

have gone far from home in the lines that depict her trip outside and although she allows the influence of her male acquaintance to set the boundaries, both spatial and temporal, of her trip outside, she must return to her home alone. In the public world, although she has voice enough to try to explain the conditions of her life to the friend she meets in the "Lane," her explanation receives no reply and carries no weight. Only when she returns home, not to a domestic, but to a literary space, is the narrator able to negotiate boundaries and degrees of enclosure with any sense of true authority. Her attempt to physically escape confinement fails; her imaginative attempt, however, succeeds.

Upon her arrival home, the narrator, with "good Fortune" as her guide, turns to Plat's *The Flowers of Philosophy* for consolation. Fortune, who "never hath denyde" to "hoyce" the speaker "on her Wheele" now leads the speaker to the pleasures of reading and textual exploration (A6r). The moment is Boethian: the narrator moves away from worry over the physical conditions and misfortunes of her life and directs her energy to intellectual pursuits in the hope that they can ameliorate the pain of adversity. There is, of course, no way to know if either Whitney herself or the narrator in her works has read Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*, though the narrator proves herself to be well read earlier in the text. Yet, that the narrator can make a similar move to the Boethian text, that is, to seek consolation in the reading, interpretation, and production of a philosophical text, proves a kind of textual journey that is not limited by spatial or temporal concerns and grants to the narrator greater agency than she has experienced thus far in the outside world.

After she returns home and Fortune leads her to "*Plat* his Plot," a space where "fragrant Flowers abound" (A6r), Whitney's narrator explains how this text, Plat's

*Flowers of Philosophy*, offers her the opportunity to write and offers both her and her readers a preventative against the forces of moral corruption. Whereas at the start of "The Auctor to the Reader" the narrator found herself closed off to and, in return, closing off the literary tradition represented by the texts she took up to read, here she has the chance to not only choose a text to read, but to extract specific parts of that text and reshape them in a manner she finds most useful and productive. Plat's text, with its collection of moral epigrams, provides for the narrator the self-edification and comfort that the previous texts did not. Plat's writing also, it turns out, presents Whitney's speaker with the opportunity not only to read, but also to *write*.

Whitney's speaker acquaints her readers with Plat's text through two interpretive strategies: first, through her representation of the *Flowers of Philosophy* as a garden, and second, through her own rewriting of that same text. Imagining Plat's book as a garden allows the speaker to map out the text as a cultivated space and thus facilitates a degree of simultaneous enclosure and exploration. The garden analogy also allows her to organize the text according to what features she finds most significant and which ones she will choose to adopt for her own series of moral epigrams. The "slip" that the speaker takes from Plat's garden (A6v) and the ability "to chuse of all his Flowers" whichever her "fancy" fills and, put together, form her "passing rare" Nosegay (A7r) and represent the speaker's participation in an act of selective reading. Her act of "choosing" flowers is reminiscent of the Latin verb *lego*, which has the primary meaning "to bring together, gather, collect," the secondary "to catch with the eye, to view, observe, behold, survey, see," and thence the transferred, figurative meaning "to read or peruse a writing," in particular, "to read out, read aloud, recite" and "to find in an author or a writing" (Lewis

& Short, *A Latin Dictionary*). The act of reading, of rendering a text legible, is not limited to the passive activity of scanning words on a page, but becomes a more active, involved one that has the reader picking out words, gathering them together to form meaning, and selecting the most significant of those words, phrases, and selections to assemble an interpretation of the text being read. In effect, Whitney's speaker participates not only in a process of reading that is analogous to the Latinate definition of the verb 'to read,' but also in a process of interpretation similar to that of the literary critic. Selecting the text as a whole and producing a re-reading of that text could result in a replication or summarization of the text; selecting parts of the text, choosing which "flowers" are most vital to her reading, produces a revision of Plat's text, a transformation dependent on the narrator's personal choice and successful arrangement of those selections.

Or, perhaps, not an arrangement, but a *re*-arrangement, for the image of Plat's text as a garden informs reader the "flowers" that Whitney's narrator picks are not growing in the wild, but in previously arranged "Beds" which are "bravely deckt" with "Bankes and Borders finely framed" (A6v). The text on which Whitney bases her own is not one of limitless possibility and does not offer to her the opportunity to perform a complete rewriting that dismantles the source text. In fact, by using Plat at all Whitney places parameters on her own work that enforce a loose set of guidelines on what she can produce. By envisioning her source text as a garden, that set of parameters becomes both spatial and specific. Plat's garden is an organized space: flowers are arranged in beds, not scattered throughout a boundless meadow; nature is tempered with art, with banks and borders framing the plot of land where the flowers grow. Whitney's narrator locates herself in a textual space that offers both enclosure and opportunity. Plat's book of moral

philosophy provides a model for her writing and limits her to a specific subject matter for the *Nosegay* proper. At the same time, it also permits her to open and close the text as she pleases, allowing her to "come agayne some other time" and to fill her "gasing eye" whenever she should choose to visit, giving her the chance to "be bolde" and "to come when as I wyll" (A6v; A7r). Plat's text may not be boundless, but it is *open* and the reader--Whitney's speaker--is the one who makes the decision as to how open she wishes that text to remain for her own edification.

Toward the end of her address to the reader, Whitney's narrator gives her audience a similar opportunity. If they do not find her writing pleasing, then they, too, can "repayre / to Master *Plat* his ground" and gather their own slips and flowers in the hopes that they may "light / On those which the fitter are / than them which I resight" (A7v). The narrator's reading of Plat is not the only possible reading nor is it the "correct" reading. She encourages her audience to read and evaluate her own work and if they deem it in any way lacking, to repair to Plat's ground themselves and perform an evaluatory reading of his work that works to *their* own edification. At the same time, she reminds her readers that the garden they can visit is a preserve of art, not nature, and they are not to let in any "Swine," "dog," or "beast that doth / to ravin styll inclyne" (A8r). Readers who demonstrate both control and skill are more than welcome to enter Plat's plot, but those who are "greedy guts" and "come with spite to toote / And without skill, both Earb & Flower / pluck rashly by the roote" are barred entrance from the garden (A8r).

The narrator complicates the openness of Plat's text further in the conclusion to her address to the reader. Before leaving her audience to both Plat's and her own collection of moral epigrams, she grants them a final warning:

One word, and then adieu to thee,  
yf thou to *Plat* his plot  
Repayre take heede it is a *Maze*  
to warne thee I forgot. (A8v)

Her last word to her readers divulges no way to navigate through her text, but how to make one's way through *Plat's* text. In this short caveat is another system of multiple enclosures and openings. Plat's text is open to all readers, but is open especially to the narrator, for she has found her way into, out of, and through the maze and presents to her readers, via her own set of epigrams, the path she has mapped. Her readers can dare the maze, though they may need the map she has created to travel through what is no longer an open space, but one surrounded by walls and marked-out pathways that may or may not lead the traveler in the correct direction. Instead of attempting an individual understanding of Plat, the reader might find it simpler or more pleasing to use the narrator's interpretation of Plat's text, thereby allowing for a textual enclosure to match the spatial one of the labyrinth. Just as space has become limited in this analogy, so has meaning. The narrator's final words, her claim that she forgot to warn her reader, seem disingenuous. Why leave out such vital information? Surely, the maze of Plat's garden affected her own reading of such a complicated text, one that would merit more than a tacked-on warning about the complications it presents. By neglecting to inform her reader of the maze inside the garden and leaving her reader with no direction aside from a curt warning, Whitney's narrator leaves the impression that Plat's text is better left closed off

to most readers and that her own text is the only reliable guide or replacement for Plat. Not only can Whitney's narrator read Plat's text better than her own readers, but she can *write* Plat's text better than Plat himself. She takes full control of the text, from its writing to its reading to its interpretation, leaving no room for alternate versions.

In addition to functioning as a guide, a reader's map of sorts to Plat's *Flowers of Philosophy*, Whitney's text also fashions her text as a preventative agent against the dangers of contagion and corruption. The narrator draws a connection between physical and mental health early in the address to her reader when she seeks exercise to refresh her mind and, upon her return home from her unsuccessful venture outside, seeks the consolation of reading a book of moral philosophy. As a result, creative and active physical and mental pursuits are aligned and can, at times, substitute for each other. However, reading Plat's moral epigrams does not only soothe the distress the narrator might feel after her short walk outside, but also serves as a curative for the contagion she might have encountered while outside. Taken out of context, the conversation the narrator has with her friend could indicate a danger of only the physical sort--the air in the lane is unhealthy and the prospect of contagion is limited to the contraction of physical ailment. Read in the context of the extended metaphor of contagion used throughout the *Nosegay*, however, it seems likely that the threat to the narrator is from both physical and moral corruption. With the threat of contagion, corruption, and penetration comes the need for further enclosure, one that the speaker establishes herself and, through it, establishes her authority.

The first way in which the speaker uses the idea of a text as a viable defense against corruption is related to her creation of a map of Plat's text as discussed above.

This map that she presents to the readers will help them navigate their way through Plat's maze and will also navigate them through the maze of their day to day lives. The poems she offers to her reader ought to be employed as a real nosegay would--as a defense against the metaphoric "noysome smell and savours yll" (A6r) encountered as one moves through the complex labyrinth of temptation and other challenges to the moral life. The narrator, who ventures outdoors with no guide but who returns and is able to find her way through a maze of text, offers her readers a set of precepts that they can carry with them and can use to create a barrier between themselves and the noisome environment. The text, which Whitney's narrator presents to her audience as open to both interpretation and revision, also functions to close to the reader off from negative influences. If contagious elements cannot be contained (as is often the case, especially if those elements fall into the realm of ideas and influences, rather than physical, tangible elements, though even the causes of physical disease cannot always be moderated by containment policy), then the body or mind at risk of contagion should make an effort at self-containment and separation from the harmful elements.

Later in the *Nosegay* the narrator repeatedly uses the language of infection and contagion to talk about a variety of negative influences. Towards the end of the author's letter to her reader, she emphasizes how the *Nosegay* itself, the book of moral precepts that the narrator presents to her reader, can be used as a preventative against the contagion of harmful spiritual and moral influence. In one of the familiar epistles following the set of moral epigrams, the narrator prescribes an "order" for "two of her yonger Sisters servinge in London" (C7v). Because she cannot instruct her sisters in person, the letter has to close the distance between them and offer the younger sisters a

rule to follow so as to gain both "wealth" and "quietnesse of mynde" (C7v). One of the warnings she issues to her sisters is to "exile" all "wanton toys" out of their minds, lest they arouse cause for suspicion, for "too many live" that would them soon "infect" (C8r). Single women, even in a domestic space that provides them both employment and livelihood, are vulnerable to the infection carried by rumor. The thoughts and words of others, which can be held against them, pose the same uncontrollable threat to reputation and moral health that the narrator faces earlier in the *Nosegay*. Both the *Nosegay* proper and the "order" sent to the narrator's sisters function as texts that have the power to defend against the harm that one can incur when true, physical self-containment is not a possibility. These texts operate as preventatives against the moral corruption of the outside world when Whitney's readers, especially women, cannot avoid such negative influences.

Yet, the female body is the one that is most susceptible to the threat of moral and physical harm. What you do to your body (expose it to noxious smells, take it out for a rejuvenating walk) can affect your mind, and vice versa (reading "bad" things or reading good things "badly" can cause infection). But, it seems, the *female* body is implicated in different ways. For, it takes a *male friend* to suddenly come along and *tell* or, even, command, the narrator that it is dangerous outside and she needs to be inside. Women's bodies, once they move out of the private, domestic space, become bodies that are not only susceptible to penetration, but, like the open doors of their houses, invite intrusion (or at least subjection to others' authority). Once the narrator attempts to extend the boundaries of her personal, intellectual, and physical space into the outside world of the "Lane" she encounters immediate resistance; her retreat indoors, however, leads her to

the great, expansive intellectual spaces of her writing. This confinement has negative consequences, too; the narrator finds herself continually cut off from the rest of her family, not only her sisters, but also her brothers, the family members who could have offered her protection from the threats of the outside world.

In the section of the *Nosegay* titled *Certain Familier Epistles and friendly Letters by the Auctor with Replies*, the narrator's letter to her brother G.W. speaks to him of the physical separation between the two and emphasizes the notion of stasis and containment in the narrator's life. The brother, who has the opportunity to ride out from the "Cittie" to the "fertile feelds" puts not only physical, but also intellectual space between himself and the narrator (C6r). When he is away from her, G.W. leaves the narrator no means of getting in touch with him, for she tells him that she has no knowledge of "how to send" word to him nor any "where to harken of your health" (C6r). The isolation and uncertainty brought about by familial separation only increases in the next letter to another brother, B.W. Here the narrator reveals a continuing lack of knowledge of the whereabouts of her male siblings, relating to her brother how she often looks "to heare of your returne," and that "none can tell, if you be well, / nor where you doo sojurne" (C7r). The ability to create a physical mapping from a text or to access knowledge through textual sources that we see evidenced in the narrator's interaction with literary texts is not possible in personal communication, a place where exchange of knowledge is primary. In the letter to her brother G.W. the narrator presents to him the "simple token" of the "Nosegay" and along with the gift offers information about the circumstances in her own life (C7r). To her brother B.W., she makes the promise to "show" him more about the way both "lucke" and "happy chaunce" have been absent from her life thus far:

As you shall know, for I wyll show  
you more when we doo speake,  
Then will I wryt, or yet resypte,  
within this Paper weake. (C7r)

What the narrator is offering is an exchange of information, both via text and conversation, that depends on the active participation of each of her brothers. Her two male siblings will have no reason, according to these letters, to wonder where they can get in touch with their sister or how they can find out about her current circumstances. When she writes to her sister, the narrator does not voice any expectation that she will either get to visit her sisters or receive a visit or letter from them. Nor does she express concern that she does or will, in the future, lack knowledge of where her sisters live in the city. In the world created by Isabella Whitney's *Nosegay*, women remain tied to places and, due to this stasis, also remain points that can be plotted as if on a map. Like the "fixed foot" of Donne's twin, stiff compasses, the women in Whitney's writing are the ones around whom action and mobility take place.

Only when Whitney's narrator enters the literary world does she have the ability to *create* maps and not just exist on them as an unmovable point. The *Wyll and Testament*, a document that speaks to both possession of a city and a sense of self-possession, grants to the narrator the ability to move through and possess well-known parts of London and locate sites throughout the city for her audience. Yet, even a book like Plat's provides the narrator with the opportunity to expand her sense of place through literary exploration. The agency that Whitney's narrator demonstrates is that which allows her to reread, rewrite, and reinterpret texts in a way that serves as a guide for her own readers. Just as she takes possession of London through the writing of her will, she

also takes possession of Plat's plot and parcels out both city and garden according to what markers--both in London and in the texts that she reads--she deems most significant. The image of the literary garden and the creative potential it offers, including the grafting of material from Plat's text to the narrator's own collection of moral epigrams, demonstrates one way that a female narrator can transform physical, geographical containment into authorial freedom.

Whereas Whitney concludes the *Nosegay* with a broadening of the textual landscape to include the city of London, Amelia Lanyer closes off the *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* to narrow it down to a single space at a specific moment in time. Lanyer's poem offers a number of interesting contrasts with Whitney's, aside from the temporal and spatial limiting that goes on inside Cook-Ham. Where Whitney's narrator exists solely in the world of working class London, Lanyer's takes up the rural, pastoral setting; where the speaker in the *Nosegay*, despite the great city that surrounds her, lives in near isolation, both physical and textual, from both friends and family, the one in the "The Description of Cook-Ham" attempts to establish an isolated but vibrant community that encourages bonds between friends as well as between readers, writers, patrons and clients.<sup>4</sup> Finally, whereas the mapping that takes place between garden spaces and textual ones eventually leads to literary production for Whitney's narrator, it is the decay and ruin of the garden and the rendering of Cook-Ham as an ultimately unmappable, uninhabitable, and unproductive space that allows Lanyer's narrator to turn inspiration into creation. Though Lanyer's narrator hopes to find at Cook-Ham a self-contained and productive, utopian space, in reality, her time at Cook-Ham proves unproductive and

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<sup>4</sup> Jenkins, Kenny, and McClung address the importance of the country house poem as

even sterile. Only when she departs and it becomes relegated to memory can the narrator participate in acts of creative, literary production. Her departure from what previous critics have described as an idealized, feminist space is what enables her to author written works.

During the narrator's stay at Cook-Ham, both the landscape and the narrator remain trapped at the verge of productivity. Only when Cook-Ham experiences a kind of post-lapsarian decay and when its gardens fall into ruin can the narrator fashion inspiration into creation. The self-contained space is an idealized one, isolated from the public that these women choose for themselves, not one in which they are confined by cultural and societal pressures. Thus, the space that Lanyer's narrator envisions through memory and elegy is never really self-contained, and the female textual community that she longs for never materializes in full. What the poem ends up with is an artificial world that cannot sustain itself, an 'art-ful' landscape that renders itself unproductive and, in the process, implicates the art of poetic creation. Only after the garden at Cook-Ham experiences its own loss and decay after the dissolution of the female community resident at the house is the narrator able to write. The piece is predicated on a sense of simultaneous absence and loss so that the longing that characterizes the poem makes the place it depicts a true utopia, a 'no place.' Like Whitney's, Lanyer's narrator attempts to create a literary and textual map of the space which she inhabits; yet, in this poem, despite being hyper-focused on space and location, the narrator is unable to successfully map the locale depicted, and instead finds that it continually evades her. The containment that Whitney's narrator is subject to and the containment she reproduces both in her

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genre and Lanyer's place as a writer in that genre.

personal life and in her writing offer a useful contrast to the situation in which Lanyer's narrator finds herself. Whereas in Whitney's poem various social, economic, physical/health, and textual forces shape the narrator's experiences and, in some ways, limit them to a static space that can only be opened up through writing, in Lanyer's poem, the narrator herself yearns for the enclosure of a self-fashioned, unchanging, static, idealized place. However, the longing for isolation and self-containment within a community of textually active women occurs alongside the constant sense of absence and loss that characterizes "The Description of Cook-Ham." This community that the narrator longs to be part of is, like Cook-Ham itself, evanescent, constantly in the state of disappearing even when it is most alive and, as a result, is not something that can easily be mapped into any one place or text.

"The Description of Cook-Ham" appears to offer an image of containment that allows the female narrator a great deal of control over the confined space she occupies. In fact, the containment in Lanyer's poem is of self-containment: the narrator portrays a closed, rural retreat which women choose in order to participate in various forms of textual interaction despite socio-economic difference. The relationship between the literary patron and her client comes to mirror that of muse and poet and, Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, is praised for inspiring both the landscape at Cook-Ham and the narrator's creativity to thrive. Yet, despite the presence of the Countess as muse-figure, the flourishing that takes place at Cook-Ham in the natural and artistic realms never reaches fruition. Where critics such as Lewalski see a proto-feminist utopia flourishing in the sequestered lands at the Cook-Ham estate, I see a space that, in an attempt to make

itself invulnerable to outside and often masculine influences, has rendered itself sterile. Even in its idealized state, Cook-Ham is a "ruptured Eden" (Coiro).

When Amelia Lanyer ends her *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* with the country house poem "The Description of Cook-Ham," she, in a sense, brings the text to a close at the same place where it started. For it is at Cook-Ham that the narrator receives inspiration to write the "sacred Storie of the Soules delight" (6) and it is the Countess of Cumberland, the temporary "Mistris of that Place," whose "desires" also inspire this "worke of Grace" (11-12). The *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* itself springs from the time the narrator spent at Cook-Ham and her recollection of that time and place lead her to produce her reinterpretation of Christ's passion and the place of women in the Christian history of salvation. As a result, the working of inspiration here is multiple: just as the house itself and the company the narrator keeps there exert artistic influence on her, so does her *memory* of that time, the place, and the people. "The Description of Cook-Ham" functions as a memorial poem and marks both the loss of and desire for the contained landscape of Cook-Ham.

Yet, this sense of absence that inspires the narrator to produce her writing after she leaves Cook-Ham also permeates her memories of the time she spent at the estate. This intense desire and longing is coupled with an underlying sense that even when the narrator describes a thriving Cook-Ham, her memory is of a landscape that could not, in reality, exist as a thriving, productive, natural space. One of the first difficulties in seeing the space occupied by the narrator and her community at Cook-Ham as a utopian community dedicated to the pursuit of textual activity occurs in the first line of the poem. In fact, the first word, the "Farewell" that the narrator bids to Cook-Ham, notifies the

reader that the space about which the narrator writes is part of a past experience. The poem functions as an elegy, a memorial to both a place and a time that the author must now leave behind. Whereas country house poems like Ben Jonson's "To Penhurst" are structured on the "oppositions of nature and culture, inside and out, and negative and positive" Lanyer's is structured "largely on the opposition of past and present" (Jenkins 160). There is no sense of possible return or that this paradise can be at all regained; all the narrator is left with is a feeling of loss that pervades her recollection--and her writing --of her time at Cook-Ham.

However, it is not Cook-Ham itself that the narrator depicts in her recollection. The house appears for no more than a few lines in the poem, and the women spend no time inside the house at any point in the narration. Lanyer's narrator does not align herself, the Countess, or the Countess's daughter with the domestic space offered by a place of residence; instead, the women in this poem are associated with the world outside the house, yet still contained within its grounds. The space they occupy in the world of Cook-Ham is more like a garden than anything else, for it functions as both a public and private space and one that both produces and is a product of artistic creation. The pathetic fallacy governs the two versions of Cook-Ham that Lanyer's poem presents: the bountiful, spring-like Cook-Ham that flourishes under the Countess's presence and the decaying, winter-grey Cook-Ham that withers with her departure. Yet, to reduce these passages to the mere workings of one literary device neglects the complex set of associations drawn between artistic production, mapping, and inspiration. The arrival of the Countess at Cook-Ham inspires the beautification of a number of elements there. "Each part" the narrator tells us "did seeme some new delight to frame!" (17) and goes on

to describe how the grounds and features at Cook-Ham fashion themselves for the Countess's visit:

The House receiv'd all ornaments to grace it,  
And would indure no foulness to deface it.  
The Walkes put on their summer Liveries,  
And all things did hold like similies:  
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:  
The cristall Streames with silver spangles graced,  
While by the glorious Sunne they were embraced: (18-28)

The personification of the "Walkes" that "put on their summer Liveries" and the trees that embrace and turn "themselves to beauteous Canopies," along with the "cristall Streames" that spangle themselves as if with silver jewelry, point to a self-fashioning of the natural world into a work of art. Through their livery, Cook-Ham's walkways designate themselves as servants; like the narrator, their well-being comes to depend on the Countess. She provides for them and they flourish. They bear the mark of her favor, yet the summertime embellishments are something they *put on*, not something that nature by its own means could instantly produce regardless of the time of year. The "silver spangles" that grace the streams perform a similar function as added adornment that enhances the beauty already present, with the result that Cook-Ham's nature becomes more beautiful than the natural world. The landscape is not only a personified one, but also a performative one that acts out the effects of the Countess on the grounds of Cook-Ham. Bound up in the idea of performance is that of illusion and pretense; art has the potential for deception through its perversion of the natural order. When the Countess is present at Cook-Ham, nature becomes a better version of itself, and while the Countess

inspires this action, she does not initiate or enact it. Instead, she simply inspires the world around her to flourish into a garden of impeccable, unchangeable beauty. The art that gets produced around her is self-creative, and the role of the Countess is that of muse who can inspire and then sustain the work of art that results. Yet, the world produced through her inspiration is an artificial one in the sense that it could only exist in a work of art. The eternal spring that the narrator longs for at Cook-Ham and that she sees flourishing around the Countess is the work of a place frozen in time, an artifact that remains unchangeable, like a painting, a sculpture or, perhaps, even like a poem.

The eternal springtime garden, however, can only reproduce itself, over and over, since it never has the opportunity to reach fruition and yield a harvest and remains neither productive nor barren, but frozen in a space somewhere between those two. The dichotomy set up between the natural world and the self-enhanced "natural" world of Cook-Ham in the presence of the Countess calls to mind that between nature and art, though here there is less of a dichotomy and more of a collision. Art and nature are not set up as opposites, but the natural world partakes in the fabrication of art, so much so that the distinction between the two is lost.

This amalgamation of the self-producing and self-performing landscape informs the creative works that flourish within the garden at Cook-Ham. The only artistic expression, however, that receives mention in Lanyer's poem is literature, and while the Countess, her daughter, and the narrator are at Cook-Ham, literary activity is limited to reading, not the production of new texts or an active interpretation of previously written ones. Towards the end of the poem, the narrator describes how the three women would gather at "that faire tree" at the center of the garden (157), a place where "many a learned

Booke was read and skand" (161). The tree is also the site of the "chaste, yet loving" kiss that, at least according the narrator, is misplaced when the Countess, who had led the narrator there to "repeat the pleasure which had past," gives it to the tree and not the narrator herself (163, 165). Both textual and sexual activities are focused around the tree, which in turn functions as the center and focal point of the garden. Here the three woman of Cook-Ham come together to "read" and "skan" books, though aside from them being "learned Bookes" the narrator gives no indication as to what sort of texts the women read. Nor does she mention what, if any, acts of interpretation are meant by the verb "skan." If the process is akin to the ones we see taking place in Whitney's text--the reading and subsequent discarding of canonical texts, followed by the reading, mapping, and rewriting of Plat's text--Lanyer's narrator makes no mention of it. Even within the relatively private enclosure of Cook-Ham, women are not allowed or do not choose to participate in the more active pursuits of literary interpretation or production.

