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Dissident Metaphysics in Renaissance Women's Poetry

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

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University of Sussex
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 Dissident Metaphysics in Renaissance Women's Poetry

Summary

This thesis considers the idea of the 'metaphysical' in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women's poetry, notably by exploring the female-voiced lyrics affiliated with Marie Maitland (*d.* 1596) in the Scottish manuscript verse miscellany, the Maitland Quarto (*c.* 1586). The study aims to reintegrate important strands of Renaissance culture which have been lost by too exclusive a focus on English, male writing and contexts. For many literary historians the 'metaphysical' refers overwhelmingly to Dryden's pejorative categorization of Donne and his followers. However, Sarah Hutton has recently shown how the 'metaphysical' can be traced to an Aristotelian Neoplatonism, whereby influential fifteenth-century thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino were conflating the spiritual and material for political purposes. For the queer Renaissance critic, Michael Morgan Holmes, the 'political' pertains to individual spiritual-material desires which can undermine hegemonic definitions of the natural and unnatural. Building on this, my thesis illuminates 'metaphysics' in the work of Maitland, Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645), Constance Aston Fowler (1621?-1664) and Katherine Philips (1632-1664). These poets use the physical and spiritual bonds between women to explore the nature of female space, time and identity. Hutton's and Holmes's definition of the 'metaphysical' has special applicability for these poets, as they tacitly deconstruct the patriarchal construction of the virgin/whore and offer their own configuration of the spiritual-sensual woman. While critics have foregrounded a male metaphysical tradition in the early modern period, this study proposes that there is a 'dissident' female metaphysical strand that challenges the 'dominant' male discourses of the time.

Over the last few decades, feminist scholars, notably, Lorna Hutson, Barbara Lewalski, Kate Chedgoy, Carol Barash and Valerie Traub have reinstated the work of Lanyer and Philips in the English canon of Renaissance writing. More recently Sarah Dunnigan has drawn attention to the importance of the Scots poet and compiler, Maitland. Moreover, Helen Hackett has indicated that the writings of Fowler force us to rethink the roles of women in early modern literary culture. I take this further in two ways. First, I examine these poets' relationship to the 'metaphysical', the importance of which has been underestimated by critics, despite Dryden's original gendered use of the term. Secondly, I propose that these writers are responding to a 'polyglottal' female metaphysical tradition that develops in Renaissance Europe through a female republic of letters. I also assess the difficulties in belonging to a 'female tradition' in an era where female authorship was necessarily affected by misogynistic attitudes to women as writers. The research re-contextualizes the work of these women by examining the philosophical ideologies of Aristotle, Ficino, Marguerite of Navarre, Donne, Sir Richard Maitland, Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth Melville, Olympia Morata, Herbert Aston, Katherine Thimelby, St Teresa of Ávila and Andrew Marvell. By juxtaposing these four poets and reading them from within this philosophical-political context, the thesis sheds new light on the nature of early modern female intertextuality, whilst challenging male Anglocentric definitions of the 'Renaissance'.

Note on Texts and Abbreviations

Where early printed books and manuscripts have been used, the original punctuation and orthography of the passages cited has been preserved, though the long ‘s’ has in all cases been modernised.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition) has been abbreviated as *OED*. The *English Short Title Catalogue* (online edition) has been abbreviated as *STC*. All other abbreviations are indicated via footnotes in the main text.

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Introduction

Why ‘Dissident Metaphysics’?

‘This Lady *Sanspareille* hath a strange spreading wit, for she can [...] make Orations on publick Theaters; [...] argue in the Schooles, preach in the Pulpits, either in Theology, Philosophy, moral and natural, [...] physick and Metaphysick.’
(Margaret Cavendish)¹

In 1693 John Dryden genders ‘metaphysics’ by proposing the following: ‘He [John Donne] affects the metaphysics [...] in his amorous verses [...] and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love.’² For Dryden, Donne’s love poetry is marred by dense philosophical speculations. By using the term ‘metaphysics’, Dryden brings to mind Aristotle’s seminal philosophical treatise, the *Metaphysica*. In the *Metaphysica*, Aristotle had constructed an abstract, speculative mode of discourse:

Are numbers, bodies, surfaces and points substances or not? [...] Affections, relations, movements [...] cannot be substances because they are predictable [...] only body can be substance, and body is determined by surface, which is in turn determined by line and this by point.³

In the mid-thirteenth century, St Thomas Aquinas made the following commentary on the above-cited passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysica*: ‘For when bodies which were initially separated are united, one surface is produced for the two of them, because the parts of a continuous body are united in having one common boundary, which is one surface.’⁴ Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s juxtapositioning of numbers, bodies, surfaces, substances, boundaries, lines and points is evoked in Donne’s love lyric, ‘A Valediction: forbidding Mourning’. In this poem, Donne quantifies physical-spiritual

¹ Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet*, in *Playes* (London, 1662), pp. 121-80 (p. 158).

² John Dryden, ‘A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire’ (1693), in *Essays*, ed. by W. P. Ker, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), II, pp. 15-114 (p. 19).

³ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 55. The date of composition for Aristotle’s *Metaphysica* is unknown. Soon after Aristotle’s death in 322 BC, his manuscripts were arranged by editors to form the present corpus of his works. A number of treatises were placed immediately ‘after the *Physics*’, from which their title *Metaphysics* is derived. See John Warrington, ‘Editor’s Preface’, in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. by John Warrington (London: Dent, 1961, 1st pub. 1956), pp. vii-xiii (p. viii).

⁴ St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, trans. by John P. Rowan and others (Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1995, 1st pub. 1961), p. 188. St Thomas Aquinas’s *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics* was written in c. 1266-1272. See John P. Rowan, ‘Introduction’, in *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, trans. by Rowan, pp. vii-xxvi (p. xiv).

love by aligning the movement of lovers' souls to a pair of mathematical 'twin compasses' (V,⁵ 26):

As stiffe twin compasses are two,
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the'other doe.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth rome,
It leanes, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to mee, who must
Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begunne.
(V, 26-36)

It is abstract philosophical conceits such as this that Dryden finds to be affected and contrived. Moreover, Dryden propounds that Donne 'affects' an intellectual, masculine poetic idiom – an 'erect' (V, 32) stylistic – that is devoid of all feminine 'softness'.⁶ Dryden implies that the 'metaphysical' (both in terms of style and subjectivity) is inappropriate for heterosexual love poetry because women cannot understand it.