Earlier in "The Description of Cook-Ham" the reader is given an idea about one of the "learned Bookes" that the women have at hand. While never named so explicitly, the Bible is the only book mentioned in the poem, and the following passage offers the fullest description of reading or reading material offered by the narrator:

In these sweet woods how often did you walke,  
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;  
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,  
To meditate what you therein did see:  
With *Moyses* you did mount his holy Hill,  
To know his pleasure, and performe his Will.  
With lovely *David* did you often sing,  
His holy Hymnes to Heavens Eternall King.  
And in sweet musicke did your soule delight,  
To sound his prayses, morning, noone, and night.  
With blessed *Joseph* you did often feed

Your pined brethren, when they stood in need. (81-92)

The textual experience depicted by the narrator in the above passages is not a simple one, and the only textual activity we see the women participating in is a kind of Biblical exegesis that, in turn, works alongside the greater project of the *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum*, though here the reader does not get the image of a rewriting of Biblical history that the larger work propounds. Again, as in the later, more vague description of readerly activity at Cook-Ham, the image is not one of women reading in order to produce individual interpretations of the Biblical text. Instead, what we see happening here is a performative interpretation of the Bible, an acting out of specific passages. Literature becomes a lived experience, almost the opposite of the performative landscape, where life (or, the case of the landscape, the natural world) becomes art.

Yet, the passage remains problematic in that the specific scenes relived by the Countess are all from the Old Testament and all deal with patriarchal figures from that text. The reliving of events depicts the Countess accompanying Moses to receive the Ten Commandments, an image of the writing, reception, and distribution of God's law, then one of her accompanying David as he sings his hymns to God, another depiction of literary production in which the Countess has no part, and, finally, the Countess accompanying Joseph as he performs acts of mercy and charity. While the performances of these scenes by the women at Cook-Ham can function as acts of reinterpretation, the narrator offers no description of those performances. In addition, none of these situations demonstrates the desire to rewrite or reinterpret salvation history to either question women's absence or to reinforce their presence. Despite the Countess' "acting out" of these scenes, her participation is severely limited. Biblical exegesis does not become a

part of women's literary or lived experience in any significant manner in "The Description of Cook-Ham," and the Bible does not become a text that the readers within the poem choose to map out and thus claim new, intimate knowledge.

Like the landscape that can only reproduce itself over and over without growing or developing further, literary activity at Cook-Ham is limited to the reading, and possibly re-reading, of texts without any push towards active, interpretive readings of those texts. This limitation is furthered by the use of a single text--the Biblical Old Testament--and the stories of important, patriarchal figures within the text. Where the *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* offers women a voice in salvation history and depicts how their role is an active one, "The Description of Cook-Ham" only allows women a position of passive participation. Reading the Bible grants women the opportunity to relive the events related therein, but only as silent spectators who, in the case of the stories of Moses and David, are only granted the privilege of standing by and watching while masculine discursive traditions in law and literature are established. Thus, even though the women at Cook-Ham read the Bible without any mediation from either male readers or male-authored commentary, reading is not a transgressive act. Literary and religious tradition shape and guide their reading of the Bible. The push to reinvision the text does not take place during the Countess' residence at Cook-Ham, when the landscape has stabilized, temporally and spatially, into a state where nature is on the brink of production, but never progresses to a time of harvest.

Instead, with the departure of the Countess of Cumberland, Cook-Ham falls into decay and ruin. Only after the narrator leaves Cook-Ham and is no longer inside a static space that discourages creativity beyond a certain, fixed point is she able to produce the

work inspired by the Countess--both the praise poem that is "The Description of Cook-Ham" and the *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* itself. Memory, desire, and a longing for the lost place and company spur the narrator to write; the environment created at Cook-Ham, however, offers no encouragement to the narrator to produce writing while she is there. As a result, this self-contained space functions in a manner opposite to the one presented in the Whitney text. Lanyer's narrator does not envision a space that allows her to appropriate male-authored texts and to revise via a process that starts with re-reading. The literary activity depicted at Cook-ham leaves texts closed to the women in the poem. While their reading of the Bible may make that reading into a lived experience that pulls the Biblical past into the present, the experience remains one that the narrator and the other women at Cook-Ham do not choose to rewrite as a part of their own spiritual or literary history, nor do they offer other women alternate ways of reading such scenes from the Bible.

At the close of Whitney's *Nosegay* and Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* the female narrators bid farewell to places that have proved formative to their work as authors. The speaker in Whitney's "Wyll and Testament" leaves her city, bequeathing all the goods and riches found in her beloved London to that city itself. The journey she makes through the city is similar to the journeys she makes through smaller, more confined physical spaces and greater, more open literary spaces earlier in the *Nosegay*. In Lanyer's "The Description of Cook-Ham," the narrator must not only bid farewell to the rural retreat at Cook-Ham, but also recognize that her departure from and her memory of that space are what spurs her creativity. Whitney's narrator has confinement thrust upon her; Lanyer's chooses a confined space. Isolation from the public world inspires

Whitney's speaker and departure from a private one inspires Lanyer's, yet, active participation in the consumption and production of literary texts engenders authority for both. Without the ability to read, interpret, and write, both the urban world of Isabella Whitney's work and the rural one of Amelia Lanyer's would be rendered barren. Authority, then, is bound up in all the aspects of textual activity; to be a writing woman in these worlds is also to be a reading woman, a woman who consumes and produces texts in a manner that is not solely dependent on dominant discursive traditions.

## *Chapter Two*

*Performing Authority in Mary Sidney's The Tragedy of Antonie and*

*Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedy of Mariam*

The examination of the relationship between spatiality and authority in the first chapter deals with the ways in which female narrators establish both physical and textual spaces for themselves within discursive traditions that are primarily masculine. Whitney's narrator transforms the confines of her home into a space for literary production while simultaneously envisioning the texts with which she works as garden spaces whose levels of access she controls for other readers. Lanyer's narrator attempts to create a closed space within a garden in order to encourage productivity, yet the impossibility of complete self-enclosure prevents her ideal vision of creative community from coming to fruition. In the work of Whitney and Lanyer, both narrators present themselves as authors and as women who have taken it upon themselves to do the intellectual work of readers, writers, and interpreters of texts. This self-consciousness allows these two speakers to draw explicit connections between the physical and literary spaces they inhabit and to demonstrate what varying levels of authority they are able to generate from within those spaces.

In moving from the poetry of Whitney and Lanyer to the closet drama of Mary Sidney and Elizabeth Cary, the focus shifts from individual female narrative voices to multiple female characters who act out the different kinds of agency available to them. Sidney's *The Tragedy of Antonie* and Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* present a number of female characters whose lives are shaped by their relationships with the central structures

of governmental authority in their homelands. Sidney's Cleopatra functions not only as the sole ruler of Egypt, but also as a symbol of Egypt and her metonymic relationship with her land leads her to negotiate both the boundaries between public and private spaces and the ones between the encroaching Roman Empire and the captive city of Alexandria as represented by her dealings with Antonius and Octavius. The women in Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, including Mariam, the wife of Herod, and a variety of additional female characters like Herod's sister, his former wife, and Mariam's own mother, also attempt to define what qualifies as 'public' and 'private' spaces in their lives. Their relationship to male authority figures, especially Herod, both allows them to fashion spaces that are private or secret for themselves and exposes them to the public eye without their consent. For women like Cleopatra and Mariam, figures who exist in realms almost completely open to scrutiny, concepts of privacy and publicity are constructed around them as well as by them. This chapter argues that the closet drama, a genre that depends upon the interplay between public and private, stages the difficulties that female characters encounter in their own trials to define public and private realms for themselves. In both Sidney's *Antonie* and Cary's *Mariam* the primary female characters construct "closets" for themselves: private, self-contained enclosures that permit them to speak and act freely and to opt out of the dominant narratives of female silence, chastity, and obedience. Yet, just as the closet drama is not an isolated genre, but part of and influenced by broader dramatic tradition in early modern England, the closets constructed by these women are not isolated spaces, but ones that are influenced by and partake in the narratives of space, power, and gender within the world of these plays.

The closet drama, the genre to which both Sidney's and Cary's plays belong, has come to represent one of the ways women writers in the early modern period fashion for themselves an entrance into literary discourse. Traditionally seen as a form of private drama, the "closet drama" exists within multiple layers of inextricably linked physical and literary enclosure. The name builds on a domestic metaphor; closets are private rooms within the early modern house, set apart from public spaces where guests might be welcome or business might be attended to. The plays are written to be read aloud, not performed upon the stage, and that dramatic reading is to take place within the confines of a private, oftentimes domestic or household setting. The Sidneian closet drama, in addition, is linked to the coterie of writers associated with Sir Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney. As a result, the sense of a specific audience with tastes, opinions, experiences, and education in religious, political, and literary matters creates another level of exclusivity that becomes associated with the closet drama as an elite literary genre that does not share the public, performative aspects of stage drama.

In *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550-1700* Marta Straznicky offers an alternate reading of the genre that allows for multiple intersections with what has come to be viewed as public theatre. Straznicky points out that the idea of privacy, in relation to the private reading and performance of the closet drama, is "a set of social and cultural preferences that both registers and subordinates the spatial dimension (indoors, closed, restricted) upon which it rests" and that it is "in its selective identification of privacy with a specific conception of space that early modern theatrical discourse resists the polarization of playreading and public playgoing" (7). Both the space of the closet and the theatre are informed by multiple conceptions of public and private.

While the space of the closet is often viewed as one for women's private meditation and prayer, that privacy is constructed by social discourses of gender and surveillance. The stage, often viewed as a communal, public space, exists in a number of permutations-- public theatre, private theatre, players sponsored by patrons, performances in private houses--that also complicate notions of public and private. As a result, no performance space is either completely public or private.

The complex interaction between public and private that informs the production of the closet drama as outlined by Straznicky in her book also provides an insight into the way we can read public and private spaces within the plays themselves. Just as the space of the closet is complicated by notions of both physical and discursive privacy, so too are the spaces occupied by the female characters in the plays written by Mary Sidney and Elizabeth Cary. Both *The Tragedie of Antonie* and *The Tragedy of Mariam* present women who, although they function outside traditional domestic spaces and are not relegated to their "closets" or any other similarly enclosed space, are still subject to public, oftentimes masculine, definitions of appropriate public and private behavior. The composition and the performance of closet drama blur the lines between open and enclosed spaces. Similarly, the spaces that the characters in these plays occupy interrogate notions of public and private. The same spaces that the women in these plays fashion for themselves as isolated, private spaces turn out to be ones that are exposed to the public and that, in turn, expose the needs, desires, and wishes of these women. Even when the women are not physically present in the public realm, the narratives told about them become part of the public discourse so that even when they succeed in escaping the scrutiny of the public sphere, they are not forgotten.

Mary Sidney's *The Tragedie of Antonie* (1592), an English translation of the *Marc-Antoine* (1578) by French playwright Robert Garnier offers a version of Cleopatra whose main concern is preservation of her reputation and virtue, both of which she defines in the context of her relationship with Antonius. Much of the difficulty inherent in her desire to be known as a virtuous "wife" to Antonius stems from the tension between the boundaries between the private space she wants to construct for herself and Antonius within a funeral monument and the public spaces which are constructed around and by her throughout the play. Though *The Tragedie of Antonie* is not an original text both in the sense that it deals with historical events, and that it is a translation of a near contemporary work,<sup>5</sup> it is Sidney's work that remains integral to the study of the early modern closet drama. Sidney is, as Victor Skretkowicz points out, "not just a translator from one language into another, but also from one textured style into another." It is "not single translation that she engages in, but a mental process that requires translation with a double focus" (19). More generally, the idea of a double focused translation incorporates the processes of both the act of translation from French to English and the interpretive acts inherent in bringing a literary work into the English language.<sup>6</sup> Sidney's work brings to her English speaking audience a retelling of the Cleopatra myth with Cleopatra herself as the focal point, and it is around her that the events of the story take place; Cleopatra herself becomes both the narrative and physical center of the story.

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<sup>5</sup> The literary tradition that deals with the events surrounding the story of Cleopatra can be traced back as far as Horace *Odes* 1.37, the Cleopatra Ode.

<sup>6</sup> For analyses of *The Tragedie of Antonie* that deal explicitly with issues of translation, see Beauchamp, Clarke (1997), Cotton, and Hillman, in addition to Skretkowicz. For discussion of Mary Sidney as influential literary figure, see Hannay's biography, *Philip's Phoenix*, Lamb's *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, and Waller's *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke: A Critical Study of Her Writings and Literary Milieu*.

The argument of Sidney's *The Tragedie of Antonie* opens not with an account about the two lovers who form the central conflict of the story, but with one about the state of the Roman empire:

After the overthrow of Brutus and Cassius, the liberty of Rome now being utterly oppressed, and the empire settled in the hands of Octavius Caesar and Marcus Antonius (who for knitting a straighter bond of amity between them had taken to wife Octavia, the sister of Caesar), Antonius undertook a journey against the Parthians, with intent to regain on them the honour won by them from the Romans at the discomfiture and slaughter of Crassus.

The statement locates the audience in both the physical and temporal landscape of the early Roman Empire. The opening to the play situates us not only in a specific historical moment--the transition between the Roman Republic and Roman imperial state under the Julio-Claudian rule--but it also within the sprawling, continually expanding geographic space of that empire. With the "overthrow of Brutus and Cassius" and the "liberty of Rome" having been "utterly oppressed," power becomes concentrated in the hands of few people and consolidated through the male homosocial relationships established via the marriage of Octavius' sister to Antonius. The wider world that the *Antonie* establishes is one where only a few men may hold power at any given time and where marriage alliances cement political ones.

These same alliances also grant participants the ability to travel throughout the empire, as shown by Antonius' journey from Rome to the land of the Parthians. En route to his destination, he arrives in Syria, where the play's argument reveals he "places renewed in his remembrance the long intermitted love of Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, who before time had both in Cilicia and at Alexandria entertained him with all the exquisite delights and sumptuous pleasures which a great prince and a sumptuous lover could to

the uttermost desire." Thence, he travels back to both Cleopatra and the city of Alexandria, encounters and loses to Octavius at Actium, who pursues the fleeing Antonius and Cleopatra back to Alexandria where he besieges them. Thus, the argument does more than set up readerly expectations regarding the setting--spatial, temporal, and historical--of the play and give a summary of the action both before and during the events of the play. It also creates a map of the world within which the play takes place, marking out significant places, the people associated with those places, and the structures of authority that function in different places cited throughout the argument and that will continue to function throughout the play itself. The argument maps Antonius' journey, who exists first as a proponent of and later an enemy of the Roman empire and who, up until the besieging of Alexandria, is presented as an agent of his own travel.

Later, however, throughout the play Antonius will attempt to blame Cleopatra for his stop in Egypt, will call her a sorceress and will claim that she drew him to Alexandria and left him no other choice but to come to her. Even when Lucilius reminds him that he has the option of exile instead of death and that he could choose to lead a private life, "reading philosophy / In learned Greece, Spain, Asia" or any other land (III. 164-1666), Antonius does not recognize that he might be able to leave Egypt, rather than stay and either be subject to death or Caesar's triumph. He dismisses the idea of exile on the basis that Octavius will never trust him if he lives, but the dismissal is quick and Antonius seems set in denying that he might have the opportunity not to remain a captive in Alexandria. He feels his relationship with Octavius, which had been strengthened through his marriage to Octavia, cannot be sustained once he has renegotiated both his marriage and his political alliances. Yet, because he is male and because he is Roman--two

qualities that come to be associated with imperial power in the play--Antonius has the ability to structure his own travel, even when he refuses to accept the responsibility associated with that power.

Cleopatra, however, comes to be associated with static places, cities like Cilicia and Alexandria, which are locatable points on both geographic maps and on the map that Antonius holds in his mind. Unlike that of Rome, the power of Alexandria is held within the borders of Egypt, an enclosure that Octavius reinforces with his siege of Alexandria. In addition, because the power of both Cleopatra and Egypt is contained within a single space, that power is characterized as one that draws other entities towards and into it. The Roman Empire expands and in that process of expansion takes in other nations like that of the Parthians and of the Egyptians. Egypt's, and more specifically, Cleopatra's power is to draw men like Antonius to her and to keep them from performing the duty of empire. If Octavius' siege of Alexandria represents the desire of masculine empire to surround and conquer other cultures, then Cleopatra's ability to draw Antonius to Alexandria through the power of recollection and then to the funeral monument through her physical and emotional strength represents an emasculating, devouring force that weakens empire.

When the argument does picture Cleopatra as mobile, her retreat from the battle at Actium takes center stage, followed by Antonius' retreat and the besieging of Alexandria by Octavius. In a move that mirrors the enclosure of her city by the Roman forces, Cleopatra encloses herself up in her monument and sets in motion the events that lead to both her own and Antonius' death and entombment in that same monument. The trajectory of the argument starts at Rome and opens up the vast space of empire as Antonius travels from the city into Syria and Alexandria. When he pauses and remains at

Cleopatra's court, we are reminded that the success of empire depends on alliances between men--governmental, marital, and martial. That success ends here, in a closed off tomb inside a besieged city. This space, ostensibly a private, self-contained, female space, is the last in a series of fixed locations allowed to Cleopatra. Like the "fix'd foot" of Donne's "Valediction Forbidding Mourning," Cleopatra is the stationary spot around which Antonius travels, and, like that fix'd foot, she does not have the power to draw maps, but to be mapped. Her use of space, then, even as queen of Egypt, is unlike that of Antonius or Octavius, who have at their disposal the resources of a dominant, masculine, imperial regime. She is both female and captive, and, like Antonius, who will deny himself the opportunity of exile (see III. 159-172), Cleopatra refuses to restructure her relationship with Octavius and chooses exile over death or captivity.

There is, however, another opportunity open to Cleopatra, one that she herself recognizes though she no longer fully endorses it, though her secretary, Diomedes, does. Her physical beauty, which Cleopatra acknowledges as the cause of her "wretched case," of Octavius' conquest, and of Antonius' yielding to Octavius (II.194-210), Diomedes sees both dangerous, formidable, and useful. His blazon of her beauty, which is both idealized and European, enumerates the captivating power of her alabaster skin, coral lips, "beamy eyes," the "fine and flaming gold" of her hair, and her "brave straight stature" and concludes with Diomedes proclaiming that all "her winning parts / Are nothing else but fires, fetters, darts" (II. 477-481). He allots some praise to the power of her speech and "forcing voice" (II. 484), yet it is her beauty, the very sight of Cleopatra, that ravishes men (II. 476). In the public display of her charms, her beauty and her grace Diomedes sees

Cleopatra's power and in her refusal to wield that power, her also sees her denial to help Egypt:

Alas! It's our ill hap, for if her tears  
She would convert into her loving charms,  
To make a conquest of the conqueror  
(As well she might, would she her force employ),  
She should us safety from these ills procure,  
Her crown to her, and to her race assure.  
Unhappy he, in whom self-succour lies,  
Yet self-forsaken wanting succour dies. (II.499-506)

Cleopatra's tears at the loss of Antonius' love and the marring of her physical beauty from her sorrow are more than just a public demonstration of grief to Diomedes. Her decision to turn her back on both Egypt and on her children, who would ensure the continued, safe succession to the throne, and to isolate herself in what she wishes to be a private, romantic relationship with Antonius cannot help but be a move that has drastic public and political ramifications. "Love," Philostratus claims at the start of the second act, "Hath lost this realm" (II. 43-44). The initiation and resumption of the love between Cleopatra and Antonius has brought destruction to Egypt and made it subject to the Roman empire via the conquering of the two lovers at the battle of Actium. Yet, the same destructive force that drew Antonius to Cleopatra and that is characterized by anti-feminist discourse throughout the play could also be used to save Egypt. Should Cleopatra choose to do so, the public presentation of her beauty to Octavius could conquer him just as effectively as he has conquered Cleopatra through military prowess. Much of Cleopatra's strength results from her position not simply as queen of Egypt, but as a metonym for the land and people. She is representative of them and her public image is the one around which their livelihood is built. Her beauty, put on display for both the Egyptian people and their

enemies to see, could bring about a renewal of Egypt's power in the theatre of imperial war. Her withdrawal from the battlefield is seen as self-destructive on two levels: her retreat from Actium forces her into a position of either captivity or death and forces Egypt, another aspect of her self, into a similar position as the land becomes subject to Rome and Alexandria is held in siege by Octavius.

As a result, the awe inspiring power of physical beauty, though limited to Cleopatra's person, is seen as a possible instrument for public welfare. To uphold her position as public spectacle, not one reserved for Antonius in the confines of a romantic relationship, would be to uphold the authority of Egypt itself. Her private desire for Antonius, to make herself an ideal wife and, in that process, to remove herself from the public eye and to surrender her duties as mother, are all acts that take place in the public sphere and that become the subjects of public discourse. The multiple roles she plays, that of queen, wife, mistress, and mother complicate her identity and "[a]ll these ideological and discursive categories involve varying degrees of submission to conventional definitions of women's nature and women's place" (Raber 65). Karen Raber also rightly points out that these various roles offer opportunities for female control and agency; however, the inability to disentangle the private from the public self complicate those opportunities. The withdrawal into the funeral monument, then, is a political as well as personal move and Cleopatra's attempt to create a domestic space can only take place under the scrutiny of the public eye. Thus, she is tied not only to specific geographic entities--Egypt, the Nile, Alexandria--but also to the public sphere, where her authority is grounded in performing a role outside one typically allotted to women in the early modern period. Kathy Acheson sees Cleopatra's removal of herself from the public arena

as a refusal to perform: "by her desire to 'outrage' her face' and thereby mar her beauty, by her evasion of Caesar's triumph, and by her suicide" she finds an escape from the "snares of the gaze" of those around her (1). For Acheson, Cleopatra is denied the "performative notions of gender and identity" that are available to male characters in stage drama. The refusal to perform, however, can also be read as a refusal to play a specific, assigned, "female" role that demands her to surrender all of her self to the public eye and to deny agency over the power inherent in her body. She does not wish "to become part of the spectacular 'triumph' that Caesar will stage upon returning to Rome" (Ferguson 487) and avoids playing the part Caesar assigns to her by withholding herself from his stage of victory.

For Cleopatra, the trifecta of feminine virtue--silence, chastity, and obedience--is not available. As sole ruler of Egypt, silence is not an option, and, indeed, her skill in languages and public speaking is one we have already seen Diomedes praise. Chastity, of both mind and body, a quality closely linked to concepts of silence and privacy, also seems to be an unobtainable attribute for Cleopatra. Despite the claim of Sidney creating a "sexually purified Cleopatra" in the *Antonie* (Krontiris), the desire Cleopatra herself has for chastity within marriage is not possible. Her sexuality is a public, if not promiscuous, kind and whether she uses it for the benefit or detriment of her country is constant matter for public discourse. As for obedience, even within the marriage structure that Cleopatra creates for herself and Antonius at the end of the play, she does not subject herself to Antonius as she simultaneously refuses to remain subject to Octavius and the empire he represents. If to be obedient is to be silent and chaste, and if silence and chastity are characteristics defined by a discursive tradition that refuses women the opportunity to

lead both a virtuous and a public life, then Cleopatra, no matter how "sexually purified" she might be deemed, will never fit into the paradigm of female virtue.

One of the effects of resisting that paradigm of female virtue is the almost complete lack of a private persona for Cleopatra. Her life is lived wholly in the public eye and even refusing to be made Octavius' trophy only prevents her from becoming a spectacle for the people in the city of Rome. She is ever a spectacle for her own people in their city, a position that is further complicated by her presence upon the stage. Cleopatra's private emotions are laid bare to the audience in ways that they would not be if her story were told in another genre. The performance of her desire for privacy complicates this problem; her desires are public, whether she wishes them to be or not. Her desire for enclosure within the monument does not just represent a longing to be alone with Antonius. It also represents a longing to construct a private space in the midst of the public life she leads and wants to end. It is, of course, worthy to note that Cleopatra does not choose a crypt or simple burial structure to mark her own and Antonius' deaths, but a *monumentum*, a structure specifically built to preserve the memory of those who have died (Lewis & Short, *A Latin Dictionary*). The building itself signifies people and events that will be held in public memory and will stand as a physical reminder of who Antonius and Cleopatra were and how they ended their lives. Just as the cities of Cilicia and Alexandria functioned both as geographic entities and memory markers for Antonius, so too will the monument continue to function as both a landmark and a physical reminder that will keep the memory of Cleopatra and Antonius present in public consciousness. Cleopatra incorporates her desire for a private space into the construction of a public monument and, simultaneously, reconstructs herself and the memory that will

continue after her death as public entities. The monument, as long as it stands, will never not be visible, and Cleopatra takes measures to ensure that the fame of the monument will come from the retelling of her and Antonius' lives and deaths.

Although Cleopatra claims that "[n]or praise nor glory in my cares are set" when Eras, one of her maids, questions her "[w]hat praise shall you of after-ages get?" in return for her death, reputation does, in part, drive her desire to close both herself and Antonius up in the funeral monument (II. 403-4). While she may not claim to seek glory or praise, she is acutely aware of and tries to avoid what she predicts might be the reaction to her surviving after Antonius' death to raise her children "in Caesar's grace":

The after-livers justly might report  
That I him only for his empire loved  
And high estate, and that in hard estate  
I for another did him lewdly leave; (II. 381-390)

That she calls posterity's putative reaction to her putative actions "just" indicates Cleopatra's agreement with the judgment that might be called upon her head should she let Antonius' death be memorialized in such a manner. Her fear of what future generations might say or think reflects a fear of misinterpretation, a fear that her actions would speak of a love that found its source in desire for power and material possession and that would wander to another when the trappings of "empire" and "high estate" shifted from Antonius to Octavius. These fears also highlight a commitment to maintaining a public persona past her death. Her fears are not entirely ungrounded, for they reflect the anti-feminist rhetoric that informs Antonius' speech in the first act of the play. His perception of her inconstancy demonstrates, on his part, an inability to read her actions outside of a harmful discourse about women and to understand the duty and virtue

she sees inherent in their relationship. He deems her unfaithful and blames her beauty for his downfall, when, in truth, she makes her devotion to him known widely enough that members of her court can speak freely to her of it. In wanting to enclose both herself and Antonius in a "darksome grave" (II. 360), Cleopatra also expresses a desire to control how posterity will read and remember her, especially in the context of the love she had for Antonius, though the love she had for Egypt and her people is not one she worries will suffer posthumous misinterpretation. For Cleopatra, the building in which she plans on enclosing herself and Antonius will stand as a monument to her personal duty to Antonius, which she believes to be founded on virtue.

Cleopatra's reaction to her maids, who wish to take part in her death and not send her to the underworld alone, also reflects her desire to leave behind a public memory over which she believes she has some degree of control. Indeed, Cleopatra's sense of responsibility and her need to take on all accountability for Antonius' downfall are almost great enough to deny him agency. The impulse is strong enough that she will not even share the blame with those who wish to die with her and, instead, instructs them to memorialize her death in a specific manner. Cleopatra directs Charmion and Eras to live and to continue to honor both Antonius and Cleopatra:

Meanwhile, dear sisters, live; and while you live,  
Do often honour to our loved tombs,  
Strew them with flowers, and sometimes happily  
Thy tender thought of Antonie your lord  
And me poor soul to tears shall you invite,  
And our true loves your doleful voice commend. (II. 417-422)

Cleopatra's request for her women to "[d]o often honour to our loved tombs," including the strewing of flowers and the shedding of tears, indicates her desire for public

demonstrations of grief that will continue to mark her own and Antonius' deaths long after they are gone. Like the monument, the flowers, tears, and doleful voices of her maids will function as public reminders, both visible and audible, of their "true loves." Again, note how Cleopatra wants to be remembered by posterity: not for her military or other prowess that enabled Egypt to become a great nation, but for her faithfulness to Antonius. For as long as they live, those who witnessed the love and death of Antonius and Cleopatra can keep on bearing witness to the people of Egypt and to all others who come to Alexandria.

When Cleopatra requests that her maids practice rites of mourning after she and Antonius have died, she sets in motion a public rehearsal of grief and a performance that will become part of the collective memory of Egypt and that can be disseminated throughout the land. Unlike the monument, which can only exist in one fixed form and place, the story that the words and acts of Cleopatra's maids will tell can multiply and change with each retelling. These circumstances are ones that Cleopatra cannot control, and her reputation, which throughout her lifetime in the play is shaped by the way others read and mis-read her, could change drastically once she relinquishes all command over the ways in which reports of her life and death are made.

Cleopatra's withdrawal into the monument, like her refusal either to use the power of her beauty against Octavius or to yield to Octavius' desire to make her part of his triumphal procession into Rome, marks a decision to no longer appear as a public spectacle. The enclosure of her body is also a move to make that body a private one; yet, Cleopatra's desire for a perpetual memory of her death creates a tension between her public and private selves. Though tied to Alexandria and Egypt and unable to traverse

great distances, mapping them out as Antonius and Octavius do, Cleopatra does not find herself relegated to any private spaces within her kingdom. Instead, her body is viewed as public property, one that can and, perhaps in the opinion of those like Diomedes, should be the center of attention. The visible demonstration of beauty finds its power in her position as object of scopical desire. To be made captive by Octavius and brought to Rome as part of his war prize is to refuse to avoid both becoming subject to and spectacle for Rome, a process which would allow Octavius to shape the way in which the public perceives her. Similarly, to lock herself in the funeral monument is to remove herself from the scopical economy and to restrict her power over her subjects and enemies. Her wish to preserve a perpetual memory of her life and the moment of her death reinforces the ideas that she is a public figure and that even her private self, the one she attempts to enclose within the monument, is still available to the public. Just as she cannot close herself off from her country completely by placing herself in the monument, she cannot separate her private from her public self.

Despite the restrictions that the monument offers, allowing Cleopatra to block both visual and physical access to her body, it cannot prevent reports of Cleopatra's actions. Dircetus, the messenger who brings news of Antonius' death and of the other events that take place at the monument, asks "[w]hat good god" will reinforce his voice that "to rocks, and hills, and woods, / To waves of sea which dash upon the shore, / To earth, to heaven" as he brings his "woeful news" (IV. 194-197). His report is made not just for Octavius, but to all the world that they might know how Antonius came to his end within the monument. The performance of the death of Antonius is limited--neither the audience of the play itself nor any of the major characters within the play, aside from

Cleopatra, are allowed to witness his demise. That final moment is contained within the monument and is given as much privacy as is possible. Yet, the report of his death is something that Dircetus deems worthy of worldwide renown, and, as a result, becomes a public text that can be repeated, interpreted, and set alongside other reports, including the proclamations made by both Antonius and Cleopatra about their feelings for each other and the events that result from those feelings and lead up to their shared suicides.

In addition, Cleopatra, at an earlier point in the play sends a message to Antonius from the monument to counter his accusations of inconstancy:

But that she faultless was, she did invoke  
For witness heaven and air and earth and sea.  
Then sent him word: she was no more alive,  
But lay enclosed, dead within her tomb. (IV. 236-239)

Like Dircetus, Cleopatra calls on all the natural world, the "heaven air and earth and sea," to bear witness to her words so that the message she sends is not just for Antonius, but for all who would listen to it. The publication of her message, that she is already dead, is shown to be effective by the relay of that same message by Dircetus, who, as an attendant upon Antonius, has the opportunity to hear and then bring the report to others who were not present. This word of mouth publication is the same kind that can be envisioned taking place after the events of the play. Paired with the public demonstrations of grief that Cleopatra instructs her maids to perform, it will exist long after she has chosen to enclose her body within the funeral monument.

The desire for a private space comes into conflict with the urge to keep part of the self public, even from within the self-constructed and confined space. Yet, for Cleopatra, the "persona" that will remain public after her demise will be one she loses the ability to

control. Unlike the monument she erects for both herself and Antony, her reputation will be mutable. Her attempt to tie her fame and the story of her love for Antony to the monument is destined to prove futile. Cleopatra's position as monarch marks her as public property and even when tied to specific geographic spaces--Egypt, Alexandria, the funeral monument--she is circulated freely as part of a public discourse of power and nationalism. The enclosure of her body within the monument removes her physical presence and the power associated with it, especially her beauty, from circulation. However, her reputation will remain dependent on the stories that others tell about her, becoming part of public discourse and knowledge.

Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Fair Queen of Jewry* offers another view of how women function in relation to central power structures. In Sidney's *Antonie*, Cleopatra alone represents both the power and provenance of Egypt and around her structures of authority--public and private, literal and physical--are built. The women in Cary's play, on the other hand, have to create their own spaces for agency in relation to the central figure of authority, the king, Herod, and both his absence and presence help mark out what kind of spaces these women can designate for themselves. Along with Mariam, the queen of Judea, the women in Cary's play fill the roles of mother, daughter, sister, and lover, oftentimes taking on multiple roles at once, and their fashioning of those roles also helps them in marking out how space functions as public or private and in defining which of those spaces allows them the agency to act as they will.

In a text that does not clearly demarcate space and that does not offer either stage directions or explicit statements by the characters about place and location, the delineation of space is an almost purely discursive act. *Mariam*, like *Antonie*, takes place

during the early years of the Roman Empire, and Herod's relationship with Rome and with Octavius Caesar locates the play in the greater context of the workings of imperial power. Unlike in the *Antonie*, however, Rome is not a force that encroaches upon on the independence of Judea and the growth of the empire is not one that seeks to redefine the boundaries of this kingdom. Indeed, there is no larger force that organizes space in the play or gives a sense as to how Judea is mapped out. That there is a city for Herod to return to is made known by his declaration upon his return from Rome:

Hail happy city, happy in thy store,  
And happy that thy buildings such we see,  
More happy in the temple where we adore,  
But most of all that Mariam lives in thee. (IV. 1-4)

Herod's greeting to Palestine, its buildings and its temple, lays open the architecture of the city that has remained hidden earlier in the play. No explicit sense of a city populated with people and buildings, with homes and places of worship, and with spaces both private and public exists up until this moment. Yet, even here when Herod points out the architectural structures in the city, the most noteworthy aspect of that same city is that "Mariam lives in thee." Just as Cilicia and Alexandria become points plotted on the memory map in Antonius's mind because of their association with Cleopatra, so too does Palestine (though the city is never actually *named*) for Herod because of its association with Mariam. In addition, just as Cleopatra becomes tied to Alexandria, a place around which Antonius travels, so too does Mariam become tied to Palestine. Both these women operate as the fixed feet in their respective compasses. Herod's intimate linking of Mariam with the city produces a map that is intensely personal: the boundaries and fortune of the city are set by Mariam's presence. She is just as, if not more, important

than the stores, the buildings, and the temple found inside the city. The act of linking is also a discursive one, and Herod's proclamation is a speech act that names the city according to its most valuable assets. His calling out of the store, the buildings, and the temple uncovers features of the city that had not been apparent in the earlier acts of the play.

Yet, despite the lack of explicit description or naming of spaces in the rest of the play, the concept of personal and discursive mapping characterizes Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam*. The women whose lives are centered around the royal court in Palestine do not have the same opportunities for allocating space that a male ruler like Herod and a female one like Cleopatra have. They cannot authorize a map of their city by proclaiming which buildings are the most central ones; nor can they alter the map of the city by erecting great public buildings. They can, however, map spaces around themselves and attempt to locate themselves within spaces that allow them to wield authority and to fulfill a variety of desires. In this play we see women utilizing spaces both inside and outside the court to participate in political intrigue, to develop self-sanctioned love affairs, and to resolve the tension between personal desire and public duty.

A number of issues are at stake here. The early modern construction of female virtue--silence, chastity, and obedience--is one that locates women within the confines of the domestic space. As seen in the *Antonie*, such a construction is not as easily available to a woman whose life is lived almost completely in the public eye. Cleopatra has to continually reconstruct and rewrite a private space for herself that will allow her to enact the virtue that she claims for herself within her relationship with Antonius. In the *Tragedie of Mariam*, not only are there no domestic spaces, but there are no physically

demarcated spaces at all save the concept of "city" that Herod evokes and the separate, public space of Mariam's execution. The lack of physical representation and of actual, material spaces (e.g., rooms, closets, houses, buildings, etc.) in which women are expected to remain makes the reader aware that these spaces have always been both *physical* and *discursive* ones. The domestic spaces in a house, such as the closet, have no inherently feminine qualities. Yet, if dominant cultural narratives construct women as beings who ought to be "silent, chaste, and obedient" and that silence, chastity, and obedience are related to a closed body that must remain in a closed space, then those narratives imbue the inner spaces in the house with "feminine" qualities. Herod's proclamation at his entrance to the city gives labels to spaces within the city; his speech act has the power to *create* spaces. If the spaces that try to contain women in Cary's play are discursive spaces, and if the power exerted over women controls where, how, and to whom they speak, then one of the primary ways for women to circumvent that power is to create their own discursive spaces.

*The Tragedie of Mariam* opens with Mariam's oft-cited speech on her tendency to "with public voice run on" (I.1). Danielle Clarke's reading of the play points to the importance of speech acts in the *Mariam* and how the play is incredibly concerned with speech crimes and with competition for control of meaning. Already, at the start of the play, we see how "*Mariam* reveals a clear preoccupation with the limits and authority of female speech" and how it begins to betray "a broader concern with the relationship between power and who is permitted to speak" (Clarke, (2006) 257). Mariam's first words reveal that she has not only spoken out of place, as it were, whilst speaking in public, but that she has spoken excessively. As her speech continues, we learn that the

label "public" is applied not only to the venue in which Mariam spoke, but also to the subject matter that characterized her speech. In the past, she had often censured Julius Caesar for his "deceit" in weeping for the death of his enemy, Pompey, though "when he lived, he thought his name too great" (I.2, 4). She takes back her censure of Caesar when finds herself mourning for Herod, though she had often wished her husband dead in the past. Both of these acts, her criticism of Caesar and her comparison of herself and Herod with Caesar and Pompey, draw Mariam's voice out further into the public realm, for with these acts she shows herself to be a participant in imperial political discourse. Her frame of reference is not reduced to any idea of domestic space, nor is it contained by her own city of Palestine or country of Judea, but extends to the machinations of the Roman empire and encompasses the same great political events that govern the action in Mary Sidney's *Tragedy of Antonie*. Though the privilege of travel within the empire, granted to men like Antonius and Herod, is not one available to Mariam, she does not function independent of the events that take place within that same empire. Indeed, her criticism of Caesar speaks to a confidence about and knowledge of the machinations of both imperial and human behavior.

Or, at least, it *spoke* to a certain degree of confidence, for by the time the play opens, Mariam has withdrawn from the public space in which she made her former statements of censure. The public voice and speaking space that she had fashioned for herself she closes off, and though her conflict with Herod will remain both personal and political, at no point during the action of the play will Mariam again "run on" with "public voice." The deaths of her grandfather and her brother, both members of Judea's ruling family, at the hands of Herod prevent Mariam from separating her personal,

private feelings for Herod from the public, political ramifications of his acts. In addition, her own position as a member of that same ruling family, the one through whom Herod legitimizes his own reign and from whom the line of descent occurs, prevents Mariam from withdrawing into a completely private space.

Mariam's withdrawal signals a retreat into a space that exists in both public and private realms and that undergoes a constant flow of inhabitants as new characters join ongoing conversations, which, in turn, yield both soliloquies and new multi-character conversations. The act begins, as already mentioned, with Mariam alone. She is joined by her mother Alexandra, and, later, Salome, who then remains on stage to deliver her own monologue before becoming involved in conversation with first Silleus and, after him, Constabarus. Act one comes to a close with Constabarus's soliloquy, followed by the first choral passage. The stage is never empty and at no point does a whole new set of characters replace the ones already on stage, giving the impression that the site is a static one and it is the inhabitants that change rather than the locale. Cary's play demonstrates what Alison Findlay calls an "abundant, creative playing arena" that "offers a fluid dynamic field with which spectators engage in the making of meanings." Findlay also sees this boundary transgression in early women's drama as activating a "flexible relationship between venues and setting, a process that raises skepticism about existing structures (physical and cultural, material and psychological)" (5). The fluidity and smooth transitions between different conversations and characters allow Cary's play to produce a "floating stage" (Findlay 31). The effect is that of a space public enough to allow constant movement into and out of it and private enough for characters to reveal personal anxieties and concerns.

Mariam signals her withdrawal from a public forum in which she gave voice to her opinions regarding the political events in Rome and into a semi-private space only once the occasion for those speech acts has passed. Her awareness that her outward appearance, as well as her words, can implicate her also affects how she perceives her current environment. Towards the end of her monologue, Mariam commands herself to collect her emotions and to school her appearance into calmness:

My passion now is far from being feigned.  
But, tears, fly back and hide you in your banks,  
You must not be to Alexandra seen;  
For if my moan be spied, but little thanks  
Shall Mariam have, from that incensed queen. (I.74-78)

While she claims her "passion" for Herod, a renewal of the love she felt upon their first meeting, is genuine and no longer "feigned," she participates in an act of feigning and makes an effort to disguise this resurgence of new, genuine love. She has not removed to a place so private that all her emotions can be writ upon her face, open to those who would not commend them, including her mother. Alexandra's arrival opens up the space Mariam occupies and reminds both the audience and Mariam that even when she does not "with public voice run on," her "tears" and her "moan" have the power to publicize her emotions. Mariam worries not just about being "seen" but also about being "spied" upon and caught in some act for which she could be condemned. When she spoke of her dissatisfaction with Caesar's deceitful behavior, she did so in a space that invited full disclosure. Now, when she speaks of her own changeable attitude towards Herod, she does so from a place where surveillance is limited, but still expected.

The conversation between Alexandra and Mariam concludes with Alexandra's suggestion that they "retire" themselves in order to "resolve / How now to deal in this

reversed state" and to "revolve" the "great affairs" they have at hand (I.203-206). Before they can depart, however, Salome enters and immediately accuses them of "More plotting yet?" (I.207). Salome's entrance and her assumption of "plotting" work to expose the simultaneous open and enclosed nature of the space that all the characters fill throughout the first act of Cary's play. That Salome can enter as easily as Alexandra and Mariam, two women for whom she has little sympathy and with whom she has little reason to associate, indicates a space that is not governed by familial or political ties. Salome's suspicion and accusation of Mariam and Alexandra of "plotting" indicates awareness that this space they all occupy, in addition to the one Alexandra hopes to retire to, is conducive to such private activities.

Despite the near constant flow of characters through the static space of the first act of the play, we do not see messengers and servants appear as they will throughout other parts of the play. Exposition of major plot points--the rumored death of Herod, for example--is accomplished by the main characters. While the knowledge of Herod's death provides stimulus for the action and conversations that characterize the first act of *Mariam*, a direct report of the news itself is markedly absent from this act. To introduce a messenger or other bearer of news would be to open up the space of the first act to a wider public. That expansion of space would, in turn, introduce the possibility of rumor. If messages and messengers, people who are not part of the main characters' circle of confidants, can be introduced into this space, then information can be taken away from it and redistributed to those outside that same circle. Neither Mariam nor Alexandra wishes to be overheard, and Salome instantly assumes that their discussion is one they wish to keep private lest their plots become public knowledge. As a result, the space in which the

first act takes place is a guarded one and one whose relative privacy is both treasured and constantly under suspicion.

This same attentiveness to an outsider's observations of private conversation taking place within a semi-public space continues to characterize the play once Mariam and Alexandra leave the stage. Salome's famous soliloquy in support of women's right to initiate divorce proceedings is followed by an appointment with her lover, Silleus. Her meeting with Silleus is a prearranged one, as Salome reveals when she claims that "He said he would be here" (I. 323). As a married woman who should not be participating in secret meetings with other men (something remarked upon by Constabarus later), her arrangements to meet with her lover would have to be both clandestine and safe. Yet, the arranged meeting place is one that cannot guarantee the sort of protection that Salome would need to preserve her reputation. With her warning "But whist, methinks the wolf is in our talk!" (I. 369) she characterizes the conversation that she is having with Silleus as one that ought not remain open to surveillance. Thus, the privacy she wishes to achieve by meeting with Silleus in this space can only be temporary.

The transitory nature of the privacy established by Salome and Silleus is apparent when Constabarus, Salome's husband, is the next character to enter the dramatic space.

His first words upon arrival are ones that express disapproval of Salome:

Oh, Salome, how much you wrong your name,  
Your race, your country, and your husband most!  
A stranger's private conference is shame;  
I blush for you, that have your blushing lost.  
Oft have I found, and found you to my grief,  
Consorted with this base Arabian here; (I. 375-380)

Constabarus's condemnation of Salome's behavior finds its source in the same standard of the silent, chaste, obedient female to which early modern women were held. Here, it is not Salome's behavior in public that earns her this condemnation, however, but her behavior in private. Her meeting with Silleus takes place in a space that is isolated enough for Constabarus to call it a "A stranger's private conference," one in which a woman meets clandestinely with a man who is not her husband. Yet, again, as we have seen from the previous transactions that take place during the first act of the play, that same stage space is one where not only illicit love affairs are conducted, but also where mothers and daughters discuss the current familial and political situation and where female rivals can trade accusations and justifications. Nor is this the only place or instance where Constabarus has witnessed his wife's infidelity, for "Of" has he found Salome, to his "grief / Consorted" with Silleus. Thus, we are told all the places where Salome meets with Silleus are ones that cannot be depicted as private if, as Constabarus says, they are ones that are open to her husband's witness.

That Salome can move from an encounter with Mariam, to one with her lover, and finally to one with her husband in the same location marks that space as open in a number of ways, including the openness of space discussed above that allows for the constant flow and exchange of characters in the geographic and discursive space of the first act. This space also functions as one where personal concerns are revealed to be inherently political. Mariam's feelings about Herod--whether they are of affection or repulsion--have very public, political ramifications. For Mariam to rebel against Herod is not only to resist her husband, but also her king. Resistance to the monarch is a public crime, and it is Herod's interpretation of her acts as treasonous that will bring about her very public

demise.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Salome's relationship with Silleus can never be a completely private affair. Her husband's witness of their meetings emphasizes how implicated he is in Salome's behavior and how those implications will be played out in both personal and public forums. We do not see Salome meet with Silleus in a secret place; we see her meet with her lover in a place where they are easily discovered by her husband, a place where they could viably be discovered by any number of people involved in the court life of Judea. Constabarus's application of the label "private" to the conference between Salome and Silleus and the constant exchange of people and conversation in that same "secret" space complicate the notion of privacy in the *Tragedie of Mariam*. If secret meetings take place in public spaces, if private emotions and desires inform public behavior, and if public behavior does or does not faithfully reproduce a person's private, innermost desires and thoughts, then the boundary between public and private is constantly permeable and continually in a process of re/construction by the characters in this play.

The persistent awareness of surveillance, both of observing the behavior of others and of being the one whose behavior is being observed, functions alongside the desire for secrecy. Telling secrets, giving voice to one's own thoughts and sharing them with either the audience or other characters, is an act of publication. Behavior that ought to be marked as private, and words that ought to be unheard, when part of a performance enter the public realm. Mariam performs for the audience, but she also performs for the public. The world of the opening of the *Mariam* is one that has porous boundaries between the public and private realms; words spoken in either can become property of the other. Thus,

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<sup>7</sup> See also Danielle Clarke's discussion in "*The Tragedy of Mariam* and the Politics of Marriage" of marriage as the institution that orders all other relationships (e.g., father/son, master/servant, king/subject) in the play.

the tension that exists between public and private in the discursive spaces created by female speech in the first act of Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam* also speaks to a tension between inner and outer selves and the inability to establish strict boundaries between "be and seem."

It is this conjunction between "be and seem," the motto that Cary had inscribed in her daughter's wedding ring,<sup>8</sup> that so many readers address in their interpretation of Cary's play. The ambiguity of interpretation in the expression itself--is there an elision or a distinction between the acts of "being" and "seeming"--points toward an ambiguity between the two states of existence indicated by the ideas of "being" and "seeming." Mariam's first urge is to elide the states of being and seeming, as demonstrated in her recounting of her past acts of public speaking. She reveals her disapproval of Caesar's changeable attitude towards Pompey and of Herod's tyrannical means of gaining and holding onto authority. Only now, when she has moved out of that public forum into a (contestable) private space, does she begin to adopt guile. Throughout the play, however, she will continue to refuse to dissemble affection and approval of Herod once he returns home.

Salome, whose behavior throughout the play is marked by dissimulation and who has learned to use so-called "feminine guile" to advance her authority over and to influence Herod, in this first act seems to call for a kind of elision between being and seeming. In her soliloquy, she claims that the time for her to make use of pretense has passed:

'Tis long ago

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<sup>8</sup> Bennet, Miller (1997), Shell, Skura, and Zimmerman all offer readings of Cary's work in relation to her biography.

Since shame was written on my tainted brow,  
And certain 'tis, that shame is honour's foe.  
Had I upon my reputation stood,  
Had I affected an unspotted life,  
Joseph's veins had still been stuffed with blood  
And I to him had lived a sober wife.  
Then had I never cast an eye of love  
On Constabarus' now detested face;  
Then had I kept my thought without remove,  
And blushed at mention of the least disgrace.  
But shame is gone and honour wiped away.  
And Impudency on my forehead sits;  
And bids me work my will without delay,  
And for my will, I will employ my wits. (I. 282-296)

While Salome acknowledges that she does not at all adhere to the standard of the silent, chaste, and obedient woman and wife, she also reveals that she does not choose to pretend and play the part of such a woman. The shame and dishonor that her society places on her she wears proudly, and at no point has she either stood upon her reputation or "affected an unspotted life." The marks of shame are described as physical ones, metaphorically inscribed upon the body and identifiable to those who view Salome's body, either in public or in private, for the "writing" of shame on her "tainted brow" and the "wiping away" of honor function as a means of publication. Salome rejects the construction of femininity that would have her affect purity and erase any physical manifestation of her own desires, especially those linked to sexuality. Instead of expressing concern over being perceived as a spectacle of shame and dishonor, Salome chooses to act on the force of her own "will." Shame and dishonor grant Salome the freedom to act according to her will and let her desire guide her; being and seeming elide in her practice of disavowing affectation.

The misogynist rhetoric that Salome reappropriates is the same that condemns Mariam, however. If a woman appears disgraceful, then she must be disgraceful. If she appears chaste, then the odds are she is *still* disgraceful. The elision between being and seeming--where a woman *seems* chaste because she *is* chaste--that Mariam counts on eludes her. Neither Mariam nor Salome is either silent or obedient. Like Cleopatra, their position as members of a ruling family marks them, by default, as public. Their behavior within the parameters set by their lives in the public eye and their choices to speak out against oppressive institutions, motivated by either personal or communal concerns, simultaneously negate the qualities of silence and obedience that inform whether or not they are chaste women.

When Salome proclaims that she will be the "custom-breaker" and effect a change in the legal system that will allow women to initiate divorce proceedings, she reinforces the public and political nature of the space in which the first act takes place. The declaration of divorce, as well as of marriage, is a speech act that has personal as well as communal significance. Her "private" meetings with Silleus prompt her to want to make the public declaration of divorce, a declaration that has the potential to restructure the family unit.

The dramatic space shifts with the second act of Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* from the static space of act one that allowed the intersection of different speeches, both soliloquies and dialogues, to the constantly changing, dynamic space of the second act. Instead of a series of conversations that flow into each other as characters are exchanged within a single space, the second act features four separate, distinct meetings between characters in the play. Each meeting takes place in a different location, one that allows

the participants some degree of secrecy and prevents interaction among the groups of people who appear throughout the act. All four scenes that make up the second act feature resistance against the tyranny of Herod. Pheroras and Graphina meet in one private space to discuss their secret wedding, a plan that directly opposes the marriage arranged by Herod for his brother with an infant bride. In another place, Constabarus discusses with the sons of Babus how they, having been hidden away to evade Herod's order for their execution, might now return to public life. The third scene features Doris and Antipater, who plot to re-establish succession to the throne through Antipater by killing Mariam's children. The second act closes with the duel between Silleus and Constabarus over Salome, which Constabarus fights unwillingly and then proceeds to win. All four scenes are ones of resistance. The scenes that feature Constabarus, either with the sons of Babus or with Silleus, focus on constructions of male homosociality and how male "community" that finds its base in a concept of honor can offer resistance to a single, male tyrant. In the case of Silleus and Constabarus, both enmity and honor are constructed around a woman, though she has no place in the connections forged between men. The "good" relationships are either between men or feature a silent, ineffective female character (e.g., Pheroras and Graphina).