But Dryden is wrong to assume that women of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could not read or comprehend metaphysical love poetry. One celebrated seventeenth-century reader of Donne's verse is the writer, Katherine Philips (1632-1664). Donne's above-quoted poem, 'A Valediction: forbidding Mourning', was widely circulated in manuscript and printed in 1633.⁷ Donne's speaker in this love lyric is free to 'rome' and 'runne' (V, 30, 34), whilst the female beloved can only 'hearke[n]' (V, 31), listen without a voice, waiting for the male spirit to 'com[e] home' (V, 32). In a direct allusion to Donne, Philips writes back:

Friendship in Emblem,
or the Seale,
to my dearest Lucasia
[...]

The compasses that stand above

⁵ John Donne, 'A Valediction: forbidding Mourning', in John Donne, *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. by Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 62-64. From henceforth 'A Valediction: forbidding Mourning' has been abbreviated as V and is preceded by the line reference.

⁶ Dryden, 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire', p. 19.

⁷ See Helen Gardner, 'Commentary, "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning"', in Donne, *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. by Gardner, pp. 188-89. The date of composition for 'A Valediction: forbidding Mourning' is unknown.

Express this great immortall Love;
 For friends, like them, can prove this true,
 They are, and yet they are not, two.

[...]
 Each follows where the other Leanes,
 And what each does, the other meanes.

[...]
 And like to them, so friends may own
 Extension, not division:
 Their points, like bodys, separate;
 But head, like soules, knows no such fate.
 (FIE,⁸ 21-24, 27-28, 49-52)

Donnean heterosexual inequality is replaced in Philips's poem by female-female equality. For Donne's speaker, the male soul is the wanderer, whilst the female soul is the 'fixt foot' (V, 27). In Philips's poem, however, it is unspecified who is the foot and who casts the circle – both the speaker and her friend, Lucasia, mutually support each other:

And as when one foot does stand fast,
 And t'other circles seeks to cast,
 The steddy part does regulate
 And make the wanderer's motion streight [.]
 (FIE, 29-32)

Jonathan Dollimore defines 'sexual dissidence' as a form of 'resistance', operating 'in terms of gender', that 'repeatedly unsettles the very opposition between the dominant and the subordinate'.⁹ What I would like to suggest here is that Dollimore's theory of 'sexual dissidence' illuminates Philips's re-working of Donne. Philips uses Donne's 'metaphysical' compass conceit to question Donne's patriarchal delineation of female spirituality. Philips posits that female souls are not passive and simply motivated by the masculine force, but can exist separately from the world of men.

⁸ Katherine Philips, 'Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda, Volume I: The Poems*, ed. by Patrick Thomas (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1990), pp. 106-108 (pp. 107, 108). This edition has been used throughout this study and has been abbreviated as *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*. From henceforth 'Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia' has been abbreviated as FIE and is preceded by the line reference. Patrick Thomas dates the composition of this poem to 1651-1652. See Patrick Thomas, 'Introduction', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp.1-68 (p. 65).

⁹ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 21.

According to the sixteenth-century French polymath, Symphorien Champier (1472-1539), there are ‘four basic principles’ in metaphysics (‘methaphisicum’): essence (‘essentia’); being (‘esse’); power (‘virtus’); and motion (‘actio’).¹⁰ Philips expands this metaphysical theory in ‘Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia’, as she focuses specifically on the essence, being, power and motion of the female soul, body and mind:

And like to them [the compasses], so friends may own
Extension, not division:
Their points, like bodys, separate;
But head, like soules, knows no such fate.
(FIE, 49-52)

For Philips in this poem, female spiritual-physical meditation is attained through the contemplation of female same-sex friendship. Philips creates a dissident female metaphysic that destabilizes the ‘dominant’ masculinist metaphysic of Donne.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the example of Katherine Philips’s dissident metaphysical stance is not an isolated occurrence, but part of a ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ female metaphysical tradition that develops in Renaissance Europe through a female republic of letters.¹¹ A female *Respublica litterarum* can be defined as an international community of women writers who are reading and responding to one another both explicitly and implicitly. I elucidate this argument by examining the writings of Marie Maitland (*d.* 1596), Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645), Constance Aston Fower (1621?-1664) and Katherine Philips. I compare the verse of these poets to the manuscript and printed philosophical writings of Sappho (*c.* 630/612-570 BC?), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549), St Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), Olympia Morata (1526-1555), Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots (1542-1587), Margaret Clifford (1560-1616), Isabella Whitney (*fl.* 1566-1573), Esther Inglis (1570/71-1624), Anne Clifford (1590-1676), Elizabeth Melville (*fl.* 1599-1631), Katherine Thimelby (1617/18-1658) and Aphra Behn (1640?-1689). By reading these female poets and philosophers alongside one another, I aim to shed new light on the

¹⁰ Symphorien Champier, *Vocabularius [...] naturalis philosophiae* (Lyons, 1508), cited by S. K. Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1974) p. 153 and Note 23, p. 196.

¹¹ Rosalind Smith argues that there are ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ feminine literary traditions in the Renaissance and my use of these adjectives here is indebted to her. Rosalind Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621: The Politics of Absence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 11.

nature of early modern female intertextuality, whilst challenging male Anglocentric definitions of the Renaissance ‘metaphysical tradition’.

The notion of a Renaissance ‘female tradition’ has prompted much debate amongst recent feminist scholars. Danielle Clarke, for instance, argues that there is little evidence that early modern women writers ‘perceived or claimed any common identity as writers and surprisingly little acknowledgement on the part of individual writers that they had read one another’s work’.¹² Rosalind Smith, on the other hand, suggests that although there is little surviving evidence for a continuous feminine literary tradition in the Renaissance, critics should be aware of ‘partial and strange [female] traditions’.¹³ Building on Smith’s contention, Jane Stevenson asserts that many intellectual Englishwomen of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lived in a world that was ‘bigger than England’.¹⁴ Stevenson urges scholars to adopt a ‘polyglottal’ approach when analysing the notion of an early modern female tradition.¹⁵ This study responds to Smith’s and Stevenson’s arguments, whilst concurrently pointing to the difficulties in belonging to a female tradition in an era where female authorship was necessarily affected by misogynistic attitudes to women as writers.

But what did it mean to be a ‘metaphysical woman’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and why did some women specifically choose this strand of ontological enquiry to forge ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ connections with one another? As will be demonstrated, the ‘metaphysical’ in the Renaissance did not simply pertain to Aristotle and Donne, but had wider philosophical, political and aesthetic connotations.