Both Act I and Act II delineate space via the kinds of speech, dialogic, and conversational modes that we see taking place in those acts. Act I shows a space that is neither fully public nor private and that provides a space for interaction between different groups of people and for individual expression and reflection. Act II shows a series of different spaces that are much more private than public, though actions and conversations that take place in those spaces directly affect the current political situation. These first

two acts feature "extrovert movements... dependent on the confinement of Herod within the sepulcher, and on spectators' imaginative powers to read beyond the household stage and perceive a political drama of State" (Findlay 34). The fluidity of the stage space remains constant throughout the earlier acts of the play, and the audience can perceive the openness and freedom of that space through the uninhibited movement of characters through it. The audience can imagine the drama playing out through Palestine itself, not in one single space, but throughout the undefined space of the city and kingdom.

The "introverted spaces" (35) that Raber sees the play moving toward in the fourth act of the play, I see happening already in the third when the news that Herod lives makes its way back to Palestine. Even the report of Herod's return begins the restructuring of space, especially for the female characters in the play. When Silleus' servant brings the news of the duel to Salome along with Silleus' wish to see her, she can only tell the servant to bring him her reply:

Comment my heart to be Silleus' charge;  
Tell him, my brother's sudden coming now  
Will give my foot no room to walk at large,  
But I will see him yet ere night I vow. (III. 115-118)

Herod's incipient arrival heralds a re-circumscription of space in the city for Salome.

When she thought her brother dead, she had the ability to go where she wanted, when she wanted, and she could construct the spaces she frequented as public or private ones to suit her needs. Now, with Herod about to return and reclaim his position as both monarch and head of the family, Salome will be forced to accept normative definitions of both public and private spaces.

Mariam also speaks in terms of more defined, enclosed spaces upon the announcement of Herod's return. Whereas Salome feels the need to monitor her associations more closely now that Herod will return, for his presence will restrict her movement more than her husband's presence, Mariam depends on a narrowing of space--the shelter that innocence provides her--for her survival. Although she now wishes Herod dead and refuses to affect care for him, she believes that she can fashion for herself a safe enclosure with her virtue, honor, and innocence as her defenses. Her power over Herod, she believes, is one that "could enchain him with a smile" and "lead him captive with a single word" (III. 163-164). The power that she could wield, should she choose to participate in acts of dissimulation, is also one of enclosure and captivity. Instead of exercising her influence over Herod, as Salome will do in the latter parts of the play, Mariam chooses to enact the power of enclosure over herself:

Oh what a shelter is mine innocence,  
to shield me from the pangs of inward grief,  
'Gainst all mishaps it is my fair defence,  
And to my sorrows yields a large relief. (III. 171-174)

Not only will Mariam use her own innocence and honor as defense against the accusations of treason and adultery, but she will also remove herself from Herod's bed. According to Mariam, these acts ought to be enough to keep her safe. Yet, with the return of Herod, the ability to restructure the world around herself and to create private and semi-private spaces disappears, and Mariam can no longer depend on the vision of her chaste, self-contained body.

Indeed, once Herod returns to the city, a whole process of unfolding the private into the public realm takes place. The concrete structures of the stores, buildings, and

temples named in the first few lines of the fourth act help map the city into a recognizable urban space and simultaneously force the disappearance of the private, secluded, and fluid spaces that characterized the earlier acts of the play. The court of Herod, the predominant setting for the last two acts of *Mariam*, reestablishes power in one central, male-dominated space around which all other events of the play's conclusion will take place. Mariam, who thinks she can still negotiate space on her own terms, realizes too late that the defenses she set up are not strong enough to resist a centralized patriarchal power and its definition of women based on perceived public behavior and physical appearance.

The return of Herod, as presented above, re-creates the dramatic space as an urban space and establishes more fixed boundaries between public and private. Herod's entrance into Judea removes the fluidity that had characterized the first three acts of the play and that had allowed the characters to create private spaces within public ones and vice versa. Once Herod returns, his throne room becomes the central location for nearly all the remaining scenes in the play and encompasses both the public *and* private realms. Herod's resumption of his role as ruler of Judea and his enactment of his own brand of justice from the throne room draw the other characters in the play out of their private, self-defined spaces. The plots and secrets developed during the first three acts become public knowledge through their revelation to Herod by those who stand to benefit from such disclosure. Thus, the marriage of Pheroras to Graphina and the alliance between Constabarus with the sons of Babus are revealed to and punished by Herod. Yet, despite the public functions of government that are enacted here and the effects of those acts that can reach the wider world outside this room, the throne room remains an

enclosed, elite space. Just as the people of Egypt have no visible, explicit role in the conflict that surrounds the drama of Antonie and Cleopatra, those of Judea take no part in the one that surrounds Herod and Mariam. Like Sidney's *Antonie*, the drama remains a domestic one that involves the whole royal household; the focus on ruling class figures constantly blurs the lines between public and private.

Thus, when Herod returns, the space in which the action of the play takes place gets dramatically restructured and defined; the city itself takes shape and Herod locates himself as the central authority of that space. When he was absent, space was fluid, private spaces could become public ones or any one space could serve as both public and private. Also, during Herod's absence, authority was dispersed among different members of his court enough so that the women of the court could use the opportunity of Herod being away to construct spaces of authority and agency for themselves, despite authority and agency being limited by an incredibly patriarchal, misogynist culture. The manner in which most characters behave in both public and private spaces, the meaning of which becomes redefined with Herod's return, changes after Herod reclaims his power, but the most marked effect is on Mariam and Salome. Both women take on increasingly public roles within the central action of the play and become increasingly opposed to each other. While Salome becomes more vocal, visible, and influential before Herod, Mariam becomes less and less so until she loses both voice and visibility within the play.

Mariam's diminishing presence within the play that bears her name stems not only from the return of Herod, but also from his fashioning of her into a public spectacle. The Mariam we see at the beginning of the play speaks of the public presence she constructed for herself based on the political opinions she voiced in public. Alongside her public

persona is a more private one that deals with the ramifications of both her own and Herod's behavior. When Herod returns, she is deprived of the ability to construct private and public spaces for herself and now must justify her behavior to Herod, not just to herself and her mother. More than verbal justification, however, Herod desires from Mariam visual proof of her affection for him. To see Mariam upon his return to their city is not enough; he must see the Mariam he desires, one whose chastity is rendered visible upon her physical form and who offers a lucid way to read her own desires and intentions via her appearance. Herod's construction of a synecdochic relationship between the city and Mariam in the opening lines to Act IV is the first step in redefining the play's space and the ways in which Mariam occupies that space.

Herod's opening speech to Act IV, after greeting the city, goes on to employ the language of wonder to describe Mariam and his longing for her. A visual economy is established where, despite having "surveyed" the streets of Rome and "seen the statue filled place," despite having "beheld" all the beauties of Rome and "seen" the games prepared by the Aediles, Herod has "seen no miracle like Mariam rare" (IV. 21-28). Her presence has the ability to "make the day more bright" and her "sight can make months, minutes, days of weeks" (IV. 11, 18). Herod even claims that "[a]n hour is then no sooner come than gone, / When in her face mine eye for wonders seeks!" (IV. 19-20). Mariam's worth resides in her appearance, and her appearance is more valuable than all the sights of Rome itself and more powerful than the workings of time. In her, Herod sees "wonders" and a "miracle," facets that place her above all other women and lend to her a supernatural beauty. Aside from placing Mariam at a level that could never be reconciled with any human behavior -- for her actions would always fall short of his expectations --

this construction of value relies solely on Herod's perception of her goodness as indicated by her outward appearance.

Such value quickly loses its currency when Herod begins to suspect that Mariam's inner virtue does not match her outer beauty. Though Mariam tells Herod, when he inquires about her "dusky habits," that she suits her "garment" to her "mind" and thus can find no "cheerful colors" (IV. 90-92), he still asks her to smile. The death of her brother and grandfather at the hand of Herod weighs heavy on Mariam's mind, however, and replies that she "cannot frame disguise" or teach "[her] face a look dissenting from [her] thought" (IV. 144-145). Mariam's reassurances and proclamations that the self she presents to the world is a mirror of the virtue and chastity that she holds inside her mean nothing to Herod once he discovers that Sohemus has betrayed him, ostensibly because of the love between Sohemus and Mariam. Herod is quick to believe the implication that Mariam is in love with Sohemus and that she has ordered Herod's death by poison in order to pursue her new love. Herod names Mariam a "painted devil" and a "white enchantress," calls her "foul" and exclaims that a "beauteous body hides a loathsome soul!" (IV. 174-177). Herod's reaction is instantaneous and irrational; he knows that Mariam will not prevaricate and will not fashion a fair appearance to disguise a sinful nature. Yet, Herod takes up the belief that Mariam has deceived him on the word of his butler and spends a good deal of the fourth act deciding whether or not he ought to condemn Mariam to death. Even with Salome's urging him to execute Mariam, he cannot decide whether she is unchaste and treasonous or if "[s]he is like Heaven, and must be heavenly true" (IV. 451). Herod's inability to see that Mariam's chastity, virtue, and honesty are written on her body is problematic; he can't envision a Mariam whose ideas

and values and opinions differ from his and who is still pure. As a result, he imagines her as a 'painted devil' and eventually condemns her to die. Like Antonie with Cleopatra, Herod cannot read Mariam and cannot see that the full disclosure he desires from her, the ability to know her inside and out, is one that she has already offered to him. When he realizes that her thoughts, intentions, and even words do not match the interpretation he has of her based on her appearance, Herod becomes susceptible to other interpretations. Mariam's rejection of his affection signals to Herod a disjunction between Mariam's appearance and intent. When the Butler appears with poison and a story that Mariam had sent it in order to kill Herod and enable her to take up with her lover, Sohemus, Herod accepts this story as truth. Though Mariam has given no reason to believe that she would be unfaithful, he interprets the Butler's story as one that tells the truth about Mariam. A woman who refuses her affection is one who would plot against him, who would commit both adultery and treason. When Salome appears in the fourth act to play the part of Herod's council, she coaxes his belief in Mariam as a 'painted devil' along until he finally yields and orders her execution. Yet, throughout the end of the fourth act, Herod becomes more and more irrational and less and less able to reconcile the competing interpretations of Mariam that exist in his mind. He remains preoccupied with the thought that she must either match his vision of purity and love or, if she falls short of that ideal in any way, her physical beauty must be a disguise for her rotten soul. Herod's attempt and accompanying inability to form a cohesive image or narrative of Mariam draws the space of the play closer in around the two of them. Not only is the fluidity of the earlier acts lost, but also the number of characters who appear on stage rapidly diminishes until Mariam herself is forced out of the dramatic space.

Mariam's offstage execution simultaneously erases her presence and turns her into a public spectacle. The moment when she is rendered invisible and silent to both the audience and to Herod is the same moment when her death is made a public event. The narrowing of space that began with Herod's return ends here, with Mariam outside the dramatic space, no longer able to voice her thoughts or present herself in a space she has deemed safe or acceptable, save through the words of a messenger. Her death becomes a story that is related back to Herod and over which she had no control. It also becomes the one cohesive narrative about Mariam on which Herod can settle. He takes a kind of vicarious, voyeuristic glee in hearing the Nuntio's report of Mariam's execution, interjecting praise of Mariam's goodness and beauty. The Nuntio's report of Mariam's death harkens back to the language of vision used by Herod in act four and emphasizes both what he saw and what Mariam looked like at the scene of execution. When Herod finally understands that Mariam has died, he also comes to realize that the Butler was the one who told him that Mariam meant to poison him and take his throne, "[w]hich tale did Mariam from herself divorce" (V. 111-114). He names Salome "accursed" and claims that if she had been "still" then Mariam would still be "breathing by my side" (V. 157-158). The story of Mariam's treachery disappears from Herod's narrative of her and is replaced with his original narrative of her peerless perfection. Only now, once Mariam has been removed from the semi-public space of Herod's throne room and her death has rendered her unable to challenge him, can he accept her as chaste and honest and good. Only when she is invisible and silent, when both her voice and her movement are restricted and she no longer has any autonomy does Mariam become for Herod a cohesive, if not dependable, narrative.

This narrative, like the one that Cleopatra attempts to create about her own death, is one that Mariam loses control over once she enacts her moment of death. Both Mariam and Cleopatra lead lives almost wholly in the public sphere due to their close affinity to the central structures of authority in their lands. This affinity grants them the ability to speak and act in public, but it also places women at the center of a scopic economy that determines female worth based on how they appear in public. When Cleopatra refuses to appear seductive in public to overcome Caesar, she rejects the value that has been placed on her power. Instead, she removes herself from the public space and attempts to construct a private room that will serve as both her marriage and death chamber with Antonius. Simultaneously, she constructs a narrative of their love and death that she hopes will outlive her, though this narrative will continually re-construct her as a public entity. Mariam, on the other hand, is forced into the public arena by Herod's condemnation of her to death. After having had the authority to construct a series of semi-private and private spaces for herself, she is thrust into the public arena of her execution. The play highlights the isolation that her death creates by placing it offstage and only depicting it via a verbal report by the Nuntio.

The generic constraints of the closet drama prevent both the *Tragedie of Antonie* and the *Tragedy of Mariam* from staging the moment of death for their heroines. The form of the plays themselves leaves no space for death to be performed, and the effect of such a constraint removes the two female protagonists from the stage at one of the most integral moments of their stories. Yet, their absence, while marked, is not sudden. Both the *Antonie* and the *Mariam* participate in a system of enclosure that isolates women from the authority over which they have a legitimate claim. In Sidney's play, the encroaching

forces of a masculinized empire, represented by Octavius's defeat of Antonie, surround both Egypt and Cleopatra, forcing her to yield or die. For Mariam, both the report of Herod's return and his arrival in the city have the power to force her into a space that is structured by a patriarchal society's expectations of female behavior. The pressure to conform and to behave in a way that is acceptable to the male characters is present throughout the plays and reaches its peak when the female protagonists are forced into roles that are both extremely isolated and extremely public. For, in the end, Cleopatra and Mariam have to cede all of their authority, including the authority to delineate the spaces they occupy, and they become the subjects of stories over which they have no control.

### Chapter Three

*Captive Queens and Secret Princesses: The Quest for Selfhood in the First Volume of  
Mary Wroth's The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*

Travel in the world of romance is a dangerous thing. Shipwreck, kidnapping, enchantment, pirate attacks, and a whole variety of near death experiences are just a few of the dangers that threaten travelers in the world of early modern romance. Women, unsurprisingly, seem to be especially susceptible to the threats of kidnapping and rape-- threats that take away their agency and ability to travel through the landscape of romance. In a romance like Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (perhaps the best known of the long prose romances written during the early modern period in England), women, like the pastoral landscape itself, are *static*. Their participation in travel tends to be against their wishes-- getting kidnapped and carried from one place to another isn't really the same as participating in the *male* travel narratives that can be part of romance.

The world of Mary Wroth's long prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, is no less dangerous. Yet, while Wroth retains the notion that travel can be incredibly dangerous, she places her *female characters* at the center of her romance and fashions that romance as a travel narrative. Though women experience many of the same dangers that we see them enduring in contemporary male-authored texts--for example, instances of kidnapping, the threat of rape, and the risk of captivity--they *also* experience the opportunities and perils usually only open to men. Wroth's female characters travel by

land and sea, undertake quests, search for lost loves and pursue new ones, rule countries, and raise families.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter discusses some of the questions of travel, narrative, and gender in Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the ways that a sense of female selfhood can develop alongside those questions. Female characters in the *Urania* develop a sense of who they are and the role they play in their world through their experiences in both narrative and geographic space. For the 'secret princesses' of the *Urania*, the narrative of self-hood unfolds along the trajectory of the quest narrative. Urania learns who she is and what role she plays in her world through her adventures, including the moments where she is held captive, enchanted, and forced to face her own mortality, in addition to the travels she undertakes. For the 'captive queens,' selfhood is mapped onto a sense of constancy--of physical and emotional stability--that ties those women to the land itself that they rule. Pamphilia is most true to herself and the expectations of rulership that are placed upon her when she is in the land of Pamphilia and ruling successfully. The narratives that Urania and Pamphilia tell and hear throughout the text, both about themselves and about the other captive queens and secret princesses, help them develop their sense of self.

With more than two hundred characters and significant number of them female, the *Urania* does not present a single, coherent narrative about the lives and experiences of women. Just as the numerous characters complicate the story of female selfhood that the *Urania* offers, so too do the copious and often intertwined stories associated with those characters. The women in the *Urania* live lives that demonstrate some of the

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<sup>9</sup> For earlier critical examinations of the multiple roles and freedoms women have in the *Urania*, see Anne Shaver's "A New Woman of Romance" and Caroline Ruth Swift's "Feminine Identity in Lady Mary Wroth's Romance *Urania*."

greatest and smallest freedoms; women with a significant amount of authority are almost always countered by those with a greatly diminished amount. In turn, the stories that these women both tell and are told--of their own lives and of the lives of other women--put forward examples that either affirm or contradict their authority. Yet, at the heart of the ever-expanding narrative are the stories of the two main female protagonists, Pamphilia and Urania. The *Urania* begins with the eponymous heroine's discovery that she is not the daughter of shepherds, but of some noble family. Her story revolves around her quest for her true identity and the sense of selfhood that develops as she comes to learn who her birth family is and how she came to be separated from them. For Urania, a self of sense develops alongside one of personal history and travel and geography. The other female protagonist, Pamphilia, shares a name with the country she is destined to rule. Throughout the romance, Pamphilia is described as "constant," and her constancy informs both her relationship with the Pamphilians and with the man she loves, the often unfaithful and inconstant Amphilanthus. Thus, Urania's quest narrative and Pamphilia's identification with her country/kingdom both align female selfhood with questions of travel and space, place, and geography. However, female selfhood does not grow out of just knowing one's *physical* place in the world. It also comes from knowing the role you play in the great narrative that makes up the world in which you live. Not only are Urania and Pamphilia's stories central to the narrative of romance, but they are also the actual narrative center of the text. Around their stories revolve multiple tales of lost princesses, unfaithful lovers, captive queens, and questing heroes and heroines. The effect is one of mirrors within mirrors, of a constant process of reflection and *re-vision*, of seeing yourself in the personal narratives of others.

Two-thirds of the way through the first volume of Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* a ship carrying a group of young noblewomen capsizes off the coast of an unknown island. Even for the *Urania*, a text that features a wide variety of female characters who traverse the pastoral landscape for diverse reasons, this moment is remarkable.<sup>10</sup> The group of women, whose number includes the protagonists Urania and Pamphilia, accompany the court of Morea into Corinth and then decide that "they must needs see the Sea, and not only that, but goe upon it" (371). They embark on this journey for pleasure, and they make it unaccompanied by any male friends or relatives, demonstrating a degree of agency rarely seen among the women of early modern pastoral and romance. Despite, or, perhaps, because of, these unusual circumstances the outcome is less than positive. The women run "from safety to apparent danger" when they leave the safety of the shore for the "uncertaintie" of the sea, which tumbles them through a vicious storm and deposits them on a rock where they feel they have been "cast into the depth of Dispaire" (372). What had at first seemed like an unusual example of female travel--a group of women able to embark on sea voyage simply because they desire to explore their new surroundings--quickly becomes predictable. Like so many others in Wroth's romance, these women suffer punishment for their error. After the shipwreck, they undergo both enchantment and imprisonment and are forced to remain captive until they are rescued.

Yet, within this instance of female mobility followed almost immediately by captivity, another moment stands out. After discovering that the rock they've landed on is not simply a barren place, but a "fine Country" with a "delicate plaine" and a great marble

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<sup>10</sup> Metz's "Reason, Faith, and Shipwreck in Sidney's *New Arcadia*" offers one discussion

structure that turns out to be an Enchanted Theatre, Urania and Pamphilia engage in a conversation that reveals a consciousness of how travel, captivity, gender, and narrativity work in their world (372). Pamphilia first climbs to the top of the rock to look at the surrounding country and joyfully discovers a great building of marble; Urania eventually follows and, upon seeing the marble building, expresses her anxiety:

"I feare this storme, and adventure," said Urania, "ever since I was carried to Ciprus; if it be an enchantment, woe to be to us, who may be bewitched to the misery of never seeing our desires fulfil'd, once was I made wretched by such a mischeife."

"Let it be what it will," said Pamphilia, "I will see the end of it, led as in a dreame by the leader, not with bewitching dull spirit but craft."

"You may," said Urania, "having had such successe in the last, yet take heed, all adventures are not framed for you to finish."

"Nor for you to be enchanted in," answered shee. (372)

At this point in the narrative, Urania has already experienced the dangers of enchantment and imprisonment that threaten the women on this adventure. She has already lived through multiple kidnapping episodes, danger at sea, imprisonment, enchantment, and all the tortures of unrequited love. Her story has intersected with Pamphilia's at various points in the *Urania* and here, when they stand at the brink of what could be the next dangerous step in an already dangerous adventure, the series of intersections culminate in an awareness of self, other, and the role that narrative plays in the development of such knowledge.

As Urania and Pamphilia approach the Enchanted Theatre and discuss the possible (or probable) conclusion of their adventure, their conversation reveals a number of issues integral to the discussion of women in early modern romance. While Wroth's *Urania* retains the notion that travel can be incredibly dangerous for women, it still

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of shipwreck's significance in romance.

places *female characters* at the center of the travel narrative. Though women experience many of the same dangers that we see them enduring in contemporary male-authored texts--for example, instances of kidnapping, the threat of rape, and the risk of captivity--they *also* experience the opportunities and perils usually only open to men. Wroth's female characters travel by land and sea, undertake quests, search for lost loves and pursue new ones, rule countries, and raise families. This is not to say that the women of the *Urania* never find themselves in the more static, fixed spaces that the women in works by Whitney, Lanyer, Sidney, or Cary did. Not all women in the *Urania* have the opportunity to travel through the different countries and kingdoms that the text maps out; some, especially those unable to overcome the authority of their male relatives, remain in confined spaces over which they have little or no control. While men retain the privileged position when it comes to deciding what spaces they will occupy and how they will take possession of those spaces, throughout the *Urania* both men and women experience varying degrees of both freedom and captivity.

The near constant movement of characters through space, from the smallest, most private closets to the vast expanses of empire, distinguish Wroth's text as not only a romance or pastoral narrative, but also as a travel narrative. *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* opens with the events that lead to the shepherdess Urania's departure from her homeland of Pantaleria. The moment is, of course, an allusion to Sidney's *Arcadia*, which opens with the shepherds Strephon and Claius bemoaning the departure of Urania from their land. In Wroth's text, however, when Urania eventually departs from the pastoral world in which she was raised, the narrative follows her exploits, rather than those of those whom she leaves behind. The text turns away from the

static, unchanging world of the pastoral and toward that of the adventure story, of the quest narrative, where, for the time being, the principal character involved in the journey is a woman. Urania's decision to leave Pantaleria sets the *Urania* up as text whose primary concern is travel and how movement from one place to another can function as means to establish identity and authority.

For Urania, the move from Pantaleria is not a simple one and the reformation of her identity is an ongoing process that lasts as long as her quest does. Unlike in Sidney's *Arcadia*, in Wroth's *Urania* the griefed for loss is all Urania's. The events that precipitate her departure take place before the start of the narrative; by the time we meet Urania, she has already gained the knowledge that Pantaleria is not her true homeland and that the shepherd parents who raised her are not the ones to whom she was born. This revision of her personal history, not revealed to her until she is an adult, leaves her bereft of not only kin and country, but also of a sense of selfhood. Without knowing who her biological parents are, where they live, and what their occupation is, Urania feels that she has lost her own identity. She names herself a "true servant to misfortune" and laments that "of any miserie that can befall woman" hers is "the most and greatest," for none comes "neare the unhappinesse of being ignorant" of one's own "estate or birth" (1). The desire for knowledge that will return to her a sense of selfhood powers Urania's desire to leave Pantaleria. She cannot gain further knowledge of self through further introspection; none of the time Urania spends alone wandering through the fields and caves of Pantaleria and lamenting her sudden loss leads her to develop a new sense of identity. When Urania protests against the "ignorance" that she now suffers, she protests against the knowledge that has led her to realize that she does not know who her real parents are and, as a result,

to not know who she is. For Urania to be able to answer the question of her own identity, she will need to be able to answer the question of who her parents truly are. As Mary Ellen Lamb observes in her reading of Urania's spontaneous sonnet of complaint at the start of the romance, the opening of the text emphasizes the "centrality of her genealogy to her sense of self in her need to know her true 'estate'"(113).<sup>11</sup> By placing such emphasis on familial relationships, Urania transforms selfhood into something that she must discover, something she must come upon as she travels from Pantaleria into the wider world. Instead of an internal quality that can change according to environment and experience, this version of selfhood is an internalized knowledge of external conditions.