The interconnections among spirituality, love and philosophy were classified as ‘metaphysical’ by Dryden’s contemporary, the clergyman and critic, Samuel Parker. In 1666 Samuel Parker applies the term ‘metaphysical’ to the influential fifteenth-century Florentine love theorist, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).¹⁶ Ficino was a priest, physician-chemist, scholar and musician. He acted as tutor to Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449-1492) and was patronized by Lorenzo’s grandfather, Cosimo de’ Medici (1389-1464). The

¹² Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), p. 3.

¹³ Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Jane Stevenson, ‘Still Kissing the Rod? Whither Next?’, *Women’s Writing*, 14 (2007), 290-305 (p. 298).

¹⁵ Stevenson, ‘Still Kissing the Rod? Whither Next?’, p. 290.

¹⁶ Samuel Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie* (Oxford, 1666), p. 74.

Medicis were high-ranking statesmen and patrons of the arts. In 1487 Ficino became Canon of Florence Cathedral.¹⁷

Samuel Parker, in 1666, proposes that ‘*Ficinus*[’s] [...] Metaphysical and Theological Treatises’ treat of ‘nothing but Love and Beauty, and of them too in Poetick Schemes and Fables’.¹⁸ Parker (like Dryden) pejoratively connects the ‘Metaphysical’ with the ‘Poetick’ and critiques Ficino’s use of ‘rampant Metaphors’ and ‘Pompous Allegories’.¹⁹

In the fifteenth century, however, Ficino had celebrated the ‘profound skill’ of the metaphysical poet-philosopher.²⁰ For Ficino, the metaphysician par excellence is the philosopher, Plato. Ficino states: ‘Plato gives dialectic [...] the profound skill of the mind freed to comprehend the true and pure substance of each thing, first by physical, then by metaphysical principles’.²¹ Following Plato, Ficino sets out to blend the ‘physical’ and ‘metaphysical’, as he fashions himself as a ‘divine physician’, nurturing both body and soul.²² This is what Ficino writes in his dedication to his patron, Cosimo de’ Medici, in his alchemical-medical treatise, *De Vita Libri Tres* (*Three Books on Life*, 1489):

I had two fathers, [Diotifeci d’Agnolo] Ficino the physician and Cosimo de’ Medici. I was born from the first and reborn from the second. The first pledged me to Galen, the physician and Platonist, the second dedicated me to the divine Plato; whilst Galen is the physician of the body, Plato is the physician of souls.²³

Ficino unites Galen and Plato, soul and body, as he seeks to concoct a Platonic spiritual ‘medicine’ to heal ‘suffering souls’.²⁴

As Sergius Koderá points out, Ficino was the first Renaissance translator of the complete works of Plato into Latin. He was a key figure in the transmission of Platonism in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁵ This was largely due to his influential *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love* or *De amore* which was first

¹⁷ This biographical information comes from the ‘Introduction’ to *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, ed. and trans. by members of the Language Department of the School of Economic Science, London, 8 vols (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1975-2009), I, pp. 19-25 (pp. 20-21).

¹⁸ Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie*, p. 74.

¹⁹ Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie*, p. 73.

²⁰ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, III, p. 30.

²¹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, III, p. 30.

²² Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, V, p. 75.

²³ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, III, Note 6, p. 149.

²⁴ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 51.

²⁵ Sergius Koderá, *Disreputable Bodies: Magic, Medicine and Gender in Renaissance Natural Philosophy* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), p. 48.

published in Latin in 1484. Ficino's own Italian translation of this work was published posthumously in 1544.²⁶ The first French translation of the *De amore* was carried out by Jean de La Haye and printed in Poitiers in 1545 and 1546.²⁷ Another French translation was undertaken by Guy Le Levre de la Boderie and printed in Paris in 1578 and 1588.²⁸

Translating the complete works of Plato in the fifteenth century was a controversial and risky business. In 1455 the Byzantine Aristotelian, George of Trebizond, wrote: 'O slothful minds [...] of the powerful friends of Plato, locked up most shamefully within the thighs of boys! [...] if only they [would] despise Plato and leave the buttocks alone'.²⁹ George of Trebizond here seems to refer to the sanctioned homosexuality found in Plato's dialogue on love, the *Symposium* (c. 384 BC).³⁰ In the *Symposium*, Aristophanes declares that there are some men who are

attracted to men and enjoy sleeping with men and being embraced by them. These are the best of their generation, both as boys and as young men, because they are naturally the bravest. Some people say that they are shameless, but that isn't true. It's not out of shamelessness that they do this but because they are bold, brave and masculine, and welcome the same qualities in others.³¹

The *Symposium*'s frank veneration of homosexuality was omitted by most fifteenth-century European translators. For example, in Leonardo Bruni's translation of the *Symposium* (1435), Alcibiades's attempted seduction of Socrates becomes (according to Jill Kraye) a 'high-minded quest for philosophical enlightenment', with Alcibiades describing himself as 'inflamed with the desire for learning'.³² There is no mention in Bruni's translation of sexual 'learning'. Ficino, however, dissents from his predecessors

²⁶ Sears Jayne, 'Introduction', in Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. by Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), pp. 1-32 (p. 4).

²⁷ Sears Jayne, 'Bibliography', in Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. by Jayne, pp. 183-213 (p. 185).

²⁸ Jayne, 'Bibliography', p. 185.

²⁹ George of Trebizond, *In comparationes Aristotelis et Platonis*, cited in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Under the Mantle of Love: The Mystical Eroticism of Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno', in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 175-207 (pp. 185-86).

³⁰ Plato's philosophical writings date from c. 427-347 BC. The *Symposium* may have been written in c. 384 BC. See Christopher Gill, 'Introduction', in Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Christopher Gill (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. x-xlvi (p. xvi) and M. C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, 'Chronology', in Plato, *The Symposium*, ed. by M. C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, trans. by M. C. Howatson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. xxix-xxxi (p. xxxi).

³¹ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Gill, p. 25.

³² Leonardo Bruni, cited in Jill Kraye, 'The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance', in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 76-85 (p. 76).

by tackling head-on the homoerotic aspects of the *Symposium*. This is revealed in Ficino's *De amore*:

Shall I say what follows, chaste gentlemen, or shall I rather omit it? I shall certainly say it, since the subject requires it, even if it seems out of place to say. For who can say offensive things inoffensively?