The version of female selfhood that the *Urania* introduces along with its protagonist is also one that the text ties explicitly to physical, mappable, geographic space. Urania cannot be the person whom she believes she ought to be once she learns that she was not born in Pantaleria to a shepherd family--she no longer belongs to the pastoral world where she was raised and must find the place where she does belong. *Who* she is depends on *where* she is and Urania has unexpectedly found herself in the wrong place. Thus, the text opens with a moment of displacement that leads to departure with the hope of discovery, and the narrative trajectory of the *Urania* follows Urania and a whole host of other characters as they travel through the many lands, countries, and regions that populate a map of this world. Though, as Jennifer Lee Carrel points out, the texts shifts away from a geopolitical view of its world and focuses on the stories of romance and interpersonal relationships, romance and the multiple, kaleidoscopic iterations of the primary romance narrative do not simply replace the structures of

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<sup>11</sup> Lamb, "The Biopolitics of Romance in Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's*

geopolitical world building, but maps that world along the lines of romance, personal histories and narratives, and interpersonal relationships.<sup>12</sup>

The result is a text that chooses not only departure, but also separation and travel as its primary motivations. As stated above, the *Urania* is a travel text in the way that many romance narratives are travel texts: the quest is the main plot device. The foundational moment in the *Urania* is the title character's decision to leave behind her homeland. Yet, the agency and ability to act on personal desires are part of Urania's characterization before she makes the move to leave Pantaleria. The Urania we meet at the opening of *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* is a woman whose whole concept of self-identity has been shaken. The abrupt loss of familial and national affiliation has left her in a state of ignorance, one she deems the unhappiest. Unlike the mourning expressed by Perissus, another major character in the romance whom both the reader and Urania will soon encounter for the first time, Urania's unhappiness does not cause her to stagnate. It does inspire her to leave the meadows for a "little path" that leads her "to the further side of the plaine, to the foote of the rocks" (1). She makes her plaint as she walks, hoping for solitude, and when she reaches the foot of a great rock, she attempts to find a way to ascend it in order to "passe away her time more peaceably with lonelnesse" (2). Urania scales the rock and makes her way to a "pretty roome" cut into the rock, a tiny hermitage, where she finds a "a little light" and then "a little doore" that leads to another small room. Guided by her grief, Urania is able to traverse the pastoral landscape in search of privacy and the opportunity to deal with her newfound state. Indeed, the only

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*Urania*" (2001)

<sup>12</sup> See Carrell's "A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass: Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the Magic Mirror of Romance" (1994).

thing she claims to fear as she makes her way from meadow to rock is the "continuance of her ignorance" (2). Thus, it is not just grief that guides her, but the desire for an end to her grief and ignorance. Urania's search is one for knowledge--for *self-knowledge*--and the search leads her to increasingly more enclosed spaces, signifying a turning inward. If self-knowledge could be gained through self-awareness, then the move that Urania makes at this early point in her story would be a fruitful one. Yet, because her perception of selfhood is linked so closely to the knowledge of who her parents are, what their place in society is, and where they live, turning away from her former life and seeking solitude cannot bring Urania to further awareness of who she is.<sup>13</sup> That knowledge--just like the knowledge that the life in Pantaleria was not the one to which she had been born--is not dependent on any form of self-awareness. Despite her ability to move freely through the meadows, plains, and rocks of the pastoral landscape and her ability to choose solitude within that landscape, she cannot come upon the knowledge that she yearns for when that movement is directed inward.

What Urania does discover in the hidden room inside the cave is the grief-stricken Perissus, whom she exhorts to behave "like a brave Prince" (15) and to avenge the death of his mistress, Limena. From here, she encounters Parselius, with whom she falls in mutual love at first sight, and they plan to set sail from Pantaleria, along with Steriamus, Selarinus, and Selarina, who have only recently been told by their father, the now deceased King of Albania, of their royal heritage. As soon as they board a ship, however, they fall into the hands of the pirate Sandrigal, who is searching for another lost princess,

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<sup>13</sup> Amelia Zurcher Sandy provides an interesting reading of Urania as a "representative pastoral figure" who has "taken the division between her identity and its genealogy into her consciousness" (Sandy 104).

Antissia, the daughter of the king of Romania. The circumstances that accompany Urania's first attempts at a journey of self-discovery are ones that will arise again and again as that journey progresses. Many of the integral points in her journey will feature Urania being held captive; many more of those points will feature Urania listening to narratives of either her own or other's pasts. Ideas of captivity and narrativity are not restricted to Urania's story; indeed, most of the characters, especially the female ones, are subject to both at some point in the text, and much of the *Urania* itself is shaped by the stories and narrative spaces embedded within it. The importance of these moments in Urania's story comes from the interruptions and impediments they present. Before Urania can take the time to mourn her own lack of self-knowledge, she is faced with the story of Perissus and his love for the married Limena and, instead of telling her own history to him, she encourages him to take up arms and spurs him onto action. Hearing his story and listening to Parselius's report of his journey to Pantaleria take precedence over Urania's relation of her story, as if she now lacks personal history and, thus, can only function as an audience for others' histories. Her sense of self is expressed through lack; her ignorance is what she possesses, and that ignorance has created a lacuna in the story that makes up her past.

The fact that two of the stories she listens to are ones of secret royalty--the dying King of Albania's revelation to his children who they really are and the pirate Sandrigal's relation of the lost princess of Romania--reveals that the world of the *Urania* is one populated by people like her. Urania's current state of ignorance, though it causes her such great grief, is not unique, and her narrative, as one of the primary ones in the text, will always be interrupted and informed by multiple other narratives. Lost royalty and

secret princesses are no unusual feature of the *Urania*, and each of their stories echoes Urania's. The expansiveness that accompanies reiterated storylines is characteristic of Wroth's romance writing. Stories of unfaithful lovers, newly discovered royalty, enchanted places, love triangles, and both captive rulers and countries are related repeatedly throughout the *Urania*. As seen in the example above from Urania and Pamphilia's adventure at the Enchanted Theatre, those stories and the mutual awareness that arises from learning them also become part of women's identities. Antissia's story--of another kidnapped and lost princess--could very well be Urania's, as far as Urania knows at this point in the narrative. After hearing Sandrigal relate his kidnap of Antissia, Urania replies with sympathy for the lost princess: "'Truly,' said Urania, 'you have told so ille a tale, as if I were the lost Princesse, I should scarce forget so great an injury: but satisfie your selfe with this, and the hope of finding her, while you have in your power one, who (alas) is lost too'" (31). Urania, who has no sense of personal history beyond her life in Pantaleria, places herself into the narrative of the displaced princess of Romania and imagines how she would feel if that were her. Like Antissia, she, too, is "lost" and her loss gives her the ability to see herself in the stories of other women and to learn to read her own story through similar narratives.

Yet, despite the kidnapping by pirates and near constant stream of narrative tangents that delay Urania's learning of her own history, her love for Parselius proves the most significant hindrance to Urania's progress toward self-discovery. Her feelings for Parselius imprison her in the Throne of Love, and keep her captive for most of the first book of the *Urania*. The impediment is more than a physical one; Urania's mind, heart, and body are held within the Throne of Love, and all her attention is directed at the

destructive aspects of love, her quest forgotten. The origin of her love for, or even obsession with, Parselius can be traced to their first encounter. Upon first seeing him, Urania "was struck with wonder; his sweetnes and fairnes such, as the rarest painters must confes themselves unable to counterfeit such perfections, and so exquisite proportion" (21). Within the conventions of romance--the ideas of experiencing "astonishment mingled with perplexity or bewildered curiosity,"<sup>14</sup> of the absolute perfection of the new object of desire--resides a metaphor for the power of not only love, but also art. When Urania first perceives Parselius, she sees an image of perfection, one that even art itself could not replicate. Parselius is more perfect than other men and more perfect than any art object a man could create. His perfection draws Urania in and, once Parselius notices Urania, the effect is mutual:

After hee had concluded these words, he (whose soule was absent from him) lookt toward the Iland, when his eyes were soone called to admire, and admiringly behold the rare Shepherdesse, who in the same kind of wonder lookt on him. He ravished with the sight, scarce able to thinke her an earthly creature, stood gazing on her. She who poore soule had with the sight of Perissus, given leave for love to make a breach into her heart, the more easily after to come in and conquer, was in so great a passion, as they seem'd like two Master-pieces, fram'd to demonstrate the best, and choisest skill of art... (21)

The wonder, admiration, and astonishment that Urania and Parselius feel whilst looking at each other takes them out of themselves. Prior to their meeting, Parselius had been separated from Amphilanthus, thus causing his "soule" to be "absent from him," and Urania has heard Perissus's story of his tragic love for Limena, thus giving "leave for love to make a breach into her heart." Both have experienced a loss of self, a kind of lacuna inside their hearts or souls, and this empty space is easily filled with the wonder they

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<sup>14</sup> "wonder, n.". OED Online.

undergo when they view each other. But it is not just wonder. When they view each other, they become "like two Master-pieces, fram'd to demonstrate the best, and choisest skill of art." This moment of narrative ekphrasis turns Parselius and Urania not into images of perfection beyond art, but into art itself. The moment they fall in mutual love at first sight transforms and entraps them into an art object created beyond their control. Urania does not so much recreate herself in the love and admiration that she suddenly has for Parselius, but lets herself be conquered and, in part, erased by that desire. To fall completely in love with Parselius and to find herself willing to invest so much of herself in this love, at a time in her life when she also feels herself almost completely ignorant of who she is, can only create tension between internal and external definitions of self and selfhood. Love, and the myriad emotions associated with it, though they often depend on another for initial expression, are private emotions. Urania keeps her declarations of love to herself early on, and both the joy and sorrow she feels she keeps close to her heart. Envisioning romantic love and its effects as an art object offers an image of stability; the moment becomes frozen in time and space, both lovers continually faithful, continually enraptured. Yet, for Urania, the captivity of love becomes a threatening, physical reality.

Once she reaches the Throne of Love her feelings for Parselius, enhanced by the enchanted water, become overwhelming:

Urania, whose heart before was onely fed by the sweet lookes, and pleasing conversation of Parselius, loves him now so much, as she imagines, she must try the adventure, to let him see her loyalty is such, as for his love, and by it she would end the Inchantment. (49)

Her desire for self-realization no longer guides her adventure and is replaced with this tremendous, imagined love she believes she holds for Parselius. In forgetting her original

quest, Urania forgets herself. Previously, her "adventure" had been to leave behind the life she knew on Pantaleria, to seek out the one to which she had been born, and to reshape herself and her life around that original familial and social heritage. Now, however, she "imagines" her love for Parselius so great that she must try this new adventure. The "sweete lookes, and pleasing conversation of Parselius" have "fed" her heart, filled it up and satiated her to the point where there is no room inside for any other of her desires. Thus equipped, she attempts the towers at the Throne:

Urania went on, when entring the second tower, guarded by Venus, she was therein inclosed, when as thus much sense came to her, as to know she had left Parselius, which strak her into a mourning passion, confessing that, an unpardonable fault, and what he in justice could not excuse. Then despaire possest her so, as there she remained, loving in despaire, and despairing mourn'd. (49)

The grief she had at the opening of the text regarding her ignorance and sudden loss of family and home has been replaced by the grief she feels over having left Parselius over the perceived and possibly mistaken magnitude of the love she has for him. Thus, two important things are happening for Urania at this moment. First, her literal imprisonment in the Throne of Love puts a temporary halt to her journey to find her home. Urania is *the* female character in this romance who can choose to take up an extensive quest that requires her to cross bodies of land and water and who, eventually, completes that quest successfully. The events at the Throne of Love illustrate why Urania's case is unique. Most of the time, in romance, and even in *this* romance, women tend to get relegated to stationary positions. They wait, captive by any number of circumstances, while the men in their lives and stories get to travel.<sup>15</sup> Second, the imprisonment occurs because she

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<sup>15</sup> The introduction to Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages* offers a useful reading of the gendering of travel, especially male exilic travel and wandering, both of which are

falls in love. Love and romance trap women in this text; the most valued characteristic for a women in love is that of constancy and, as Pamphilia's storyline exposes, that constancy is a combination of emotional, behavioral, and physical stability. In addition, some of the imagery in this passage is not that far from the imagery of the labyrinth of love and confusion that traps the female narrator in Wroth's sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. While love could be used as a way to help Urania further develop selfhood, instead it is used as means of imprisonment. Her passion locks her into a "prison of the self" (Lamb 2001, 121).<sup>16</sup> When the narrator reveals that "[t]hus were the women for their punishment, left prisoners in the throne of *Love*: which Throne and punishments are daily built in human hearts" (50), she also reveals that the punishments exacted at the Throne of Love are not caused by mere place or circumstance, but by the way humans react to and deal with love at all times and places. So, while getting trapped in the Throne puts a halt to Urania's journey, falling in love with Parselius is the more dangerous impediment and one that she brings on herself, though, of course, she does not do so intentionally. The problem does not seem to be that romantic or erotic love cannot be part of an evolving sense of self. Throughout the *Urania*, Pamphilia's constancy and the multiple ways it informs both her love of Amphilanthus and love of her country constitute a great part of the way in which she defines herself. But love is not working in a similar manner for Urania; her desire for external validation and information about her past conflicts with the internal desire to love Parselius completely and absolutely.

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integral to the male quest narrative seen in romance.

<sup>16</sup> See also Christina Luckyj's "The Politics of Genre in Early Women's Writing: The Case of Lady Mary Wroth" for a discussion of the destructive potential of love for women.

Furthermore, she does not recognize her love and desire for Parselius as a way to ameliorate the ignorance the knowledge of her birth has forced her into. While she continues to fashion and develop a selfhood or a sense of self based on what she experiences, Urania simultaneously depends on an external definition of self as the correct one. To truly know herself, no matter what else happens to her, she must discover her birth and heritage, not allow herself to become attached to a man with whom she has no previous familial relationship. Thus, falling in love cannot help her in that process of discovery and can only deter her. When she drinks of the water of the enchanted river on Cyprus, her greatest desire is not, like the men who accompany her, to continue to quest, but, instead, to prove her loyalty to Parselius and to enter the Tower of Love. That all the women become entrapped in the Throne of Love and that all the men leave the island to go on some adventure or quest speaks to one of the intersections of gender and geography that echoes through the *Urania*. The pressures of gender and genre rarely allow a woman like Urania to join Parselius, Leandrus, Steriamus, and Selarinus on their journey away from the island, even though the larger trajectory of her story is her quest for the knowledge that would help her define her identity. Where men are sometimes spurred on by their emotions and "often choose itinerancy as means to assuage these strong negative emotions" (Cavanaugh 125), women like Urania tend to become trapped by their emotions.

Urania remains locked in the tower at the Throne of Love for much of the first book until Pamphilia and Amphilanthus arrive to free her and the rest of the captives. The episode at the Throne of Love leaves Urania in love with a man who has long forgotten about her and has moved on to another woman. Although Parselius has entered into a

relationship and, subsequently, a marriage with Dalinea by the end of the first book, Urania remains in love with him and longs to see only him. While Parselius offers Urania a means of getting out of Pantaleria in the first book, her love for him only deters her throughout the first and into the second book.

The turning points in Urania's story occur first at Delos and later at the rock of St. Maura. The prophetess Melissea, during a visit to Delos by Urania, Pamphilia, and Amphilanthus, reveals to Urania part of her history and her future:

"Fayrest, and sweetest, leave off your laments for ignorance of your estate, and know that you are daughter to a mighty King, and sister to the bravest living Prince, the honour of all Knights, and glory of his Country, renowned Amphilanthus; the manner, and the reason of your losse, shall bee brought to you in a fitter place. Now for your love, alas that I must say, what Destinie foretells, you shall be happy, and enjoy, but first, death in appearance must possesse your dainty bodie, when you shall revive with him you now love, to another love, and yet as good, and great as hee. Bee not offended for this is your fate, nor bee displeas'd, since though that must change, it is but just change, bringing it from him alike disquieted."  
(190)

Melissea's prophecy emphasizes the resolution of the "ignorance" that Urania has lamented since the opening of the text. She immediately imparts to Urania some of the information she has sought, telling her to "know" that she is the daughter of one great man and the sister of another, and promises that the remainder of her history "shall bee brought to [her] in a fitter place." This encounter is what Urania has been longing for: some external source of knowledge that will impart to her the story of her past. Although the familial relationships presented to Urania as most significant are patriarchal, her first connection to her past outside of Pantaleria is made through another woman. Knowledge, when offered by the prophetess Melissea, gets coded female and is not restricted to the events of the past, but to all of history, past, present, and future. Melissea chooses to hold

back part of Urania's history and instead imparts a prophecy for her future, reassuring her that rebirth and change will bring her happiness in love. To Amphilanthus, Melissea "onely told that faire Urania was his sister, and that although so deare to him, yet to make her live contentedly, he, and none else must throw her from the Rocke of St. Maura into the Sea" (190). The greater part of Melissea's knowledge and attention is directed toward and shared with Urania, for even Amphilanthus's prophecy concerns Urania more than himself.

The language of destiny and fate in the prophecy that accompanies the news of Urania's heritage lends an air of immutability to the future as well as the past. The circumstances of her birth are, of course, ones that Urania cannot change, though she can see herself and her future changed *by* them. So, too, the prophecy offered by Melissea constitutes external knowledge that Urania has no control to change and that she should have no wish to change. The events of her life will play out in a favorable manner as long as she obeys what "Destinie foretells." That is, she cannot change the past, she should not attempt to change the future, and she is at least semi-dependent on all this external evidence to shape who she is and who she perceives herself to be. She can change herself in accordance with this information if she obeys it, and part of that change is a process of forgetting and rebirth. Urania also demonstrates faith in narrative when she accepts Melissea's prophecy; for her to obey the prophecy, she must accept it as a true story and as a part of the greater narrative of her life.

After arriving at the Rock of St. Maura, Amphilanthus reveals to Urania that "Fortune (never favourable to us) hath ordain'd, a strange adventure for us, and the more cruell it is, since not to be avoyded" (230). Only Amphilanthus can perform this task and

though "apparent death" will be the outcome, he has "assured hope of good successe" (230). Amphilanthus's belief in divine providence and the promise of a positive result enables to him take up the task of throwing his own sister into the sea, since "Heaven appoints it so" (230). Urania's reaction, while just as amenable to the task assigned by the prophecy, does not speak to a belief that the outcome will be a positive one. Instead, she demonstrates that she is willing to die in reality, not just in appearance:

"My deerest brother," sayd she, "what neede you make this scruple? You wrong me much to thinke that I feare death, being your sister, or cheerish life, if not to joy my parents; fulfill your command, and be assured it is doubly welcome, comming to free me from much sorrow, and more, since given mee by your hands: those hands that best I love, and you give it me, for whose deare sake, I onely lov'd to live, and now as much delight and wish to die." (230)

Urania sees death as not only a viable but also as a completely welcome end to the scenario. Her will to live is tempered by the sorrow that arises from her unrequited love for Parselius and some of the torture experienced in the Throne of Love still lives within her heart. In turn, her willingness to drown and give her life up at the rock of St. Maura ought to be tempered by unfulfilled desire to meet her father. Here, she claims that all the happiness in her life stems from her relationship with Amphilanthus, and the fact that he is the one to perform the act of throwing her from the rock makes the experience a welcome one. She is happy to die at his hands. In addition, the only way she could value life more would be if she could be a joy to her parents. Although it is ostensibly the waters of the sea around St. Maura that cure Urania of her love for Parselius, this moment is one where we see Urania herself choosing familial over romantic attachment. That choice allows her to return more fully to the mission she established for herself at the start of her quest back in Pantaleria. While locked in the Throne of Love, all Urania could

concentrate on were the torments and grief of unfulfilled romantic love; the focus of her world and the definition of her selfhood were both reduced to her yearning for Parselius. Despite still being preoccupied by her love for Parselius, after having been freed from the Throne of Love and after having been told of her future by the prophetess Melissea, Urania can make the choice to affiliate herself more closely with the men in her family than with the man with whom she has fallen in love.

Even though she appears to believe that she might perish in the drowning, if she retains her faith in the prophecies given to her and Amphilanthus at Delos, then that fear is unfounded. Her acquiescence, then, indicates her trust in her brother and her desire to only live a life that is pleasing to both him and to her father, whom she has not yet met. When Amphilanthus lets her slip into the water, she goes willingly and begins to drown, but soon thereafter Urania is rescued by Parselius, along with his fellow travelers, Steriamus and Dolorindus. After they are all plunged into the waters around the rock of St. Maura, it is Amphilanthus who first comes to understand "the operation of that water" and how it erases the desire and pain of unrequited love. As a result of plunging into the water around the rock at St. Maura, Steriamus no longer yearns for Pamphilia, Parselius only loves Dalinea, Dolorindus only desires to accompany his friends wherever they go, and Urania is released from the "hell" of loving Parselius, a man who "had (although so neere to her) been so farre from truth to her" (231). Urania's vast, unrequited love for the unfaithful Parselius is mirrored by a multitude of similar love stories throughout the text, including, to a certain extent, that of Pamphilia's love for Amphilanthus. None of the others who suffer the "hell" of unrequited love undergo such a miraculous cure; none of them have the opportunity to be reborn, to reclaim their life and identity after having the

pain and grief of that love washed from their heart and mind. For Urania, however, continued suffering and longing for Parselius would only continue to impede the conclusion of the journey she began when she left Pantaleria with him. Just as she left everything else behind when she left that place--all her perceived knowledge of self and the (external) elements that construct that perception--so, too, must she leave behind her love for Parselius. The events at St. Maura and those following are truly transformative ones for Urania. She comes to the rock at St. Maura prepared to die, despite reassurances that the outcome would not be fatal, and, in a sense, she does perish. The remnants of her former life on Pantaleria are all washed away in the sea, and the image of her being both reborn and baptized through the actions of her brother determine that this new life will be defined in terms of patriarchal affiliation. Like her decision to leave Pantaleria, Urania's decision to submit to drowning signals a moment of departure. Urania physically leaves behind her past in both these places and picks up a new narrative thread in the story of her life. The foundational narrative of her life has become untangled from the sense of self she had formed as the daughter of a shepherd and the one she had formed as the lover of Parselius. The stories that Urania has heard, especially the various parts of her own history, have taught that while the past may be in some ways immutable, it can be rewritten and recuperated. For Urania, the reclamation of personal history and selfhood *is* the narrative of travel.

Directly after leaving St. Maura, Urania and Amphilanthus return home to their father, where Urania gets some new clothes to signal her transition from shepherdess to princess: "Urania having rich robes fit for her birth brought unto her, till then having worn her Shepherdess attire, which she resolv'd to doe, as long as she liv'd unseene of

her father, and only to receive them from his hands" (231). Urania's recognition of her new state in life is once again dependent on a number of external markers, the first being the new clothing she receives. The "rich robes fit for her birth" remind us not only that Urania was born the daughter of the King of Naples, but that she had to be *re-born* into that position. They also present her new status to the world in a very visible, very material manner, something that could not happen while she "liv'd unseene of her father." The visual recognition that leads to an established patriarchal affiliation functions as part of an external conception of selfhood. Despite the idea of inherent nobility throughout the romance, and despite the idea that Urania was *born* a princess, she does not see herself as one until her father recognizes her. To be known, and to know herself, then, is to be recognized--to become the object first of her father's gaze and then of all other people who will see her attire and will mark her social station according to that attire.

As soon as Urania is taken in by her father and once more accepted into her birth family, a Pilgrim appears at the Italian court who confesses to having been the kidnapper of the baby Urania. The prophecy that the child Amphilanthus would grow up a great man spurred the kidnapper to want to cause him pain and distress by taking his sister; however, robbers kidnapped Urania from the Pilgrim, and only in the past year did he discover that Urania was safe and a Shepherdess somewhere. He'd been seeking her and now finds her in her place of birth. Urania asks the Pilgrim "how the Mantell, and Purse was left unto her" (233), the two original markers of her nobility that were revealed to her by her adoptive parents. "That," said the old man, "was done by him or her I know not which, that protected you, nor can you know that, till you finish an adventure, which is onely left for you to end" (233). Although Urania once again turns to external, material

markers to help her define her place in life--the mantel and purse that revealed to her she was not born to shepherds, but to nobility--those markers now become less important than the history associated with them. For Urania to finally achieve the sense of self she has been longing for since the start of the *Urania*, she needs to resolve the issue that has powered that longing: ignorance. The lack of knowledge of self that Urania lamented so fiercely at the start of her journey is what gave her the greatest sense of displacement, greater than the physical loss of her country or the emotional loss of her parents, both birth and adoptive.

It makes sense, then, that Urania's ignorance can only be resolved by her taking up her quest once more and "finish[ing] an adventure." Her story has always, in its broadest sense, been one of displacement. The double-kidnapping removes her from the place of her birth and leaves her in Pantaleria, a place that proves to be the wrong one for her. After leaving Pantaleria, Urania continues to experience displacement through her incarceration at the Throne of Love. Her drowning at St. Maura demonstrates her sense of displacement dramatically: she must be physically hurled from one place to another to effect a dramatic change in her life. Urania's quest for selfhood is made up of a series of departures, removals, and imprisonments. Her story is mapped onto a number of different locations and despite all the time she spends immobile inside the Throne of Love, her narrative remains one of travel and discovery. What Urania discovers once she reaches the place where she thought she could establish final knowledge of self is that her journey is not yet complete. Dependence on the external recognition of her father can only take her so far. She can finally dress herself in the clothes of the nobility, but fashioning her appearance according to whom she ought to be does not tell her who she *is*. Another

series of displacements needs to happen for Urania to complete the final steps of her journey and to discover who she is, a process that, in turn, ultimately requires her to internalize a sense of self and of history.

The final stage in Urania's quest for selfhood takes her to the Enchanted Theatre cited at the opening of this chapter. This journey, like many in the *Urania* including the earliest steps in her adventure, is not an easy one for Urania. Along with Pamphilia, Philistella, and Selarina, she goes on a sea voyage, unaware that the storm and shipwreck that follow will bring her to the place that holds the secret to her past. The wreck in the middle of the Adriatic here reminds us how precarious sea travel is in the world of romance and how vulnerable travelers are to not just shipwreck, but to the pirate attacks, kidnapping, drowning and other dangers that result from the "uncertainty" and isolation of travel upon the uncharted sea. In addition to presenting dangers, the uncertainty of sea travel can also present moments of transformation. In Urania's story, her kidnapping off the coast of Pantaleria, the landing on Cyprus and subsequent events at the Throne of Love, and her near drowning at the rock of St. Maura, all are moments that change Urania by shaping her circumstances, physical and emotional, or her knowledge about herself and her history. Yet, despite the significant moments of revelation and transformation that have taken place alongside those of jeopardy, the danger and isolation produced by her previous experiences are foremost in Urania's memories of those events. Urania's anxiety about the great building of marble that Pamphilia discovers speaks to the peril she has already experienced. She knows what it is like not only to be held captive physically but to be held captive by her own desires, including the pain of unrequited love which kept her from fulfilling her other, non-romantic desires. Urania knows that in

order to complete her "story" she also needs to complete her adventure, but the resignation to destiny she expressed at St. Maura seems to have given way to apprehension. The knowledge and experience she has gained thus far have taught her how to read the map of this land: enchanted spaces are often confining ones. The great moments of transformation in Urania's narrative have been when the landscape opened up for her; the great expansiveness of the sea at her departure from Pantaleria and her drowning at the rock of St. Maura presented her with the opportunity for freedom and knowledge. Here, the sea becomes "uncertain," and the narrative options that can stem from the moment of shipwreck are few.

Urania's conversation with Pamphilia upon their arrival at the Enchanted Theater also demonstrates a mutual awareness of how the trajectory of both their narratives operates. This mutual awareness of each other's stories also speaks to awareness of *each other* and of how self-knowledge can develop alongside knowledge of an other. At this moment in the text, we witness one of the few places where two women discuss neither their romantic or familial relationships with male characters nor the parts that other women play as rivals or allies in those relationships. When Urania admonishes Pamphilia to "take heed, all adventures are not framed for you to finish" she shows not only an awareness of the danger of their surroundings, but of the roles that she and Pamphilia tend to play when placed in such an environment. The sea voyage, the threat of enchantment, and the presence of a magnificent yet ominous building all bring to Urania's mind the events at the Throne of Love and the parts that she and Pamphilia played there. To recall her own torment at the throne is not enough; she must also remind Pamphilia of her own role as savior and how that role is not one guaranteed her.

Throughout the *Urania*, Pamphilia also endures multiple instances of captivity, both literal and figurative, and her ability to dissolve the enchantment at the Throne of Love is dependent on her remaining within the boundaries of constancy. In turn, Pamphilia's retort to Urania's warning that all adventures are "not framed" for her to "finish," that neither are they framed for Urania "to be enchanted in," demonstrates similar knowledge of the trajectory of Urania's narrative. Pamphilia's reply points to the many instances in the text where she is not held captive by her fears or desires, but where those fears and desires help to move her story further along.

In a way, the knowledge that this conversation reveals is not just personal, but *textual*. Urania and Pamphilia do not simply know each other, but they know each other's stories and the parts that both of them have played within those narratives for the other. One result of the various conversations they have had with each other and with others about each other and about the various experiences that form the basis for those conversations is a coherent narrative about the other's life. Though we do not ever see either Urania or Pamphilia compose and relate a biography of the other woman, we do see them tell such stories about other female characters in the romance. The ability to tell another woman's life story also demonstrates the intimacy of same-sex female friendship; to know another woman textually, to be able to weave a tale of the desires and experiences that make up her life, is one of the driving forces of the narrative in all of the *Urania*. Thus, once again, the central focus of the text is the network of inter-personal relationships between characters; here, that system itself is focused on the relationships among women and the idea that identity is an issue of affiliation. The quest for female identity at the center of the *Urania* demonstrates that "Wroth's narrative ... addresses the

resilience of women in a world where fluctuations in romantic fortune may be determined by male lovers, but constancy in love is redefined by female friends" (Miller, (1989) 126).

Yet, the telling and hearing of other women's stories in the *Urania* often divulges as much about the teller or listener as it does about the subject of the story herself. Throughout the *Urania*, many characters--male and female--both tell and are told stories that mirror their own. The conversation that Urania and Pamphilia have before they reach the Enchanted Theatre where they dispute the possible outcomes of their visit to the theater signals that in learning how to tell each other's stories, each woman also learns how to tell her own. The mirroring between Urania and Pamphilia's stories enables one reading of the history established for women in the text. Their stories function together to tell a larger story of how women exist in the world of romance, the roles they play and the positions of authority they hold. Women can play both parts: the one who is held captive and the one who frees the captives, and the same woman can play both parts at different points in time. Though different women throughout the text have the opportunity to wield levels of authority, here the interchangeability of that power between them makes Urania and Pamphilia equals. This moment, then, where they acknowledge the many roles that they each could play and the narratives within which they play those parts, functions as one of the *Urania's* strongest moments between women.

This moment, in addition to pointing out the intersections between Urania and Pamphilia's narratives, offers a contrast between the ways in which selfhood gets mapped geographically for each of these women. As stated above, Urania's expression of her fear

of a second episode of magical captivity speaks to the knowledge she gained from her first experience. In stating her eagerness to "see the end of it, led as in a dreame by the leader, not with bewitching dull spirit but craft" Pamphilia signals both a lack of anxiety and a sense of resignation, tempered by her eagerness to follow this adventure to its conclusion (372). That she is willing to be "led as if in a dream by the leader" emphasizes the kind of resignation that she demonstrates throughout the romance: an acknowledgment of powers greater than herself over which she has no control but which can grant her varying amounts of authority. The constancy for which she is known throughout the world of the text encompasses the erotic and political power present in Pamphilia's life and manifests itself here in her desire to conclude her adventure.

If Urania's story demonstrates how one concept of selfhood can develop along the lines of the quest narrative, interspersed with episodes of captivity, then Pamphilia's story demonstrates how the opposite is also true. A narrative of captivity, interspersed with moments of travel, can also structure a conception of selfhood. Pamphilia's selfhood is built around the spatial metaphor of "constancy." The word denotes both physical and emotional stages of being--her constancy to Amphilanthus and to her country of Pamphilia require her to be steadfast in the way she *feels* about them (e.g., her conception of her relationship with her country as spousal) and in where she locates herself. Thus, for Pamphilia to be *con-stans*, she needs to be not only faithful to Amphilanthus in a way that precludes her from loving or even showing interest in other men, but she also needs to remain the geographically "fixed-foot" in that relationship. Her identity is wrapped up in this concept of constancy and seems fixed for her long before the reader encounters

her; her constant loyalty to her country is the aspect that stretches back furthest in Pamphilia's personal timeline to the moment of her birth and naming.

The strongest association between Pamphilia and her role as ruler is a linguistic one; she shares her name with the country of Pamphilia whose present ruler, her uncle, has chosen her as its future queen. This link between Pamphilia the person and Pamphilia the land is one that the text makes obvious and one that has been remarked on by critics. Cavanaugh notes that the inability to tell if Pamphilia was named after her uncle's country as an infant or if she elected to adopt the name later in life after taking on the position of future queen, demonstrates that there is no distinction between Pamphilia's public and private selves. For Cavanaugh, Pamphilia is *always* performing a public role, and even her romance with Amphilanthus directly informs and is informed by her place as the future ruler of Pamphilia. If her parents had given her another name at birth, that name is completely erased by the text and, in Cavanaugh's formulation, along with it the private self that Pamphilia might have been able to develop (22). Having been named after her uncle's country and thus designated its ruler, she is born into a pre-established identity of the constant, virtuous ruler whose life is lived with her country and people given the utmost consideration. As Cavanaugh points out in the stories of Antissia, Nereana, and Melasinda "for female characters, the obligations attendant with belonging to a country, whether a ruler, subject, or member of the royal family, most commonly require that women stay at home" and that such an obligation demonstrates "the characters' physical and emotional alignment with physical spaces" (55).

Thus, the link between Pamphilia and her country Pamphilia is geographic as well as linguistic. Throughout the *Urania*, most of the travel undertaken by Pamphilia is

between her father's kingdom and her own, with a few exceptions where she travels elsewhere chaperoned by either her brother Parselius or by Amphilanthus, and even fewer exceptions where she travels on her own. Her journey to the Throne of Love and her liberating of the lovers imprisoned therein marks Pamphilia as a woman who can act as a key, as a door, as a passage to freedom for others, while she herself remains locked in the prison of her position. Unlike Urania, whose exploration of the world around her allows her to construct her self, Pamphilia must locate herself in specific, pre-established places if she wishes her land to prosper. The "physical and emotional alignment with physical spaces" inherent to successful female rulership appears throughout the stories of the other captive queens in the *Urania*. Two of the most notable and violent examples of this model of female selfhood are Melasinda, Queen of Hungary, and Meriana, Queen of Macedon. Both these women are forcibly held captive in their lands and sometimes choose to act in ways they might find personally or morally reprehensible but which, at the time, seem to ensure benefit for their countries. Melasinda, having been "inclosed" in "the City of Buda" decides to marry the bastard son of her uncle, Rodolindus, in order to prevent civil war in her country (79). Though the decision "was bitter to her" she chooses Rodolindus over being "left alone, people-lesse, and Kingdome-lesse" (79). Later, Ollorandus, having been summoned to Melasinda in a dream, will arrive in Hungary to free Melasinda and her country from Rodolindus, but before she is rescued, her motivation to remain there is two-fold. She cannot let her country be embroiled in civil war, nor can she imagine herself without her country; the disintegration of Hungary by internal conflict is equal to the disintegration of the selfhood she has built up around her governing of Hungary and its people. Thus, to keep her country and her sense of self

intact, Melasinda yields to the enclosure of marriage to Rodolindus. Meriana's story is similar. The rightful heir to the kingdom of Macedon, she remains imprisoned in a tower until she agrees to marry the usurper to the throne and thus legitimate his rule. Her place as prisoner allows Clotorindus to claim both her and Macedon as his own, and only after her imprisonment, forced marriage to Clotorindus, and fake execution by Clotorindus is she rescued by her true love, Rosindy, and restored to her throne. Yet, her restoration takes place not after she first encounters a disguised Rosindy, but after she's sent him from her place of imprisonment on a series of quests in order to assure her of his "love" and himself of "pity" and told him not to return until he has found fame through "noble deeds" and then to return and release her with his "owne hands" (110). In choosing not to be rescued by Rosindy when he disguises himself as a servant in order to see her, but to wait until she knows "perfectly" that he is "Prince Rosindy," she chooses for herself a partner and for her country a king who will be known only for his noble deeds by taking on a new disguise and keeping the "name of the Unknowne" (110). Viably, Meriana could have let herself be rescued by Rosindy before Clotorindus forced her hand in marriage and before he staged her execution, but instead she opts to wait until Macedon can be freed by a man of noble deeds.

In addition to functioning as female rulers who cannot literally and physically be separated from their countries, characters like Pamphilia, Melasinda, and Meriana also represent the "good" female rulers in the *Urania*. Women like Nereana choose to leave their countries and travel at their will, leaving their homelands to suffer the consequences of their absence. In Nereana's case, she also suffers and undergoes humiliation, attempted rape, and mental breakdown before she recognizes her erroneous behavior. Women who

travel and who elect to act on their own desires are often the same women who are characterized as "bad" or "evil" female figures of authority. For Pamphilia to avoid this characterization and to develop into the ruler that the Pamphilians need, she does need to construct a selfhood that recognizes the importance of her position as a public figure. For her to turn completely inward, to her poetry and her closet and her secret, enduring love for Amphilanthus, would be to become a figure like Sidney's Basileus, a king who leaves and nearly loses his kingdom when he turns to the retreat of the pastoral world.

Despite the set of external circumstances that structures a version of female selfhood based on a position of rulership, it is dangerous to neglect the multiple attempts that Pamphilia makes to construct a private self. As in Urania's story, the emotions and desires that are associated with inwardness and privacy are the same ones that are associated with romantic, erotic desire. These same emotions and desires, as they are in Urania's life, can also be destructive ones. Amphilanthus's faithlessness and his frequent absences cause Pamphilia more pain than pleasure, but even the council of her various confidants cannot weaken the constancy of her love for Amphilanthus. The construction of semi-private spaces like Pamphilia's cabinet and her tendency to create and then immediately destroy her poetry and sonnets speak to, at the very least, a desire for a private self. Her role as ruler of Pamphilia absolutely informs the way she thinks about herself and her relationship with Amphilanthus; there is no denying that. However, her incredibly private, unpublished, uncirculated poetry and her reticence about her feelings for Amphilanthus construct one aspect of a private self. Unlike Urania, Pamphilia does not have to locate external markers of identity, for they are all already present for her. Indeed, if we believe she was named Pamphilia at birth, then she has never not known

who she is. In addition, she does not reject the positive or negative emotions that contribute to the construction of an internal sense of self. That is, when Urania encounters romance, she becomes entrapped, her quest comes to a halt, and she doesn't seem to recognize that relationship as an element of selfhood that could be just as valuable as paternal affiliation. Romance is just as dangerous for Pamphilia, but she embraces the danger and heartache as integral to her self. One of the risks of seeing Pamphilia as a character who exists only in the public sphere and whose selfhood is inherently and absolutely bound up in the like-named country that she will rule is the loss of the complexity that Pamphilia's inner turmoil grants to her character. The composition and subsequent destruction of her secret, practically anonymous poetry, her refusal to speak of and thereby publish her feelings for Amphilanthus, all speak to a private subjectivity that comes into conflict with her public self.

The roles both women indicated on their approach to the theatre predictably come true as the situation plays itself out. When Pamphilia and Urania arrive at the building, they discover pillars engraved with letters whose meaning they cannot discern and between the pillars, a keyhole. When Pamphilia finds the key and inserts it into the hole there "[i]nstantly appeared as magnificent a Theatre, as Art could frame" (373) into which she ventures with Urania, Philistella, and Selarina, having been enticed to ascend the throne at the top of the stairs. Music immediately sounds and overrules all their senses and when they sit in the chairs, the gate re-locks and they are all trapped inside the Enchanted Theatre:

The gate was instantly locked again, and so was all thought in them shut up for their coming forth thence, till the man most loving, and most beloved, used his force, who should release them, but himselfe be inclosed

till by the freeing of the sweetest and loveliest creature, that poore habits had disguised greatnesse in, he should be redeem'd, and then should all bee finished. (373)

The conditions for release are set at once: in order for the enchantment to finish:

Amphilanthus, "the man most loving, and most beloved," and Urania, "the sweetest and loveliest creature, that poore habits had disguised greatnesse in," after being freed herself, need to come to the Theatre and free those still imprisoned. The temptation into the Theatre and subsequent imprisonment of the women mirrors the events at the Throne of Love. Yet, here as the note to text points out,<sup>17</sup> only women are affected by this enchantment and during their imprisonment, they are not afflicted with the tortures of love, but with the pleasures.

When Urania returns to the Enchanted Theatre, she does so not only to help free Pamphilia, but also to complete her quest by reading her history. When the lovers imprisoned at the Theatre are awakened from their enchanted sleep and all the couples assemble in a circle, the chairs vanish and a "Pillar of Gold... on which hung a Booke" takes their place (455). Urania takes the book down, ending the "Musique and charme" aspect of the enchantment, and with the help of Veralinda<sup>18</sup> is able to open the book. The house itself vanishes as the book is opened and "they found in the Booke the whole story of Urania, and how that after shee was stollen by the Duke as before was confessed by himselfe, and then from him by robbers" (455). As Urania continues to read the story in this book, she discovers the significance behind the mantle and purse that had been left with her as an infant:

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<sup>17</sup> Robertson's note to 373.22-23 points out how the narrator's "patronizing tone calls attention to the fact that this enchantment involves women only" (761).

<sup>18</sup> Veralinda's story in the first volume of the *Urania* parallels that of Urania, in that she,

This wise man who had made this enchantment preserved her, took her from those robbers, left the purse and mantle with her to be the means for those that took her up to cherish her, and then being Lord of this Island, framed this enchantment, wither he knew she should come and give part of the conclusion to it, and so appear fit to deserve his care, which she might thanke him for; the next story as of Veralinda, which was this. (455)

In a way, the story of Urania's life had been written before she had a chance to live it.

The wise man's foreknowledge allows him to set the enchantment while Urania is still very young, with the expectation that her desire to learn her own history will eventually lead her to the island to end the spell. The moment the enchantment is set, Urania's past, present, and future become conflated. For the wise man on the enchanted island, some of the events in Urania's life appear as if in a literary narrative over which he has control, with the events taking place both chronologically and concurrently. The double-kidnapping that brings her to the sorcerer ensures both that he will set the spell and that she will break it, and over none of these events does Urania have complete power.

Yet, the times and places where Urania does have control further underscore how complex the development of female agency and selfhood is in Wroth's text. At the start of her quest, Urania bemoans her ignorance above all else; to not *know* who she is and to have that ignorance stem from the sudden loss of both personal and familial history makes her miserable. Slowly, through her travels, she learns of her history by listening to the narratives of others whom she meets, often by chance, along the way. Those narratives and the information they contain, coupled with the acknowledgement she receives from her father, are the markers of selfhood that Urania searches for throughout her quest. As discussed above, the external markers of selfhood are the ones that Urania tends to depend on. However, for those markers to work, they need to signify something

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too, is sent on a quest that ends in the process of self-discovery via the reading of a text.

that Urania herself believes in, that is, she needs to have *internalized* the idea that, for example, patriarchal approval and clothing type can function as public signs of status and affiliation that work to define the self. Here, in order to conclude her quest and dispel the ignorance she bemoaned at the start of that quest, Urania has to read the history of her own life that somebody else had written. The act of reading, however, is presented as anything but passive. The taking up and opening of the book are both productive acts that have the ability to transform the theatre from an enchanted, confining space to a safe, free one. Just as Urania internalized the stories of other women and used those narratives to be able to predict how the events might turn out at the Enchanted Theatre, so too does she internalize her own history so that it can transform both herself and the world around her.

## Chapter Four

*"The light of her beauty and the heat of her youth": Fantastic voyages & fantastic bodies  
in Margaret Cavendish's Blazing World*

In her address to the reader that introduces *The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing World*, Margaret Cavendish stakes her claim as "Margaret the First." Though, as she explains, she has "neither power, time nor occasion to conquer the world," instead of being mistress of no world, she has created a world of her own. Her act of creation is explicitly textual; both Margaret Cavendish, the author, and the Duchess of Newcastle, the character, participate in the authoring of a new world via their own powers of imagination rather than in the conquering of an already existing world. Cavendish divides the "world of her own creating, the text of the *Blazing World* itself, into three parts: the first "romancical," the second "philosophical," and the third "fancy" or "fantastical" (124). In the epilogue to the *Blazing World*, she emphasizes how "both the Blazing and the other Philosophical World, mentioned in the first part of this description, are framed and composed of the most pure, that is, the rational parts of matter, which are the parts of my mind" (224). This combination of romance, philosophy, fancy, and reason highlights multiple aspects of the imagination and carefully places both the text of the *Blazing World* itself and the acts of authorship within that text outside generic boundaries. In her address to the reader Cavendish emphasizes the authority inherent in the use of the imagination as an aid to the act of creation. The created worlds of the mind are immaterial and, thus, "it is in everyone's power to do the like." Her readers who, like Cavendish, "cannot be *Henry the Fifth*, or *Charles the Second*" and

cannot conquer as "*Alexander* and *Caesar*" did, can nevertheless author multiple worlds of the mind and grant to ourselves and to others dominion within those worlds.

Yet, within the *Blazing World*, the creation of imagined worlds is only one of the acts of authority in which the female characters partake. This act of intellectual creation and of retreat into the world of the mind takes place alongside a number of other acts that emphasize the importance of the material world and the potential of the female body. The heroine of the *Blazing World*, a Lady who becomes the Empress of the world, begins her narrative as the victim of a kidnapping and ends it as a destroyer of worlds. Her self-transformation from a nearly powerless figure into one who can appear almost omnipotent is at the heart of the *Blazing World* and that transformation itself depends on the altering perception of the female body. The journey of self-transformation and self-fashioning that the Empress undergoes can be mapped along the physical (and immaterial) journeys inside the text to forge relationships between travel, space, and authority in the *Blazing World*. Travel, aided by the providence granted to those whose minds and bodies are virtuous, first enables the Lady to leave one place where she lacked almost all control over her own body and to come into another where a woman can be granted total authority. When both the citizens and the Emperor of the *Blazing World* perceive the Lady to be one of the most beautiful and possibly powerful women they have encountered, they name her Empress of that world. Once she becomes Empress, however, all power resides in her, and her first move is to divide up *intellectual space*. Not only does she wish to gain knowledge of the *Blazing World* from its people, but she also takes on the task of placing them into separate societies based on species and specialty. The conversations with the different groups of academics set out a criticism of

contemporary science and learning, and, at the same time, work to make the Empress an arbiter of intellectual space in the *Blazing World*. The knowledge that she gains through this discourse with the intelligentsia paves the way for her later actions of establishing her own religion and of wishing to write her own Cabbala, which then leads her to the Duchess and their renegotiation of material space. Only after the Empress has mapped out the physical and intellectual spaces in both her own and the Duchess's world is she ready to reclaim all the power inherent in her own physical form.

Thus, Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World* offers a narrative of travel and a version of embodied female authority that stems from the protagonist's participation in different modes of travel and narrative. The issues of confinement, community, power, physicality, and authority that characterize the texts in previous chapters all come out here in this last chapter as Cavendish's *Blazing World* participates in a variety of generic modes and of narrative traditions to set out how female authority and female selfhood develop parallel to stories of travel, exploration, and dominion.<sup>19</sup> The body of the Lady, later the Empress, forms the focal point for these intersecting narratives; the knowledge she gains of the physical world around her and the ability she gains to manipulate her physical and spiritual presence in that world enable the Empress to bring together stories of travel, exploration, and dominion.

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<sup>19</sup> Anne Thell's reading of the *Blazing World* demonstrates how the travel narrative "provides a source of power for Cavendish in two ways," first by her use of the control the travel genre offers, with the traveler herself the one who can report the truth of her journey, and second, by her use of the genre to create a society outside her own that can critique her own world (445-446). Though my own reading focuses on the Empress and the fictional character of the Duchess, Thell's reading is integral to my understanding of some of the ways Cavendish's text participates in the genre of travel writing.

*The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* opens with a story that has, at its core, the problems inherent in the narrative and real world traditions of a patriarchal society. The book begins with a narrative of travel, adventure, and romance, as a "merchant travelling into a foreign country, fell extremely in love with a young Lady" (125). At first, the expectations associated with these types of narrative are fulfilled: we hear about the perceived inequality between a foreign merchant and the woman who is above him "both in birth and wealth" (125) and the plot he executes in order to obtain the Lady and circumvent the class system that would keep him from his desires. Yet, his desires are quickly revealed to be selfish, and the brief romance scenario we are offered changes to a rape scenario; the Lady, whose "father's house was not far from the sea" is stolen away while gathering shells upon the shore (125). The society in which the Lady is born is one that allows for the treatment of women as goods; just as the Lady gather shells upon the shore by her father's house, so too does the merchant gather up the Lady, taking her from her father's house as if she were but a shell for him to pluck from the shore. Her father, who ought to be keeping her safe for the marriage economy, is nowhere to be seen, and his negligence allows her to become part of a circulating money economy.

The merchant's rapacious desire does not go unpunished; just as quickly as he gains the object of his desire, he loses her, "for Heaven frowning at his theft, raised such a tempest, as they knew not what to do, or whither to steer their course" (125). The small packet-boat which the merchant and a select few of his men used to apprehend the Lady is "carried as swift as an arrow out of a bow" up to the North Pole and to the "Icy Sea" (125). Punishment is just as swift; the merchant and his men perish in the journey, for not

knowing what to do on "so strange an adventure" and "not being provided for so cold a voyage" they were "all frozen to death" (125-6). Only the Lady, through the grace of God and the power of her own inborn virtue, is able to survive. The quick succession of the plot from romance to rape to divine retribution takes us out of a story that could have followed a number of familiar literary narrative tropes. From story that could have followed the trajectory of unobtainable, unrequited love or the punishment of a rapist or the suffering of a victimized woman, we get a story about the survival and eventual empowerment of the victim. While Cavendish begins her novel with a focus on male desire, such desire proves to be self-destructive and the repercussions of rape are visited a great deal more on the perpetrator than they are on the victim. The Lady, in fact, seems only to be an accessory during her abduction. Her thoughts and reactions during the kidnapping scene are absent from the text, and only when the narrative shifts away from the merchant to the only surviving member of the expedition does her story truly begin.

The female travel narrative that grows out of the narrative of selfish masculine desire finds at its point of origin the stories of captive women who overcome their oppressors. More similar to the story of Constance, as told by Chaucer's *Man of Law*, another narrative of suffering, travel, and conversion with a complex female character as its focus, than to the stories of women who suffer both kidnap and rape, and whose suffering and often suicide paves the way for conflict and anguish of *male* characters,<sup>20</sup> the tale of the Lady's survival is one of female virtue triumphant. Luck does not save the Lady from the Icy Sea or the polar climate at the pole; the displeasure of Heaven brings

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<sup>20</sup> The best-known example of this type of story is the rape of Lucretia, as told by various writers including Livy, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. For an example of a female character who disappears from the text shortly after the rape scene, see Chaucer's "The Wife of

about the tempest that carries the ship away and the "assistance and favour of the Gods to this virtuous Lady" guide the vessel through the sea ice to ensure it does not wreck. The ability to survive, then, is a gift of the gods granted to those who remain virtuous.<sup>21</sup>

Virtue alone does not keep the Lady alive. "By the light of her beauty, the heat of her youth, and protection of the gods" she is able to survive when all the men aboard the vessel freeze to death. Their boat arrives at "the conjunction of those two Poles" where their own world was "joined close" to the pole of another world, thus doubling the strength of the cold (126). Her initial inclusion in this narrative of travel is one that is void of agency--she is kidnapped and forced from her father's home onto the merchant's vessel, treated with no more consideration than stolen property, and the narrative never speaks of her own fears or desires. Her rescue, too, depends on forces outside the reach of her influence. Virtue, and the enactment of qualities associated with a virtuous life, can be active. Though we never see the Lady act upon her virtue, that it is strong enough to procure her rescue demonstrates that neither her own thoughts or actions nor those of her captors compromise its integrity. For this lady, active virtue does not mean taking all her suffering upon herself and enacting punishment for the crimes of others (again, compare this story to that of Lucretia) on her body. Her preservation is demonstration enough of her spiritual, moral, and physical integrity. "The light of her beauty" and "the heat of her youth," however, are harder to name as active characteristics. While they could be seen as external manifestations of her inner strength, they can also be seen as physical qualities

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Bath's Tale."

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of contemporary thought about North Pole exploration and a reference to the Galenic female body as "colder" and thus more likely to survive such an expedition, see Line Cottagnies's chapter in *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period*.

that are in no way connected to her moral rectitude. To be young and beautiful are not qualities over which the Lady has any control and, therefore, she cannot use them to her benefit in this scenario. She could not, for instance, make herself appear younger or more beautiful in the eyes of the beneficial providence that rescues her from death. Unlike Cleopatra and Mariam, women of great physical beauty who have the opportunity or ability to see the effects of the beauty on others whether or not they choose to perform their power and femininity in such a manner, the Lady has nobody upon whom to impress the power of her beauty or youth. Only the benevolence and favor of the gods take note; no further action of her own is required to procure her rescue or her success on the journey to the other world. She remains helpless, unable to resist her own capture and too weak to remove either herself or the decaying bodies of her shipmates from the vessel once putrefaction sets in (126). Yet, that weakness is coupled with a virtue strong enough to earn the favor of the gods. Power and the capability to survive the journey, then, are not concentrated in physical strength or access to material goods (both of which, at the start of the narrative, are connected to male authority and desire), but in an undescribed, unnamed sense of virtue that manifests itself in the Lady's light of beauty and heat of youth and in the fact of her survival.