The great transformation which occurs in an older man who is inclined toward the likeness of a younger causes him to want to transfer his whole body into the youth, and to draw the whole of the youth into himself, in order that either the young humor may obtain young arteries, or the younger arteries may obtain younger blood. Hence they are driven to do many sinful things together. For since the genital semen flows down from the whole body, they believe that merely by ejaculating or receiving this, they can give or receive the whole body.³³

Ficino classifies male-male genital relations as 'sinful'.³⁴ In this way, he conforms to the moral and judicial condemnation of male-male sodomy enforced by the Florentine legal officials throughout the fifteenth century. As Wouter Hanegraaff observes, laws against male-male sodomy had been in place in Florence since the early fourteenth century and these were 'strongly enforced' from 1432 to 1502 by a special judiciary magistracy called the *Ufficiali di notte* (Office of the Night).³⁵ During the whole period in which the Office of the Night was active, at least 17,000 individuals were incriminated and around 3,000 convicted.³⁶ Ficino announces in his *Theologia Platonica* (*Platonic Theology*, 1482): 'Whatever subject I discuss, here or elsewhere, I wish to state only what is approved by the Church'.³⁷ Ficino fashions himself clearly as a conformist, and thus shrewdly avoids both excommunication and burning at the stake.

However, in the *De amore*, Ficino goes on to classify erotic love between men as a risqué three-tiered system: 'The love of the contemplative man is called divine; that of the active man, human; that of the voluptuous man, bestial'.³⁸ Ficino wishes to conflate the 'divine' and the 'human', the soul and the body:

the body [...] is the shadow and image of the soul. And so, judging by its image, we assume that in a beautiful body there is a beautiful soul. That is why we prefer to teach men who are handsome.
[...]

³³ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, p. 163.

³⁴ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 163.

³⁵ Hanegraaff, 'Under the Mantle of Love', p. 190.

³⁶ Hanegraaff, 'Under the Mantle of Love', p. 190.

³⁷ Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, trans. by Michael J. B. Allen and others, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001-), I, p. 1.

³⁸ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, p. 120.

When anyone sees a man with his eyes, he creates an image of the man in his imagination [...]. Then he raises the eye of his intellect to look up to the Reason of Man which is present in the divine light. Then suddenly from the divine light a spark shines forth to his intellect and the true nature itself of Man is understood. [...] The whole fertility of the soul clearly consists in this: that in its inner being shines that eternal light of God [...]³⁹

Ficino here constructs a male same-sex sensual-spiritual idiom. But this same-sex erotic-spiritual ideology is seemingly unthreatening because such love culminates in the celestial light of a Christian God. Ficino thus Christianizes Platonic pagan male same-sex acts.

Ficino was also responsible for introducing a large European audience to the Greek wisdom texts, the *Corpus Hermeticum* or *Hermetica*, attributed to the ancient Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus. In 1462 Cosimo de' Medici asked Ficino to set aside his work on Plato and concentrate on a new Latin edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Ficino eagerly consented.⁴⁰ Ficino's Hermetic *Pimander*, together with the *Asclepius*, went through more than twenty printed editions between 1471 and the mid-sixteenth century.⁴¹ It was translated into French, Spanish, Dutch and Italian.⁴² The first printed English translation of the *Hermetica* was John Everard's *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (1649).⁴³

Ficino describes Hermes Trismegistus in the following terms in his preface to the *Pimander*:

Among philosophers he [Hermes] first turned from physical and mathematical topics to contemplation of things divine, and he was the first to discuss with great wisdom the majesty of God [...]. Thus, he was called the first author of theology, and Orpheus followed him, taking second place in the ancient theology. After Aglaophemus, Pythagoras came next in theological succession, having been initiated into [the] rites of Orpheus, and he was followed by Philolaus, teacher of our divine Plato. In this way, from a wondrous line of six theologians emerged a single system of ancient theology [*prisca theologia*], harmonious in every part, which traced its origins to Mercurius [Hermes] and reached

³⁹ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, pp. 132, 134-35.

⁴⁰ Brian P. Copenhaver, 'Introduction', in *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, trans. by Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. xiii-lxxxiii (pp. xlvii-xlviii).

⁴¹ J. B. Trapp, 'Introduction', in Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2002, 1st pub. 1964), pp. xvii-xxvi (p. xxii).

⁴² Trapp, 'Introduction', p. xxii.

⁴³ The title-page gives the date as 1650, but the copy preserved in the British Library, London shows a contemporary correction, in ink, to 1649. See Maren-Sofie Røstvig, 'Andrew Marvell's "The Garden": A Hermetic Poem', *English Studies*, 40 (1959), 65-76 (Note 4, p. 67).

absolute perfection with the divine Plato. Mercurius [Hermes] wrote many books pertaining to the knowledge of divinity, [...] often speaking not only as philosopher but as prophet [...] He foresaw [...] the rise of the new faith, the coming of Christ [...]’⁴⁴

As Stanton Linden points out, the *Hermetica* was, in fact, penned in the post-Christian era (in the third or fourth century AD), but this was unbeknown to Ficino and his followers, who believed that the *Hermetica* presaged and predicted the ‘coming of Christ’.⁴⁵ What Ficino is suggesting in his preface to the *Pimander* is that the *Hermetica* is one of the first ancient texts to conflate the ‘physical’ and natural with a ‘divine’ spiritual monism. This view is substantiated by the fifteenth-century mosaic in Siena Cathedral (c. 1488) that proclaims that Hermes was a contemporary of Moses: ‘HERMES MERCURIUS TRIMEGISTUS CONTEMPORANEUS MOYSE’.⁴⁶ Moreover, Ficino in his preface to the *Pimander* does not define Hermeticism and Platonism as two separate traditions, but emphatically unites them into one trans-cultural syncretic philosophy – a *prisca theologia*.

According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine’ and ‘the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’.⁴⁷ Ficino wishes to master this ‘natural [...] Egyptian art’ and wholeheartedly encourages others to ‘apply’ themselves ‘to it’.⁴⁸ The ‘mysteries’ of this ‘art’ can be found in the *Hermetica*. The *Hermetica* posits that ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’ have ‘within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity’.⁴⁹ It is the human being, according to the *Hermetica*, who has the capacity to uncover this earthly natural divinity:

a human being is a great wonder [...] He looks up to heaven [...] He cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind [...] mingling and combining the two natures [mortal and eternal] into one in their just proportions.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Marsilio Ficino’s preface to the *Pimander* cited in Copenhaver, ‘Introduction’, p. xlviii.

⁴⁵ Stanton J. Linden, ‘Introduction’, in *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, ed. by Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-23 (pp. 10-11). For the dating of the *Hermetica*, see also Røstvig, ‘Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Hermetic Poem’, p. 67 and Margaret Healy, ‘Protean Bodies: Literature, Alchemy, Science and English Revolutions’, in *Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing (1500-1650)*, ed. by Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 161-76 (p. 165).

⁴⁶ Bruno Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena* (Firenze: Scala, 1982), p. 22.

⁴⁷ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

⁴⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

⁴⁹ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, trans. by Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998, 1st pub. 1989), p. 389.

⁵⁰ *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. 69, 70, 71.

It is a passage such as this that arguably led to the seventeenth-century philosopher, physician and poet, Henry Vaughan, to remark that ‘*Hermetists* [...] observe nature in her workes [...] by the mediation of nature [...] they may produce and bring to light [...] rare effectual medicines’.⁵¹ For Vaughan and his fellow Hermeticists, ‘rare effectual medicines’ could be attained through the distillation, conservation and transmutation of telluric ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’.⁵² Hermes was thus regarded as the father of physical and spiritual alchemy. The seventeenth-century German alchemist, Martinus Rulandus, for instance, argued that ‘to obtain a knowledge of the mysteries of the art [of alchemy], it is necessary to be acquainted with all the works of Hermes’.⁵³ Rulandus’s use of the Ficinian term ‘mysteries’ suggests that this ‘art’ of alchemy is physical and exoteric, spiritual and esoteric.⁵⁴

Indeed, Rulandus goes on to propose that

hermetic philosophers lend themselves readily to interpretations which have no connection with physical chemistry. Under this treatment the Philosopher’s Stone assumes a purely moral or spiritual significance. [...] He who can dive into the depths of his own soul and penetrate to its centre [...] will find at that centre the jewel of priceless value, the Philosopher’s Stone [...] for he will be one with Christ [...]⁵⁵

For Rulandus, Hermetic philosophy does not simply involve ‘physical chemistry’, but spiritual chemistry – the alchemy of the soul. Rulandus’s theory is echoed by the seventeenth-century English philosopher, Sir Thomas Browne, who remarked in 1642:

The smattering I have of the Philosopher’s stone, (which is something more then the perfect exaltation of gold) hath taught me a great deal of Divinity, and instructed my beliefe, how that immortall spirit and incorruptible substance of my soule may lye obscure, and sleepe a while within this house of flesh.⁵⁶

Both Rulandus and Browne seem to invoke the *Hermetica*’s transmutative mingling of the physical and human with the divine.

In 1614, the philologist, Isaac Casaubon, proposed that the *Hermetica* derived from the first century AD rather than from ancient times, but this evidence was largely

⁵¹ Henry Nollus [Heinrich Nolle], *Hermetical Physick*, trans. by Henry Vaughan (London, 1655), p. 5.

⁵² Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

⁵³ Martinus Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary* (1612), trans. by A. E. Waite (London: John M. Watkins, 1964), p. 339.

⁵⁴ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

⁵⁵ Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary*, p. 393.

⁵⁶ Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (1643, 1st pub. 1642), cited in Eluned Crawshaw, ‘Hermetic Elements in Donne’s Poetic Vision’, in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, ed. by A. J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 324-48 (p. 324).

ignored throughout the seventeenth century and philosophers such as Ralph Cudworth continued to insist that Hermes Trismegistus initiated the prophet, Moses, into ‘Hieroglyphick Learning and Metaphysical Theology’.⁵⁷ As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 5 of this study, a pronounced strand of ‘Metaphysical’ philosophy in the Renaissance stemmed from spiritual Hermetic alchemy.

It was not only the *De amore* and the *Hermetica* that were circulating in Renaissance Europe, but Ficino’s influential *Epistolae* – his twelve books of letters first printed in Latin in Venice in 1495.⁵⁸ An Italian translation was undertaken by F. Figliucci and printed as *Le Divine Lettere del Gran Marsilio Ficino* in Venice in 1546 and 1563.⁵⁹ Another Latin edition was printed in Paris in 1641.⁶⁰ The *Epistolae* offered a highly accessible form by which to digest Ficino’s syncretic blending of Christianity with pagan philosophies. Ficino tells us explicitly in the *Epistolae*: ‘I am imitating Jesus [...] I am also following Pythagorus, Plato and [...] Aristotle’.⁶¹

Ficino not only creates a metaphysical subjectivity through his Platonic-Hermetic melding of soul and body, but he also creates a metaphysical style of writing, combining ‘poetry with philosophy’.⁶² Ficino’s ‘Metaphysical [...] Poetick Schemes and Fables’ are epitomised by his *Epistolae*.⁶³ This is how Ficino addresses his patron/disciple/friend, Lorenzo de’ Medici, in the *Epistolae*:

I burn with the fire of love [...] if ever we [Marsilio and Lorenzo] appear to grow cool, [...] our coolness burns with more heat than the passion of others [...]. Your [Lorenzo’s] bite is sweeter than sweetness. Oh how sweetly you bite, how sharply you kiss! You mingle a magic sweetness with the sharp, and a sharpness with the sweet, as does Nature in the most succulent tastes.

[...]

you ought to remember that if Lorenzo is not absent, neither is Marsilio, for Marsilio dwells in Lorenzo [.]

[...]

⁵⁷ Isaac Casaubon, *De Rebus Sacris et Ecclesiasticis* (1614), cited in Røstvig, ‘Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Hermetic Poem’, p. 67; Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), cited in Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*, trans. by David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 93.

⁵⁸ ‘Introduction’, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 22.

⁵⁹ ‘Bibliography’, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, II, pp. 235-36 (p. 235).

⁶⁰ ‘Translators’ Note’, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, pp. xxiii-xxiv (p. xxiv).

⁶¹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, V, p. 48.

⁶² Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, II, p. 10.

⁶³ Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie*, p. 74.