Women do not enter narratives of romance, rape, and travel in Cavendish's *Blazing World* of their own election; the Lady is forced into all these scenarios. Only later, when she has obtained greater power, do we see her able to choose when and how to travel and to what effect she can use her body. By the time her story comes to an end, she will have learned how to manipulate her appearance so that it can be used as a source

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of great physical power. The story of the development of her authority and the unfolding of the Lady's fully formed self into the Empress grows out of a story of travel and survival. Her latent physical prowess enables her survival on the voyage. The significance of this moment becomes clearer and clearer throughout the *Blazing World* as the Lady becomes the Empress of the Blazing World. Her authority, her awareness of the power she holds over the peoples of that world, and her realization that her power can extend to worlds beyond the Blazing World, both real and imagined, all unfold, grow, and develop throughout the narrative, too, and those developments accompany her growing knowledge of how to travel through multiple realms and how to use her body to her advantage through those travels. Although she was placed in a position of helplessness and ignorance at the start of her journey, the Lady apparently cannot help but gain power and knowledge as her journey continues. Her rise to Empress is dramatic not only for the rapidity with which it happens, but also for the amount of authority that she fashions for herself. Most of her narrative after the scenes of her rescue by the various denizens of the Blazing World focuses on her development of power as Empress, not with the way she obtains her position. The exercise of power and the development of knowledge, coupled with the desire and ability to explore multiple physical and non-physical worlds, take up most of the Empress's story. By the time we get to the end of the Lady/Empress's narrative, not only has she learned how to travel in both the immaterial world of the spirits and in worlds of her own creation, but she has also learned how to fashion her body (the light of her beauty, the heat of her youth) in very material ways to influence her subjects and her enemies. The roots of that power reside here at the start of

the text, in the story of a woman who is kidnapped from her father's house and brought to the Blazing World by no choice or power of her own.

Once her boat lands on the snow-covered shores of the Blazing World, the Lady is rescued by "strange creatures, in shape like bears, only they went upright as men" who, despite their difference from humans, exercise no cruelty toward the Lady and "showed her all civility and kindness imaginable" (127). Unlike the men of her homeland, including her father who could not protect her from the merchant and his men who kidnap her, these creatures treat her with care and kindness. Yet, even control that is exercised under the aegis of "all civility and kindness imaginable" is still a form of control. They carry her from the vessel, which they sink along with its dead crew, and take her to the fox-men, who "very much admiring this beauteous Lady, and having discoursed some while together, agreed at last to make her a present to the Emperor of their world" (127). The Lady has already been removed forcefully from the marriage economy present in her home world; her arrival in the Blazing World subjects her directly to another. She is both discoverer and discovered at this moment in her journey; she comes upon the Blazing World and is come upon herself by its inhabitants. She remains an object to be taken up by one man, and then another, and made a gift to the most powerful man in their world. To view a woman as an object, as something that can be given without any consideration for her needs or desires, is to ignore that which makes her human.

Even the inner workings of the Lady's mind remain unknown to the reader; aside from brief moments of fear and apprehension, no idea of her thoughts or feelings is revealed until the inhabitants of the Blazing World begin their journey to take her to the

Emperor. The first indication of her future, more active role within the Blazing World takes place during that journey:

Having thus prepared and ordered their navy, they went on in despite of calm or storm, and though the Lady at first fancied herself in a very sad condition, and her mind was much tormented with doubts and fears, not knowing whether this strange adventure would tend to her safety or destruction; yet she being withal of a generous spirit, and ready wit, considering what dangers she had past, and finding those sorts of men civil and diligent attendants to her, took courage, and endeavored to learn their language; which after she had obtained so far, that partly by some words and signs she was able to apprehend their meaning, she was so far from being afraid of them, that she thought herself not only safe, but very happy in their company: acquaintance settles it in peace and tranquility.  
(130)

Instead of functioning as a passive passenger en route to a destiny decided for her by the denizens of this new world, the Lady takes on her first truly active role within the novel. The "doubts and fears" that originally torment her mind come from the uncertainty of her situation; ignorance of where she is and what her escort, who also act as her captors here, plan to do with her keeps her from participating in the choices that direct her life at the most basic of levels. Making use of both her "generous spirit" and "ready wit" she can compare this journey to the first she took out of her native land, discern that the beast-men of the Blazing World are more civil and gracious than the men of her own world, and take "courage" that her situation has bettered. The Lady demonstrates an openness of thinking and a willingness to see that not all men and not all forms of captivity are the same. She also employs her own quickness of mind to choose what freedom is available to her. Her strength of heart and desire to learn the language of the Blazing World place the Lady in a position to remove herself from a state of ignorance to one of greater awareness. Fear grows out of uncertainty and ignorance; it dissipates when the Lady is

able to "apprehend [her captors'] meaning." As she learns some words and signs and is able to communicate with the citizens of the Blazing World, she is able to understand their intentions and to dispel her fears. No act of her captors eases her trepidation, but rather the exercise of her own intelligence.

Along with the acquisition of language comes a wealth of knowledge; the laws, customs, and systems of learning that become so important to the Lady's governing of the Blazing World once she takes up the role of Empress all find their origin here in her learning the one language of this world. When she is brought to the Emperor, and he "conceive[s] her to be some goddess, and offer[s] to worship her" she is able to "refuse" and tell him herself "that although she came out of another world, yet she was but a mortal" (132). The Emperor's reaction to this revelation is to rejoice; immediately, he "made her his wife, and gave her an absolute power to rule and govern all the world as she pleased" (132). Once again, the power invested in female beauty earns the Lady special treatment--both the Emperor and his subjects assume that she is divine and the subjects, "who could hardly be persuaded to believe her mortal," continue to grant her "all the veneration and worship due to a deity" (132). Yet, it is her ability to now "refuse" the Emperor's original assumption and to explain to him on her own who she is and whence she comes that prompts the Emperor to grant her the status of Empress. Her command of language helps her obtain the freedom that, at this point in the narrative, she would not have been able to obtain through sheer physical power. The Lady's story is once again her own: she is not just the rescued victim in a tale of a kidnapping and shipwreck. She is a woman with a past that she can share with the Emperor; she can now

tell her own history and explain for herself who she is and what place she will take up as ruler of the Blazing World.

That place, when she takes it up, is not one of physical but intellectual authority. Having observed the "several sorts of men" that occupy the Blazing World and that "each followed such a profession as was most proper for the nature of their species" the Empress "encouraged them" in those professions, "especially those that had applied themselves to the study of several arts and sciences" (134). Nor does her involvement with these branches of knowledge end with her encouragement of their study; the Empress "erected schools, and founded several societies" to promote the study of the arts and sciences.

Indeed, her continued promotion of the different branches of knowledge serves her own needs, for through them she gains much of her knowledge about her new world. Having taken up the position of sole ruler and having divided her subjects up into "societies of virtuosos" (136), the Empress "before all things" desires "to be informed both of the manner of their religion and government" (134). After discussions of religion and governments, those about architecture and the many branches of the sciences follow, so that the Empress participates in conversations not only about what the Blazing World's many virtuosi know, but also how they come upon that knowledge. The Empress's primary action as ruler of the Blazing World, then, is to continue to distance herself from the ignorance in which the merchant's kidnapping had placed her. Instead of a display of physical prowess, or, really, any other kind of power that exerts immediate material control over her subjects, the Empress maintains the practice of knowledge acquisition of the Blazing World that she began with her learning of their language. The skill to shape

and control systems of knowledge for those whom she deems less capable of self-moderation supports the Empress's decision to categorize her subjects into the various "societies of vertuosos." Just as the Blazing World had one monarch, one religion, and one language, now it has one method of categorizing and practicing knowledge. The authority that the Empress achieves through her conversations with the different specialists in her new world comes to bear throughout the novel as the Empress attempts to reform the religious institutions of the Blazing World.

The reformation of religion is one of the first demonstrations of the Empress's knowledge of how to use *art* as a tool of authority and influence. Her restructuring of the world's religion also functions as another carving out of intellectual space. When she examines the religion in the Blazing World, the Empress learns that women have no part in the system of worship. This discovery leads the Empress on a campaign to convert the residents of the Blazing World to her new religion. First, after having "consulted with her own thoughts" (162), she begins to instruct her people. The women especially prove they have "quick wits, subtle conceptions, clear understandings, and solid judgments" and quickly become devout followers of the Empress's new religion. The act is one of authorship, for not only does the Empress "write" her own religion, but also she creates a female-focused religious community that grants a voice to those who had been left out of the previous official state religion. Thanks to her skill in preaching, a demonstration of her continued ability to use language for her own ends, she earns the love and loyalty of all her subjects. Pondering the "inconstant nature of mankind" and "fearing that in time they would grow weary, and desert the divine truth, following their own fancies, and living according to their own desires" the Empress studies "all manner of ways to

prevent" her subjects drifting from the new faith that she establishes for them (163). Her solution is to manipulate their fears and desires, to shape them to her own purposes, and to present her subjects with a version of the divine truth that they cannot question or deny. She builds two chapels, one of star-stone to comfort the devout and one of the flaming sun-stone to frighten the sinful:

And thus the Empress, by art, and her ingenuity, did not only convert the Blazing World to her own religion, but kept them in a constant belief, without enforcement or blood-shed; for she knew well, that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled into their minds by gentle persuasions; and after this manner she encouraged them also in all other duties and employments, for fear, though it makes people obey, yet does it not last so long, nor it is so sure a means to keep them to their duties, as love. (164)

The use of the fire- and star-stones in the chapels allows the Empress to use art and architecture to manipulate the beliefs and emotions of her subjects. By keeping secret the existence and function of the sun-stone, which flames when wet, she ensures that her faith will center around a mystery. This mystery of faith, along with the love she instills in her subjects, encourages "constant belief, without enforcement or blood-shed," with the insinuation that all enforcement would be violent. Yet, by forcing their emotions via a manipulation of appearance, the Empress takes her subjects' wills and desires captive and keeps them ignorant of the source of their faith. The structures of the chapels work to reinforce the subjects' faith, giving them a physical reminder of their obedience or sinfulness. Like Cleopatra, who erects a monument and commands her women to offer up memorial prayers to keep her story alive within Egypt after her and Antonius's death, the Empress ensures her subjects' belief and love by changing the physical as well as the religious landscape of the Blazing World.

The renegotiation of intellectual space that the Empress introduces with her interview of the Blazing World's various learned societies continues when she decides to contact the immaterial spirits of the realm and, with their assistance, to write her own Cabbala. The introduction of the immaterial spirits who are able to travel from realm to realm and world to world dramatically changes the conception and experience of space in the text. Indeed, this conception of space differs not only from previous ones encountered in Cavendish's text, but also from all the other texts examined in this project. The immaterial spirits in the Blazing World are, as their name suggests, intelligent beings that have no material bodies of their own. Their lack of dependence on physical form allows them to transgress all spatial and temporal boundaries and, with that transgression, they are allowed unbounded knowledge. The first deed they do for the Empress is to bring her knowledge of her home world. They then go on to answer the Empress's questions about the nature of humans and immaterial spirits, and of the mortal worlds and of Heaven and Hell. From the immaterial spirits the Empress is able to gain access to knowledge of times and places beyond the reach of her own intellectual prowess.

The knowledge that the Empress gains of the realm of the immaterial spirits coincides with her desire to author a Cabbala; that desire leads her to the Duchess, a woman brought to her by the immaterial spirits to help with the authoring of her text. As with the development of the Empress's religion, authorship becomes a female, communal activity. Her encounter with the Duchess, in turn, not only leads her to a mode of travel that eliminates all the constraints of the body but also leads her to become the author of a world of her own creation. The literary spaces explored by the Empress and the Duchess allow them to create spaces not even imagined in the poetry of writers like Whitney and

Lanyer, whose narrators strove to create spaces that allowed for creative and spatial agency for women. This woman, who had been so helpless at the start of the *Blazing World*, becomes an author in multiple ways. Her determination of intellectual space, her relationship with the immaterial spirits, her acquisition of knowledge about the transgression the limits of physical space, and her creation of "a world within herself" are all acts of authorship. To be an author, then, is not simply the creation of some original written text. To be an author, in the world of this Empress, is to take control of knowledge by interrogating and regulating the systems that produce knowledge, as the Empress does with her review and management of the Blazing World's various learned societies. The Empress's relationships with the immaterial spirits and with the Duchess teach her to "rewrite" herself. She gains control over her body and her mind; she has the authority to decide when her physical form is needed or necessary, and she can author a world in which that need is primary. From these acts of authorship stems the re-creation of the female body and female beauty that grants the Empress power in the war. Her management of space and travel and her manipulation of the way her body and her beauty are perceived let her use imagination and the creation of images to give her power over the enemies of her original homeland. Thus, the knowledge of a spiritual life, that is, of the life led by the immaterial beings, and the creation of an immaterial, intellectual world lead the Empress to learn the great power inherent in the command of the material world.

When the Empress first meets with the immaterial spirits, her first and greatest desire is to garner information about her homeland:

... after the spirits had presented themselves to the Empress, (in what shapes or forms, I cannot exactly tell) after some few compliments that passed between them, the Empress told the spirits that she questioned not, but they did know how she was a stranger in that world, and by what miraculous means she was arrived there; and since she had a great desire to know the condition of the world she came from, her request to the spirits was, to give her some information thereof, especially those parts of the world where she was born, bred, and education, as also of her particular friends and acquaintance; all which the spirits did according to her desire... (166)

She and the spirits go on to talk about "the most famous students, writers, and experimental philosophers in the world" and to discuss "whether there were none that had found out yet the Jews' Cabbala" (166). A longer discourse about the nature of faith, belief, the soul and the spiritual history of humankind (*i.e.*, the history of humans starting with the creation of Adam and Eve and following the Fall) ensues, interspersed with information about the nature of the immaterial spirits themselves, including their ability to discern the past, present, and future and their use of material bodies to enable motion and physical, natural (as opposed to supernatural) knowledge. The Empress's curiosity about her homeland and the spirits' ability to inform her of the goings on in that world speak to an unfolding of knowledge not bound by material concerns. The Empress, through the spirits, is able to remain informed about her home world despite her present inability to travel between those two worlds; just as her original trip to the Blazing World marked her as unique, so too does her command of the material realm grant her the unique ability to use knowledge to continue to "travel" between the physical and spiritual realms.

Her curiosity about the nature of the world of the spirits, the nature of the human soul, humankind's place in salvation history, and the nature of God and of the universe

itself demonstrates a desire to keep on pushing the boundaries of human knowledge. When she steps too far beyond the limits of human knowledge, the immaterial spirits rein her in and refuse to answer her, not condemning her curiosity, but reminding her that there are things that either they themselves do not know or that they cannot reveal to human beings. The Empress desires to confront the boundaries of knowledge, to approach the limit of what is knowable by human beings and to be assured that, although many of those questions are unanswerable, there exists a realm of divine comprehension beyond that of the human and spiritual. Like her conversations with the "societies of the virtuosos" earlier, this conversation with the immaterial spirits establishes as many boundaries as it dissolves; the Empress progressively gains more and more knowledge, possibly more than any other being in her realm, and uses that conversation to demarcate what is knowable and what is not. With the virtuosos, she forms societies for them and tells them when their learning has progressed to a point that is no longer useful. With the immaterial spirits, she lets herself be guided, takes in all the knowledge that she can, and does not press for more when she is told that some learning is beyond her ken. Many of the questions the Empress asks are about the nature of physical beings, including the relationship between the immaterial spirits and their material vehicles, about the nature of the human soul and how it relates to the body, about the construction of the material world, including the animation of the material world and its sources in the story of Adam and Eve, and the nature of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. Her interview of the immaterial spirits, in a way, reconstructs the physical world and the spiritual one that surrounds it through learning.

The acquisition of knowledge takes the Empress to the point where she shares her wish to write her own Cabbala with the immaterial spirits. Her desire for spiritual, esoteric knowledge and the breaking down of the boundaries between human and superhuman learning gives her an authority beyond that of even her wisest subjects. Her desire to synthesize her knowledge into the writing of a Cabbala begins a more demonstrative expression of the Empress's knowledge of the spiritual, analogous to her reformation of the institutionalized religion and foundation of new places and practices of worship. The Cabbala represents a step in the Empress's personal reformation; her writing of a spiritual text will not only mark her as the author of a text, but as the creator of her own system of personal beliefs. The system of religious belief she imposes on her people seems to come from a desire to control her subjects. The writing of her Cabbala, while never depicted in detail, seems to arise from a desire to codify her knowledge on some broad, intellectual topic.

This act, however, is not one that can be accomplished immediately or alone. Just as the Empress expresses her wish to write a Cabbala, the immaterial spirits disappear and the Empress falls into a trance (179). Upon waking, she "grew very studious" and, fearing that she was the cause of the spirits' disappearance sent her worm-men down into the ground and her fly-men into the air to search for them. Eventually, the worm-men discover that the immaterial spirits had passed through the center of the earth on their way to the antipodes, where the fly-men encountered them. In the Empress's search for the spirits, the map of the text reaches out towards the heaven and down past the center of the earth all the way through to the other side. Though the reader does not travel with the worm-men, fly-men, or immaterial spirits to these places and instead remains at the court

with the Empress, a sense of the greatness and vastness of this world begins to come into focus.

Writing her Cabbala brings this vastness into focus for the Empress, for it is through her desire to author this work that she encounters the Duchess of Newcastle. When the immaterial spirits return, they offer the Empress the help of a scribe in the composition of her Cabbala; she accepts, and requests a spiritual scribe. After pointing out the disadvantages of using the soul of one of the famous ancient writers, who "were so wedded to their own opinions, that they would never have the patience to be scribes," or one of the more modern ones, who were "so self-conceited that would scorn to be scribes to a woman," the immaterial spirits recommend the Duchess of Newcastle (181). The Duchess, they explain, is a woman "which although she is not one of the most learned, eloquent, witty and ingenious, yet is she a plain and rational writer, for the principle of her writings, is sense and reasons, and she will without question, be ready to do you all the service she can" (181).

Writing, then, becomes not an individual but a collaborative process. To employ the soul of any of the famous ancient or modern writers would result in an unsuccessful collaboration for a woman writer; the best scribe is another woman, and writing the Empress's Cabbala becomes an instance of female collaboration. Although she has had the assistance of some of her subjects, the societies of vertuosos, and the immaterial spirits previously, no one person or being has worked with the Empress. Even the Emperor himself has all but disappeared from the text; at no point does he join the Empress in her collection of knowledge, an area in which she appears to be his superior (simply given his near complete absence in the text). The Empress reforms the Blazing

World's religion on her own, acquires as much of that world's knowledge from its most learned citizens as she can, and has even reached out to the world of the immaterial spirits for knowledge beyond her own world and the Blazing World. To produce her own written work, however, she needs the help of a woman who will be not only her scribe, but also her "platonic lover."

The relationship that the Empress forms with her scribe, the Duchess of Newcastle, is the most intimate in the text. Before she arrives, the Empress claims that by her choosing a woman as a scribe "will the Emperor have no reason to be jealous, she being one of my own sex." The spirit with whom she speaks warns her "husbands have reason to be jealous of platonic lovers, for they are very dangerous, as being not only very intimate and close, but subtle and insinuating" (181). The Empress does not refute any of the points that the spirit makes about platonic lovers nor does she seem to see them as a danger. Her indication that the Emperor might have been jealous if the scribe had been male points to the possibility of the intimacy and closeness of the relationship, rather than the "subtle and insinuating" behavior that the spirit warns the Empress about. When she decides to take on a female scribe, then, the Empress also decides to form a relationship that could be more intimate and close than the one that she has with her own husband. The absence of an erotic relationship with her scribe marks not only the Duchess and the Empress as *platonic* lovers, but also the perfect closeness that will come to exist between them. The representation of same-sex female relationships, similar to the ones represented in Lanyer's "Cook-ham" and Wroth's *Urania*, depends on textual activity and the intimacy that arises from being able to tell or write each other's stories. That such intimacy will exist between these two women is established before they meet,

and at the Duchess's "first arrival the Empress embraced her and saluted her with a spiritual kiss" (181). Notions of physical affection are elided with spiritual ones, and soon the Duchess becomes so dear to the Empress that she supersedes all other counselors.

The Duchess's soul is originally summoned to help the Empress write her Cabbala, and her primary concern is whether or not the Empress's subjects will be able to read her penmanship. However, before they even begin to write the work, the Duchess takes her place as the Empress's counselor in this literary endeavor. She suggests not that the Empress write a Cabbala in the style of the Judaic religion, nor should the Empress write a philosophic, moral, or political one, but advises her "rather to make a poetical or romancical Cabbala, wherein [she] can use metaphors, allegories, similitudes, etc and interpret them as [she] please[s]" (183). What the Duchess recommends and the Empress adopts is a literary Cabbala, a work where the Empress will have control over language, its manipulation and its interpretation. "Metaphors, allegories, similitudes" and other literary devices allow for the complexity of language play that opens up interpretational possibilities for the author as well as the reader. The Duchess's suggestion that that Empress can "interpret" the figurative use of language in her literary Cabbala any way she desires seems to speak to the control that the disciplines of philosophy, morality, and politics would exert on her writing should she compose her Cabbala within them. To write about the Judaic religion, about philosophy, morality or politics would require the Empress to write within an already established discourse. To write a literary Cabbala would permit the Empress to escape a certain amount of discursive control; instead of being controlled by what are already established and primarily masculine intellectual

traditions, she can exert power over her own reader simply by choosing an intellectual tradition that encourages the flexibility of language and expression.

The Empress's reaction to the Duchess's suggestion is to accept it by "embracing her soul" and telling the Duchess that "she would take her counsel" (183). The Empress "made her also her favourite" and places her above all others who had once been part of her advisors at the royal court. In addition, this first meeting "did produce such an intimate friendship between them, that they became platonic lovers, although they were both females" and "(for between dear friends there's no concealment, they being like several parts of one united body)" (183). The friendship between the Empress and the Duchess is platonic both in the sense that it is non-erotic (though, at times, it depends on the rhetoric of erotic love to depict the intimacy between these two women) and that it reaches the height of perfect, shared intellectual understanding of which only men in the pre-modern era were believed capable. Through her friendship with the Duchess, a relationship that the Empress establishes immediately upon first meeting the other woman, the Empress begins to see how she, too, can overcome the restraints placed on her physical and gendered body.

The Empress's desire to share everything with the Duchess, not just her mind and her body, leads her to ask the immaterial spirits whether or not a world exists that the Duchess could conquer and become an empress. The desire to obtain worlds by conquering them is an aspiration from which neither the Duchess nor the Empress shies away. Yet, they both seem as happy to create fantasy worlds and to participate in this act of authorship and creation, as they would have been to conquer a material world. Though the Duchess longs to conquer a world of her own and the Empress encourages this

yearning, the immaterial spirits point out to both women the disadvantages of mastering a physical world. Worlds ready for conquering do not exist and even if they did, to conquer one world is to only know part of it. Even the Empress, who investigated all aspects of knowledge and learning available in the Blazing World does not know all parts of it at all times. "Whenas," the immaterial spirits persuade, "by creating a world within yourself, you may enjoy all both in whole and parts, without control or opposition, and may make what world you please, and alter it when you please, and enjoy as much pleasure and delight as a world can afford you" (186). The ability to know and control a world of her own creation from the inside out convinces the Duchess as well as the Empress. The power associated with the dominion of the worlds of the mind goes beyond that available to any earthly ruler. Although influenced by the conditions of the worlds in which they live, as seen in the Duchess's struggle to create a world based on the doctrines of previous philosophers, this act of creation allows for the shaking off of the boundaries of the material world. As the Duchess discards the opinions of Pythagoras, Epicurus, Descartes, and Hobbes, and resolves instead to "make a world of her own invention," a world "composed of sensitive and rational self-moving matter," she puts aside the ways of thinking, learning, and creating that men have fashioned for the past two thousand years (187-188). Like the narrator of Whitney's *Sweet Nosegay*, who sets aside the books of the generations of male writers who preceded her and decides to rewrite the work of one man, the Duchess separates herself from previous theories of creation and rewrites them as she invents and reinvents worlds inside her mind. The Duchess does not just reshape the philosophical landscape of her kingdom, but also the physical, the political, the scientific, the religious--that is, all the intellectual landscapes of the realm that we see the

Empress exploring and sometimes transforming in the Blazing World. When she and the Duchess create their imaginative worlds, they not only have the power to reshape those landscapes, but to control them completely.

Once the Empress constructs an "imaginary world of her own" for which she "framed all kinds of creatures proper and useful for it, strengthened it with good laws, and beautified it with arts and sciences," she finds herself with nothing left to do (189). Not willing to dissolve her world or institute any more changes in the Blazing World, which is already so "well ordered that it could not be mended" (189), she resolves to see the Duchess's home world. Her rulership of the Blazing World has been perfected as far as she can tell; her creation of an imaginary world is, by default, a flawless one in her eyes. Now, with both her invented and conquered worlds perfected, the Empress's next step is to explore new, undiscovered worlds. No longer limited to coming upon them by accident or through the guidance of providence as she had been at the start of the text, the Empress realizes she can choose when and where she wants to travel, and she can do so without the restraints imposed by her physical form. Just as the Duchess comes to her as a disembodied soul, so too does the Empress travel to the Duchess's home world in her spirit form.