I love my own in you. I praise you in art, and I value art in you. I honour you in nature, and I marvel nature in you. I revere you through God, and I reverence God through you.⁶⁴

This letter encapsulates Ficino's metaphysical subjectivity and writing style, as he fuses the erotic, the Platonic, the divine, the spiritual, the sensual, the Hermetic and the alchemical. Plato posits in the *Symposium* that divine love derives from the 'Heavenly goddess' who has 'nothing of the female in her but only maleness; so this love is directed [...] towards the male'.⁶⁵ This is Christianized in Ficino's above-cited letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, as Ficino reaches the Christian God through his male beloved. The *Hermetica* tells us that '[s]oul and corporeal substance together are embraced by nature' and it is this corporeal-immaterial love for human/divine Nature that Ficino reveres through Lorenzo.⁶⁶ The cluster of imagery in the above-cited letter that relates to cooling, burning and heating evokes the movements of the alchemical alembic that transforms metals, herbs, minerals and plants. But Ficino is not searching for an exoteric 'alchemy' which 'turns iron into gold', but is celebrating an inner alchemy that sublimates man into the divine: 'He who transforms human love into divine is transformed from man into God'.⁶⁷ It is thus an inner heat and fire that Ficino is conjuring in his relationship with Lorenzo. It is arguably this type of allegorical esoteric discourse that Samuel Parker in 1666 finds to be rampantly 'Metaphysical'.⁶⁸

Ficino's cryptic metaphysical style of writing is part of a carefully engineered dissident political agenda. Ficino deliberately constructs an ambivalent allegorical mode of discourse, as this enables him to engage with male-male eroticism, whilst simultaneously avoiding direct condemnation from the Roman Catholic Church and the Florentine legal authorities. Michael Morgan Holmes argues that Renaissance metaphysicians 'dissected traditional values and undermined the myth that desire, perception, identity, and aesthetic taste are always and everywhere the same'.⁶⁹ What I am suggesting here is that this strand of dissident metaphysical thinking emanates from the fifteenth-century writings of Marsilio Ficino.

⁶⁴ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, pp. 69, 70, 71.

⁶⁵ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Gill, p. 13.

⁶⁶ *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, ed. and trans. by Walter Scott (Bath: Solos Press, 1992), p. 116.

⁶⁷ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, IV, p. 56; VI, 54.

⁶⁸ Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie*, p. 74.

⁶⁹ Michael Morgan Holmes, *Early Modern Metaphysical Literature: Nature, Custom and Strange Desires* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), p. 28.

Samuel Parker's critique of Ficinian metaphysics was far from being universally accepted. There were, in fact, many enthusiastic readers and disseminators of Ficino's writings throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seventeenth-century Cambridge Neoplatonist, Henry More, for instance, stated that he was rescued from a sense of '[d]issappointment' in his studies by reading 'the *Platonick Writers, Marsilius Ficinus, Plotinus himself, [and] Mercurius [Hermes] Trismegistus*'.⁷⁰ Ben Jonson owned a Latin copy of the *De amore*.⁷¹ The sixteenth-century philosopher-chemist, John Dee, had a complete set of Ficino's works.⁷² The sixteenth-century Scots humanist, Hector Boece, owned a Latin copy of *De triplici vita* (Paris, c. 1496).⁷³ These surviving records suggest that Ficino's writings were being avidly read in the British Isles during the Renaissance.⁷⁴ We only have to turn to Robert Burton's popular treatise, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), to find evidence of Ficino's impact on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophical, literary, anatomical and erotic culture.⁷⁵ *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is peppered with Burton's own vernacular translations of Ficino's *De amore* and the *Epistolae*:

(as *Ficinus* pleads) *for all loue is honest and good, and they are worthy to be loued that speake well of loue.*

[...]

I need not as *Socrates* in *Plato* did cover his face when he spake of loue: it is not such lasciuious, obsceane or wanton discourse, but chaste and honest, and most part serious and euen of religion it selfe.

[...]

Ficinus illustrates this with a familiar example of that *Marhusian Phædrus* and *Lycias*. *Lycias* hee stares on *Phædrus* face [...] *Phædrus* [...] fastens the balls of his eyes upon *Lycias*, and with those sparkling rayes sends out his spirits. The beames of *Phædrus* eyes are easily mingled with the beames of *Lycias*, and spirits ioyned to spirits. This vapour begot in *Phædrus* heart, enters into *Lycias* bowels, & that which is a greater wonder, *Phædrus* blood is in *Lycias* heart, & thence come those ordinary loue speeches my sweet heart *Phædrus*, and mine own

⁷⁰ Henry More cited in Sarah Hutton, 'Henry More, Ficino and Plotinus: The Continuity of Renaissance Platonism', *Forme del Neoplatonismo* (2007), 281-96 (p. 283).

⁷¹ Margaret Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination: The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 26.

⁷² Elizabeth Mary Tilyou, 'Ficinian Elements in Selected Poems of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke', in *Neglected English Literature: Recusant Writings of the 16th-17th Centuries*, ed. by Dorothy L. Latz (Salzburg: Salzburg Studies in English Literature, 1997), pp. 49-58 (p. 50).

⁷³ John Durkan and Anthony Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (Glasgow: John S. Burns, 1961), p. 105.

⁷⁴ Other readers of Ficino included John Colet, Edward Herbert, Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser. See Valery Rees, 'Ficinian Ideas in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser', *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual*, 24 (2008), 73-134.

⁷⁵ Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) ran into seven editions by 1652 (STC).

selfe, my deare bowels. And Phædrus again to Lycias, O my light, my ioy, my soule, my life.
[...]

In *Ficinus* words I exhort and beseech you, *that you would embrace and follow his diuine loue with all your hearts and abilities, and by all offices and endeauors make this so louing God propitious unto you.*⁷⁶

Burton here vividly captures Ficino's metaphysical style of writing. It is not clear whether Phædrus and Lycias's male-male love is a 'heroicall passion', a 'chast loue', or a 'brutish burning lust'.⁷⁷ Phædrus and Lycias's relationship hovers ambivalently between three Ficinian states: the 'human', the 'divine' and the 'voluptuous'.⁷⁸ In *circa* 1628, Sir Edward Coke announced that 'Buggery is a detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named'.⁷⁹ Thus Burton, in his translation of Ficino, carefully avoids sodomitical, 'lasciuious, obsceane or wanton discourse', but he simultaneously depicts the fluvial fusion of male-male vapours, hearts, spirits and bowels.⁸⁰ Such relations for Burton are not sodomitical, but lead to 'religion it selfe'.⁸¹

This Ficinian 'Religion in friendship' had a profound effect on some seventeenth-century metaphysical poets.⁸² For example, in 1612, John Donne chooses to address his friend, Sir Henry Wotton, in the following terms:

You (I think) and I [are] much of one sect in the philosophy of love; which, though it be directed upon the mind, doth inhere in the body, and find plenty entertainment there: so have letters for their principal office to be seals and testimonies of mutual affection [.]
[...]

Hold me still in your own love, and proceed in that noble testimony of it, [...] and believe me that I shall ever with much affection

⁷⁶ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), pp. 496, 497, 562, 713.

⁷⁷ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 562.

⁷⁸ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, p. 120.

⁷⁹ Sir Edward Coke, *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England*, cited in Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, 1st pub. 1991), p. 50. *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* was first published in 1644, but written in *circa* 1628. See Allen D. Boyer, 'Coke, Sir Edward (1552-1634), lawyer, legal writer, and politician', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 14 February 2012]. From henceforth the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition) has been abbreviated as *ODNB*.

⁸⁰ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, pp. 497, 562.

⁸¹ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 497.

⁸² The phrase 'Religion in friendship' comes from John Donne's letter 'To the Lady G[rymes?]' (1612), in *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, ed. by Edmund Gosse, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1899), I, pp. 289-90 (p. 290).

and much devotion join both your fortune and your last best happiness,
with the desire of mine own, in all my civil and divine wishes [.]⁸³

Donne's 'philosophy of love' here is reminiscent of Ficino's aforementioned love letter to Lorenzo de' Medici.⁸⁴ Donne, like Ficino, fuses male-male mind and body with civil and divine obligations.

This homosocial Ficinian 'philosophy of love' is sustained in Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV:

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
[...]

Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.

(XIV,⁸⁵ 1-4, 12-14)

Margaret Healy argues that Donne's opening line here, 'Batter my heart, three person'd God' (XIV, 1), is charged with alchemical 'metalwork meaning'.⁸⁶ Donne had alluded to the battering transmutative power of God in his Easter Monday sermon of 1622: 'God can work in all metals and transmute all metals: he can make [...] a Superstitious Christian a sincere Christian; a Papist a Protestant'.⁸⁷ Donne's use of divine alchemy in his 1622 sermon and Holy Sonnet XIV recalls the alchemical spiritual-physical sublimation found in Ficino's *De amore*:

the ray of beauty which is both Plenty and the father of love [...] descends first from God, and passes through the Angel and the Soul as if they were made of glass; and from the Soul it easily emanates into the body prepared to receive it. Then from that body of a younger man it

⁸³ John Donne, 'To Sir H. Wotton', in *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, I, pp. 290-94 (pp. 291, 294).

⁸⁴ David Wootton proposes that Donne's reference to the 'philosophy of love' here is a reflection of his sympathies for religious Familism, the sixteenth-century Christian mystical cult that had its roots in the writings of the Dutch philosopher, Hendrick Niclaes (b. 1502). As Christopher Marsh has argued, mystical Familism had a 'certain affinity with Neoplatonic currents of thought'. What I am suggesting here is that Donne's 'philosophy of love' emanates from Ficinian Neoplatonism. David Wootton, 'John Donne's Religion of Love', in *Heterodoxy in Early Modern Science and Religion*, ed. by John Brooke and Ian Maclean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 31-58 (p. 31); Christopher W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 73.

⁸⁵ John Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XIV', in John Donne, *The Divine Poems*, ed. by Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 1st pub. 1952), p. 11. Donne's Holy Sonnets may date from 1609 to 1611, see 'Notes to the Text, Note 259', in *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659*, ed. by H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Penguin, 1993, 1st pub. 1992), p. 822. From henceforth Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV has been abbreviated as XIV and is preceded by the line reference.

⁸⁶ Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, p. 2.

⁸⁷ John Donne's Easter Monday sermon of 1622 cited in Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, p. 2.

shines out, especially through the eyes [...]. It flies onward, through the air, and penetrating the eyes of an older man, pierces his soul, kindles his appetite, then leads the wounded soul and the kindled appetite to their healing and cooling [...]⁸⁸

Ficino posits that the divinely pierced glass-like male soul can alchemically heal and cool male appetites and this is explicitly sexualized in Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV: 'Batter my heart, three person'd God [...] / [...] Take mee to you [...] / [...] Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee' (XIV, 1, 12, 14). In Holy Sonnet XIV, Donne adapts Ficino's motif of male-male alchemical love to establish an intensely fierce physical-spiritual communion with God.

Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV is 'dissident' in the original seventeenth-century meaning of the term. In 1617, James VI and I's royal chaplain, Samuel Collins, had attacked religious dissenters for practising forms of 'prayer, dissident from the common'.⁸⁹ Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV is an explosive reinterpretation of *The Book of Common Prayer*'s 1549 instruction to worshippers to meditate on the Trinity: 'we worship one God in Trinitie, and Trinitie in unitie. [...] He therefore that will bee saved: must thus thinke of the trinitie'.⁹⁰ For Donne's speaker in Holy Sonnet XIV, the salvation of the Trinity (the 'three person'd God') can only be attained through ravishment (XIV, 1, 14). According to the *OED*, 'ravish' (XIV, 14) has multiple connotations, both sacred and profane: 'To remove (a person) from earth, especially to heaven; [...] to transport (a person) in spirit [...] to fill with ecstasy, intense delight, or sensuous pleasure [...] To seize and appropriate as plunder or spoil [...] To rape, violate (a woman)' (*OED*). But how is Donne's speaker's ravishment gendered in Holy Sonnet XIV? Critics such as Arthur Marotti have argued that Holy Sonnet XIV is seeking a 'homoerotically sexualized salvation'.⁹¹ What I would like to propose here, however, is that the speaking voice of Holy Sonnet XIV is gender ambivalent. Take, for example, the following lines:

I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due,
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,

⁸⁸ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, p. 126.

⁸⁹ Samuel Collins, *Epiphata to F. T.* (Cambridge, 1617), p. 283. 'F. T.' has been identified as the Catholic Jesuit, Thomas Fitzherbert. See Nicholas W. S. Cranfield, 'Collins, Samuel (1576-1651), college head' and Thomas H. Clancy, 'Fitzherbert, Thomas (1552-1640), Jesuit', both in *ODNB* [accessed 14 February 2012].

⁹⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549), in *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. by Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 16, 17.

⁹¹ Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 259.

But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue,
 Yet dearly 'I love you', and would be lov'd faine,
 But am betroth'd unto your enemy,
 Divorce mee, 'untie, or breake that knot againe,
 Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
 Except you 'enthral mee, never shall be free,
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.
 (XIV, 5-14)

Donne's speaker here compares himself/herself to 'an usurpt towne, to'another due' (XIV, 5). This is arguably a reference to the usurped town of Jerusalem, a city emphatically personified as female in Lamentations in *The Geneva Bible* (1560):

She [Jerusalem] wepeth continually [...] amo[n]g all her louers, she hathe none to comfort her: all her friends haue delt vnfaithfully with her, & are her enemies.

[...]

the Lord hathe afflicted her, for the multitude of her transgressions, & her children are gone into captiuitie before the enemy.