Once she leaves her body behind, nearly all the restraints that had been placed upon the Lady at the start of the *Blazing World* have disappeared. No longer is she subject to the multiple forces that allowed her kidnapping; she has learned how to command the language of the Blazing World and use that knowledge to take part in, and at times, direct, the religious, scientific, philosophic, political, and legal discourses in that world. The Empress's conversations with the immaterial spirits make it clear that multiple

realms of knowledge exist, some of which are beyond her comprehension, and some of which can not only be comprehended but also created by her intellect. With one world conquered and another created, both of which appear perfect in her eyes, the Empress turns to the exploration of new, undiscovered worlds. Her exploration of the Duchess's world leaves behind the restrictions placed on all physical forms and allows her to see that world from beyond the limits of time and space and to create what Miriam Wallraven calls an "original vision of humanity,"<sup>22</sup> one that transgresses physical, temporal, spatial, and gender boundaries. The Empress's relationship with the Duchess and Duke of Newcastle, along with her marriage to the usually absentee Emperor, eliminate the dangers of erotic attraction. The threat of rape inherent in the act of kidnapping of which the Lady was once victim is one that as Empress she need not dread. She has taken command of her body and mind as well as of the world that she has conquered. What remains to the Empress, then, after conquering the Blazing World and exploring the Duchess's world, is a return to her own home world.

The second, significantly shorter part of the *Blazing World* depicts the Empress returning to her homeland in order to defend it from its enemies. Separated off from the rest of the text in both form and content, the second part functions almost like an epilogue or a commentary on the first part. All the important issues dealt with throughout the first part of the text--questions of travel, both physical and immaterial, of rulership, of embodiment, and of platonic relationships--all come to a head in the second part. The Empress is able to travel back to her home world and to do so in a way that demonstrates

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<sup>22</sup> Wallraven also links the Cavendish's "realm of spirits and souls" with current cyber theory, seeing the "enhanced humanity" in Cavendish's work in relation to the reconceptualizations of space and time that cyber theory explores.

effectively both the power of her position as Empress and of her own individual authority; her own skills, intellect, and ability to manipulate female beauty lend her authority which she lacked at the start of her narrative. Throughout the demonstration of the Empress's power, the most significant relationship remains that between herself and the Duchess, and it is out of a female/female homosocial, platonic relationship that the greatest and most problematic expression of female authority springs. For, although the Empress has gained the ability to travel independently and to present her body as both incredibly powerful and incredibly feminine, she also participates in great acts of destruction.

"The Second Part of the Description of the New Blazing World" opens with a statement of how the Empress had "settled her government to the best advantage and quiet of her Blazing World" and how she "lived and reigned most happily and blessedly" (203). The calm of her reign is quickly countered by news from the immaterial spirits that "the world she came from, was embroiled in a great war, and that most parts or nations thereof made wary against that kingdom, which was her native country, where all her friends and relations did live" (203). Aside from being able to bring peace throughout her new world, the Empress is capable of gathering knowledge from other realms, via the immaterial spirits that function under her command. Knowledge crosses geographical boundaries, and the Empress is able to access it in a manner unknown to other humans. This knowledge, however, comes with a price: she is made aware of the great suffering of her homeland, and though she has not spoken of it or expressed any sentiment for ESFI<sup>23</sup> since her arrival in the Blazing World, this news causes her great emotional distress.

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<sup>23</sup> Cavendish's acronym for "England, Scotland, France, and Ireland" aligns the Empress's

The Emperor who, like the Empress's feelings for her homeland, has been absent for most of the narrative, reappears to "comfort her as much as possibly he could" and to tell her "that she might have all the assistance that the Blazing World was able to afford" (203). His role remains the same as it has been throughout the *Blazing World*; the Emperor supplies the Empress with whatever resources she might need at any given time. Though, when she needs the fire-stones, one of the greatest sources of her own power, she either obtains those herself, or commands her subjects to do so. His absence throughout the text marks the Emperor as unnecessary beyond his ability to name the Empress as the most powerful ruler in their country. Indeed, even here, after his initial consultation with the Empress over the matter of war in her homeland, he yields his advisory position to the Duchess.

In her advice to the Empress, the Duchess first suggests that the Blazing World's shipwrights and architects design "ships that could swim under water" to help solve the problem of that world having only "one passage" into and out of it, big enough for only a packet-boat (205). Her plan offers the Empress an easy way into and out of the Blazing World, a feat that none of the learned men of that world had come up with. Like the Empress, the Duchess has the ability to navigate between worlds, though she herself is bound to leave her physical body behind and to pass through the different worlds as a soul. The idea of complete bodily autonomy and the idea that if the Empress can "but destroy their [her homeland's enemy's] ships, and hinder their navigation, [she] will be mistress of all that world" (207) relates back to the beginning of her story; with this plan, the Empress can overcome the power structures that made her a victim. She will have

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home world with contemporary Britain, though it is the Duchess who comes from a

control over the passage between worlds and will also have control over domestic maritime travel in her home world.

A lack of physical body turns out to be no obstacle for the Duchess in her role as advisor to the Empress of the Blazing World. When the Empress expresses doubt and uncertainty about part of the Duchess's plans, the "Duchess said, I desire Your Majesty will have but a little patience, and rely upon my advice, and you shall not fail to save your own native country, and in a manner become mistress of all that world you came from" (206). The Empress "who loved the Duchess as her own soul" listens to her, and dismisses the Duchess's concerns about her own lack of physical form: "Your soul, said the Empress, shall live with my soul, in my body; for I shall only desire your counsel and advice" (206). Here we see that bodies can be flexible; they can accommodate multiple souls or beings. Depending on the circumstance, physical forms are not always essential. The Duchess's worth does not reside at all in her physical presence or beauty, but in her mind and her skill as a councilor, for in her disembodied, ensouled form, she remains with the Empress throughout the battle.

The battle itself depends largely on spectacle, and the greatest part of that spectacle is the way the Empress presents her own body as a machine of war and catalyst for violence. Throughout the *Blazing World* the female body has been a space of contention. At the start of the novel, the Lady's body is taken by the merchant and made victim to kidnap and attempted rape. As the Empress of the Blazing World, she overcomes whatever ignorance or weakness she might have had in her homeland through the acquisition and negotiation of all realms of knowledge in the Blazing World. Once

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fictionalized version of Cavendish's own world.

she takes control of the systems of knowledge and learning, she is able to also overcome the limits of her physical body. Through her relationship with the Duchess, one that is first founded upon the desire to create a written text and that becomes more intimate despite the abandonment of that project, the Empress discovers the multiple ways in which women can transgress the boundaries of the physical. The confines of time and space disappear for her as she travels outside of her material body; all other confines fall away when she realizes she can create her own realm in the world of her mind.

When the Empress has learned the multiple ways in which the material body can be abandoned and that great knowledge, power, and authority can arise out of the worlds of the mind and the soul, she takes full command of her own physical presence. Her youth and her beauty, two characteristics that guaranteed her salvation at the start of her journey without any initiative of her own, become weapons strong enough to destroy the enemies of her homeland. Not only is she able to find the passage from the Blazing World to her own land, something that the men of neither land were able to do, but she is able to do so with a military force. She places herself at the head of that force and fashions a great spectacle with which to amaze both her countrymen and their enemies. Upon arrival at her homeland, she keeps her ships disguised during the day. At night, the bird-men and fish-men carry "fire-stones" which are "cut in the form of torches or candles, and being many thousands, made a terrible show; for it appeared as if all the air and sea had been of a flaming fire; and all that were upon the sea, or near it, did verily believe, the time of judgment, or the last day was come, which made them all fall down, and pray" (208). The vision she offers the enemies of her homeland is one of apocalypse; the power she displays seems to destroy not only them, but also the world around them,

burning both the sea and the sky. In this first display, the Empress obscures herself and her fleet. Only the "flaming fire" can be seen, so that the enemy has no idea whose ships they are (they're painted black over gold to hide their true nature) or what power they hold.

The Empress has learned not only the art of spectacle, but that of deception, of both "being and seeming." Her true power is located in the manipulation of her body and in the way both her allies and their enemies perceive her body. What once enticed a man to kidnap her and what once rescued her from that kidnapping now proves an agent of destruction. Yet, to maximize the power of her beauty, she must keep it obscure until the critical moment. The first time she reveals herself is to negotiate with the chief commanders of her homeland and that revelation is only partial. In their written exchange, she does not let them know who she is or whence she comes; concerning the assistance she will offer them, she says that she will appear to their navy "in a splendid light, surrounded with fire" (209). Her appearance to her countrymen is as she promised. She comes to them in "garments made of the star-stone, and was born or supported above the water, upon the fish-men's heads and backs, so that she seemed to walk upon the face of the water" (210). The Empress presents herself not just as a spectacle, but also as a miracle and, indeed, her countrymen do wonder at the sight of her. Their "hearts began to tremble" and when she comes nearer, all other lights are extinguished and she "appeared only in her garments of light, like an angel or some deity." All her countrymen "kneeled down before her" to worship "with all submission and reverence." The Empress remains at a distance from her countrymen "by reason she would not have that of her accoutrements anything else should be perceived but the

splendour thereof" (210). From her place on the water, distant from the people of her native land, the Empress proclaims that she will make them "*the most powerful nation of this world*" by means of the destruction of all their enemies. Her appearance inspires a number of reactions in her countrymen, with some believing her to be an "angel," others a "sorceress" or a "goddess," and some that "the devil deluded them in the shape of a fine lady." Again, her strength resides in how she manipulates her appearance and how she calls upon tropes of both divinity and femininity to support that strength. The Empress is not just as beautiful as the sun, she *is* the sun; not just as pure or as light as an angel, but to her countrymen she becomes an angel, or a goddess. All the language of love and literature that likens women's eyes to suns, stars, and diamonds is rendered literal here and the Empress becomes an embodiment of all female strength. She also embodies all that is threatening about female power, for those that do not deem her divine believe that she is a sorceress or a devil in the shape of a woman who has come to deceive them. The Empress's power to inspire thoughts of both divinity and devilry speaks to the doubleness inherent in the perception of the female body.

The day of the battle itself, the Empress appears once more on the water, "dressed in her imperial robes, which were all of diamonds and carbuncles" (211). Her fish-men accompany her, carrying pieces of the star-stone, which they use to set fire to and destroy the enemy ships. Here, her countrymen proclaim her an "angel sent from God to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies" (211). Yet she appears as an angel of destruction, for the only way to preserve the lives of her countrymen is to take the lives of their enemies, and mercilessly so. With "a buckler, made of one entire carbuncle" in one hand, "a spear of one entire diamond, in the other, and a crown of star-stones on her head, her

beauty is so enhanced (and simultaneously obscured) through her costume that she becomes a manifestation of the star-stone, beautiful and deadly. Like Prince Arthur's shield "all of Diamond perfect pure and cleene,"<sup>24</sup> the buckler has no device and is in and of itself a perfect symbol of fortitude and righteousness.

Soon, the Empress subjugates all nations who oppose her homeland, attacking them both on land and at sea, and setting fire to the cities and towns as well as their ships: "Thus did the Empress not only save her native country, but made it the absolute monarchy of all that world; and both the effects of her power and her beauty did kindle a great desire in all the greatest princes to see her" (214). The home world of the Empress becomes akin to the Blazing World where power is centralized in one place and in one ruling body. The establishment of absolute monarchy seems to be a condition of salvation; the Empress cannot simply save her homeland, but must place it at the center of power. For the people of this world, "her power and her beauty" continue to remain on equal planes and become almost synonymous.

Before her departure, the Empress appears once more on the water in her imperial robes, this time to the other princes of the world. Upon seeing her, these men believe her "to be some celestial creature, or rather an uncreated goddess," who deserved their worship, "for surely, said they, no mortal creature can have such a splendid and transcendent beauty, nor can any have so great a power as she has, to walk upon the waters, and to destroy whatever she pleases, not only whole nations, but a whole world" (215). Later that night, the Empress performs in an "entertainment" that she plans for her countrymen and the visiting princes. At the darkest hour of night, she has fire-stones set

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<sup>24</sup> See Spenser, *Fairie Queene* I vii 33.5 and Hamilton's notes to I vii 33.5-9.

alight "which made both air and seas appear of a bright shining flame" so that all the spectators were put into "an extreme fright," thinking that they, too, would be destroyed. When the Empress perceived their fear, she "caused all the lights of the fire-stones to be put out, and only showed herself in her garments of light: the bird-men carried her upon their backs into the air, and there she appeared as glorious as the sun" (215). Even during moments of "entertainment" the Empress presents herself as a threatening power and is perceived as such. The entertainment she plans reminds the audience of the battles that have just been fought, and there is no doubt in their minds that this woman does indeed have the power to destroy worlds should she wish to do so. Even if her body on its own does not have the physical capability to ruin a world, the power that she has at her hands, both to fashion her own appearance as a destructive force and to command actual forces of destruction to act, makes her strong enough to effect ruin.

The exit the Empress makes from her homeland is fashioned much like her arrival. Amidst her ships, she walks out onto the water, proclaims the work of the king's enemies an "unjustice" at which "Heaven was most displeased" and threatens those who would oppose him with further destruction and loss. The displeasure of heaven marks the Empress's actions against the enemies of ESFI, the name given to her homeland, as divinely sanctioned; she may not name herself a goddess or an angel, but by acting against that which offends Heaven, the Empress does name herself an instrument of divine vengeance. Those who obey her proclamation to pay tribute to the new head-monarch of their world will not suffer further loss at her hands and instead will "be rewarded with the blessings of Heaven" (216). The Empress fashions herself as an agent of divine vengeance, able to punish the enemies of ESFI not only in the name of her

homeland, but also in the name of Heaven. The power she claims here is one beyond the reach of the human; she validates the impression that the citizens of ESFI have formed of her as an angel or goddess. At no point does she correct their assumption, as she had when the denizens and the Emperor of the Blazing World had thought her divine upon her arrival in their world. Here, when she is using her beauty as a weapon, she reinforces the notion that she is divine and uses it to her great advantage. Her arrival in and departure from her homeland clad in the star-stones, appearing as a destructive, super-human force whether she intends to or not, do not allow the people of her homeland to see her as anything but the commander of a great military power. The truth of her body and the weakness of her human form remain secrets; the star-stones and fire-stones that enhanced her chapel and kept the secret of the religion she preached to her people do similar work for her own body. As long as the citizens of her home world deem her all powerful and, perhaps, all knowing, then she does possess the power that they believe she does. The transformation of her body is in part physical, for the disguise she wears is fashioned to highlight her beauty and brightness to the point of extremity. The transformation is also partly intellectual, for the Empress needs to be able to predict how her enemies and allies will interpret her appearance.

Thus, the "light of her beauty and the heat of her youth" that preserve the Lady at the start of her narrative become a force that transforms this woman in multiple ways throughout her travels. The preservation that takes place at the start is dependent on forces outside the Lady's control, though the beauty, youth, and virtue that inspire her rescue come from deep inside her. When she is made Empress, her beauty is the first quality that leads to her acquisition of power, but her intelligence, her quick wit and

boundless curiosity enable her to use the authority granted her to access all the knowledge available to her. That knowledge finds its source first in the variety of learned societies in the Blazing World and the Empress puts herself in charge of all the branches of learning available, from the natural sciences to the study of law and religion in the Blazing World. All power is concentrated in the figure of the Empress, with her husband the Emperor only a nominal figure in the rulership of the Blazing World, and all the knowledge available in the world reinforces the Empress's exercise of her power. In turn, absolute rule becomes coded feminine; by "[r]echarging the polarities of private/public, feminine/masculine, spiritual/material, new world/old world, Cavendish transforms the topsy-turvy inversions representing female rule as disordered into the powerfully paradoxical construction of absolute rule as feminine" (Leslie, (1997) 69). She exceeded the material limits placed on human knowledge through her conversations with the immaterial spirits and fashions a "Paradise ruled by a woman who is free to question its substance and to alter its social system in ways that challenge conventional view of Eden and conventional beliefs about the position of women" (Micros 3).

For the Empress, information is not limited by her ability to visit only certain worlds or parts of certain worlds. She accesses information through the travels of her non-human subjects beneath and above the surface of the Blazing World, makes that world into her vision of an ideal world, and then extends her knowledge to worlds beyond by asking the immaterial spirits to tell her about the nature of Heaven. The Empress herself, once she arrives in the Blazing World, remains there, but through her command of her own subjects and the help of the immaterial spirits, she is able to enact vicarious travel to almost all possible worlds. Travel becomes an intellectual and rhetorical

practice, an activity that can take place through a process of inquiry and the collection of knowledge.

When the Empress moves from the collection of knowledge to production of it with the composition of her own Cabbala, she also moves to a more active exploration of multiple worlds. Her experiences with the Duchess--the discussion and eventual rejection of the writing of her own Cabbala, the design of a new world using the creative potential of her own imagination, the exploration of the Duchess's home world as a spiritual being-- all enable the Empress to reconceptualize her notions of space, self, and strength. The "light of her beauty and the heat of her youth" that had saved her from the kidnapping and potential rape scenario and had been passive qualities become active ones. Once the Empress has gained complete control of a world that she herself has constructed and once she has discovered that her body is no longer limited by physical geography, she can return to the material world with a greater sense of authority. Her body, which she has learned is not the only locus of authority, takes on the powers that she has gained in both the material and immaterial worlds. The seeds of her authority are found in the passive qualities that ensure her preservation at the start of her tale; those first beginnings develop through her intellectual, physical, and immaterial travel. Her body becomes an instrument of destruction, not only able to preserve her own life and those of all the people from her homeland, but also able to destroy those who oppose her power.

## *Conclusion*

### *Expanding the Literary Landscape of Early Modern England*

In their introduction to *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* Susanne Woods and Margaret Hannay identify two of the greatest obstacles facing the study of early modern women's writing. First, women's writing is rarely seen as literature, and, second, even literary writing by women is seen as aesthetically inferior to comparable writing by men. To overcome the first obstacle, readers must let go of the "lingering assumption that what women do with their lives is *de facto* less interesting than what men do" (20). To overcome the second, readers and teachers of early modern literature need to realize that we were "educated in a tradition that barely noticed" women's contributions to early modern literature (21). The solution, then, is not simply to include women's and other "new and different voices" in the traditional literary canon, but to develop new ways of 'reading' these texts (21). The means by which we identify texts as 'literary' or 'interesting' or 'important' develop through our reading and valuing male-authored or traditional literary texts and identifying ourselves as readers with the intended (and often male) audience. Learning how to re-read traditional and non-traditional literary texts and to confront our expectations of what qualifies as 'literature' and our discomfort when those expectations are not met needs to accompany the inclusion of new, different, and, at times, oppositional voices in the early modern canon.

Though it was written over a decade ago, Woods and Hannay's introduction is still integral to the study of early women's literature. The possibilities their project points to are exciting ones--the prospect not only of an expanding literary canon, but of an ever-

changing, ever-growing process of reading and valuing texts. This project has at its source the excitement and possibility inherent in the reading and re-reading of early modern women's literature and the inclusion of those texts in contemporary discourses of space, place, and travel. The initial steps in that process--an examination of the complex relationships between gender, genre, and geography in women's writing--are the ones that my dissertation takes. The first chapter on Isabella Whitney and Amelia Lanyer's poetry examines the effects of isolation on the woman writer and discusses how active, literary creativity can take place in and be inspired by seclusion. Whitney's and Lanyer's poetry also presents how both the rural and urban landscape provide opportunities for women to "map" out their desires, that is, in both the city and the country women writers locate their needs, wishes, and wants in the landscape around them. In the second chapter, Mary Sidney's *Tragedy of Antonie* and Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* reveal how the claustrophobia associated with the closet drama genre is enacted through the plays themselves. The female protagonists in both these dramas use their position as part of the nexus of political authority to attempt to fashion both private and public spaces for themselves. Public discourses of gender and expectations of women, even women who hold positions of authority, to remain "silent, chaste, and obedient" continually deny these women the ability to self-define their public and private selves. Systems of enclosure characterize the first half of this project; yet those systems--the attempt to consign women to "domestic" spaces and to confine their voices to silence--do not remove female characters or women writers from contemporary cultural discourses about public, private, rural, and urban landscapes. The latter half of this project concentrates on two very distinct travel narratives by seventeenth-century women writers. Chapter three's

focus on Mary Wroth's *Urania* presents one way of reading the development of female selfhood by plotting that development along geographic lines. Women in Wroth's romance can be either the "wandering" or the "fixed" foot and both positions are viable ways for women to discover who they are and what role they play in the world around them. Finally, the reading of Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World* in chapter four describes how one narrative of travel can lead to an awareness of self as both an intellectual and physical being. The Empress's journey into the Blazing World plots the advancement of her intellectual authority and physical autonomy. All of the episodes of enclosure, confinement, freedom, and exploration in each of the chapters pull women out of the domestic space and into multiple public, private, rural, urban, and fantastic realms.

Thus, this study of space, place, travel, and geography allows us to read and *re-read* women's writing as not isolated from the contemporary literary and cultural narratives. It also proves that narratives of travel are not peculiarly masculine; a redefinition of travel to include the mapping out of Plat's garden that Whitney's narrator performs, or the movement of Cleopatra into her funeral monument with Antonius, or Urania's quest narrative to find her father teaches us new ways of reading both male and female authored texts. If this project itself were to function as a map, then the directions it points the reader in are multitudinous. The most important, however, is the move to not only include women's writing in studies of early modern space, place, and travel, but to continue to include works by women in studies of periods past that of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries as new avenues open up for travel, exploration, and writing. With the advent of the Restoration in England and the expansion of print culture to include professional female writers such Aphra Behn and incredibly prolific ones such as Eliza

Haywood, the literary landscape continues to change in significant ways. Not only are there more women writers, but women are writing *more*. A concern with the physical spaces women write in and about, with the places their characters inhabit, and with the travels those characters undertake, whether it be from one household to another or from one country to another, cannot be separated from the spaces these writers and characters have within the literary canon.

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Dismission: Juxtaposing John Milton and Elizabeth Cary." *English Literary  
History* 66.3 (1999): 553-589.

## *Curriculum Vitae*

### **Marie Elizabeth Molnar**

#### **Education**

- Ph.D** English, Lehigh University, May 2012  
Major exam field: Early Modern British Literature (passed with distinction)  
Minor exam field: Medieval British Literature
- M.A.** English, Seton Hall University, May 2006  
*Thesis: "Petrarchan Spaces in Lady Mary Wroth's Pamphilia to Amphilanthus"*  
Directed by Angela J. Weisl
- Classical Studies, Rutgers University, 1999-2000  
Two semesters of graduate level work in Latin & Ancient Greek
- B.A.** English & Classical Studies, Rutgers University, Rutgers College, *summa cum laude* with honors in Classics and general honors, Phi Beta Kappa, Eta Sigma Phi, May 1999

#### **Conference Participation and Presentations**

- "The Uncertainty of the Sea: Shipwreck, Captivity, and Female Narrative Community in Wroth's *Urania*." Northeastern Modern Language Association Conference, Rochester, NY, March 15, 2012.
- Panel Organizer and Co-Chair, "Issues of Mobility and Confinement." Northeastern Modern Language Association Conference, Rochester, NY, March 15-16, 2012.
- "Among those beds so finely deckt': Isabella Whitney and the Construction of Female Authorship." Sixteenth-Century Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX, October 27, 2011.
- "Images of isolation in the poetry of Isabella Whitney and Amelia Lanyer." Pennsylvania College English Association Conference, Bethlehem, PA, April 8-10, 2010.
- "Living Dead Girl: Performing the Female Corpse in 17th Century London City Comedy." Lehigh University Pre-Modern Studies Colloquium, Bethlehem, PA, November 12, 2007.
- "Male Homosocial Desire in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*." New Jersey College English Association Conference, March 18, 2006.

"Into Heaven Ravished: The Instability of Gender in Donne's *Holy Sonnets*." New Jersey College English Association Conference, April 09, 2005.

### **Awards**

Senior Teaching Fellowship, English Department, Lehigh University, 2010-2012  
Teaching Fellowship, English Department, Lehigh University, 2007-2009  
University Fellowship, Lehigh University, 2006-2007, 2009-2010  
Teaching Fellowship, English Department, Seton Hall University, 2005-2006  
Jacob C. Brodhead Prize for Excellence in Classics, Rutgers University, May 1998

### **Teaching Experience**

Instructor, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

Literature & Composition II (Spring 2012): Moments of Transformation  
Literature Seminar (Spring 2012): Metaphor & Metamorphosis: Stories of Transformation  
Literature & Composition I (Fall 2011): Borderlands: The Afterlife, Cartography, and Dreams  
First-Year Literature Seminar (Spring 2011): Ars Moriendi: The Art of Dying  
Literature & Composition I (Fall 2010): How, What, and Why We Believe  
Literature & Composition II (Spring 2009): The Literature of Adolescence & Contemporary Youth Culture  
Literature & Composition I (Fall 2008): Reading & Writing the World Around Us  
Literature & Composition II (Spring 2008): Growing Up: Young Adult Literature & Culture  
Literature & Composition I (Fall 2007): Systems of Learning: Education, Memory, and Technology

Teaching Assistant, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

British Literature I: Medieval through the Restoration/18c (Fall 2008)

Writing Tutor, Lehigh University Center for Writing and Math, Bethlehem, PA  
(August 2008-May 2012)

Instructor, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ

College English II (Spring 2006): *Literature and the Humanities*  
College English I (Fall 2005): *Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing*  
Intermediate Latin 1, 2 (Fall 2005-Spring 2006)

Instructor, Bishop George Ahr High School, Edison, NJ

English and Latin Instructor (August 2001-June 2004)

Learning Assistant, Rutgers Learning Resource Center, New Brunswick, NJ  
(September 1999-May 2000)

## **Professional Experience**

Translation of Hildebert of Bingen's *Epistula XXI* (Latin to English) for Dr. Suzanne Edwards, Lehigh University, Fall 2010

Translation of the Latin passages in Simon Foreman's manuscript work into English for Dr. Barbara Traister, Lehigh University, Spring-Fall 2010

Translation of Peraldus (Latin to English) for Dr. Kate Crassons, Lehigh University, Fall 2006

First-Year Writing Portfolio Project, Seton Hall University (Fall 2005-Spring 2006)

## **University Service**

Graduate Student Liaison to the Chair, Lehigh University, English Department, 2010-2011

Member, 17c Literature Faculty Search Committee, English Department, Lehigh University, 2009-2010

Graduate Student Representative, Library Users Committee, Lehigh University, 2008-2009

Graduate Student Member, 18c Literature Faculty Search Committee, English Department, Seton Hall University, Spring 2006

## **Languages**

High proficiency in Latin

Reading knowledge of Ancient Greek, French, German, and Old English.