[...]

Ierusalém hathe grievously sinned, therefore she is in derision: all 'y honoured her, despise her, because thei haue sene her filthines:

[...]

The enemy hathe stretched out his ha[n]d vpon all her pleasant things:

[...]

For the iniquitie of the daughter of my people is become greater then the sinne of Sodóm [.]⁹²

Jerusalem, in the Lamentations, has been sodomised by God's enemies and must be re-captured so that she can be purified. God commands the prophet, Ezekiel, to besiege Jerusalem:

Thou also sonne of man, take thee a bricke, and lay it before thee, & pourtray vpon it the citie, *euen* Ierusalém,
 And lay siege against it, and buylde a fort against it, and cast a mount against it: set the campe also against it, and lay engins of warre against it rounde about.⁹³

I would argue that it is the above-cited sexual, spiritual and military imagery from Lamentations and Ezekiel that pervades Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV: 'o'erthrow mee,'and bend / Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new' (XIV, 3-4). Donne's speaker in Holy Sonnet XIV laments her betrothal unto the 'enemy' (XIV, 10)

⁹² *The Geneva Bible, A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), Lamentacions 1. 2, 5, 8, 10; 4. 6.

⁹³ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Ezekiél 4. 1, 2.

and seeks a new sacred sodomy with God. Read within the context of Lamentations and Ezekiel, Donne's Holy Sonnet XIV appears to be a dramatic prosopopoeia whereby Donne's speaker takes on the female voice of Jerusalem in order to be purified and ravished by God.

Ventriloquizing the female voice to reach the divine can be traced back to Ficino's *De amore*, where ultimate knowledge of transcendental love emanates from the priestess, Diotima. Towards the end of Plato's *Symposium* and Ficino's *De amore*, a prophetess, Diotima, emerges and explains to the philosopher, Socrates, 'what the origin of love is':⁹⁴

she [Diotima] now reveals what its [love's] object is and what benefits it entails for men.

[...]

Diotima takes Socrates from the lowest things to the highest. She leads him back from the body to the soul, from the soul to the Angel, and from the Angel to God.⁹⁵

Ficino's Diotima is 'inspired by the divine spirit' and thus has the capacity to traverse both earthly and heavenly realms.⁹⁶ She describes love as a '*sophist* and a *magician*' and this inspires the aforementioned commentary by Tommaso Benci (Ficino's admirer) in the *De amore*:⁹⁷

the ray of beauty which is both Plenty and the father of love [...] descends first from God, and passes through the Angel and the Soul as if they were made of glass; and from the Soul it easily emanates into the body prepared to receive it. Then from that body of a younger man it shines out, especially through the eyes, the transparent windows of the soul. It flies onward, through the air, and penetrating the eyes of an older man, pierces his soul, kindles his appetite, then leads the wounded soul and the kindled appetite to their healing and cooling [...]⁹⁸

Benci's speech here recalls Ficino's earlier cited love letter to Lorenzo de' Medici with its use of esoteric alchemical eroticism that blends the 'appetite' of the soul with the 'appetite' of the body. But this transmutative movement of love is led by Diotima in Benci's speech, as it is she who moves men 'from the body to the soul, from the soul to

⁹⁴ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, p. 130.

⁹⁵ Ficino, *Commentary*, pp. 130, 136.

⁹⁶ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 107.

⁹⁷ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 126.

⁹⁸ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 126.

the Angel, and from the Angel to God'.⁹⁹ Diotima is a sophist and magician, as she facilitates upwards movement to the divine and nurtures a transformative 'healing and cooling'.¹⁰⁰ But Diotima's voice is manipulated to articulate male-male love and the 'benefits' this love 'entails for men'.¹⁰¹ Ficino's/Benci's Diotimean prosopopoeia stems from Plato's *Symposium* where Socrates declares: 'She [Diotima] is [...] the one who taught me the ways of Love. I'll *report* what she said'.¹⁰²

The 'Socratic ventriloquism' of Diotima's voice in the *Symposium* has been criticized by twentieth-century critics.¹⁰³ Luce Irigaray, for instance, states that Diotima 'herself does not speak. Socrates reports or recounts her views. He borrows her wisdom and power, declares her his initiator, his pedagogue, on matters on love, but she is not invited to teach or to eat'.¹⁰⁴ Andrea Nye, on the other hand, contextualizes Diotima's presence in the *Symposium* through Minoan culture. Nye argues that in ancient Greece women had an inferior status, but they still 'retained some of their old' Minoan 'power in religion'.¹⁰⁵ Women in ancient Greece continued to fill important 'sacerdotal roles as priestesses of Athena or Demeter; they participated publicly in religious festivals and initiations; [...] they performed as prophetesses at oracular shrines such as Delphi'.¹⁰⁶ Within this historical context, according to Nye, it is 'neither surprising nor anomalous that Diotima would appear in an authoritative role as the teacher of Socrates'.¹⁰⁷ As 'prophetess/priestess' she was part of a 'religious order that had maintained its authority from the Minoan/Mycenaean times'.¹⁰⁸ Diotima, for Nye, speaks out of a tradition of 'female power and female thought' that was still alive in Plato's Greece.¹⁰⁹

But what would Ficino's Diotima have meant to a Christian Renaissance culture? What I would like to propose here is that Ficino's Diotima evokes three interconnected positions of divine female agency: biblical Sapience (the wisdom of

⁹⁹ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 126.

¹⁰¹ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 130.

¹⁰² Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Gill, p. 37, my italics.

¹⁰³ The term 'Socratic ventriloquism' is coined by David M. Halperin, 'Why Is Diotima a Woman? Platonic Eros and the Figuration of Gender', in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. by David M. Halperin and others (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 257-308 (p. 293).

¹⁰⁴ Luce Irigaray, 'Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium, Diotima's Speech', trans. by Eleanor H. Kuykendall, *Hypatia*, 3 (1989), 32-44 (p. 32).

¹⁰⁵ Andrea Nye, 'The Hidden Host: Irigaray and Diotima at Plato's Symposium', *Hypatia*, 3 (1989), 45-61 (p. 53).

¹⁰⁶ Nye, 'The Hidden Host', p. 53.

¹⁰⁷ Nye, 'The Hidden Host', p. 53.

¹⁰⁸ Nye, 'The Hidden Host', p. 53.

¹⁰⁹ Nye, 'The Hidden Host', p. 54.

God); the Hermetic Sibyls of Siena Cathedral (c. 1488); and Lady Alchymia (the muse of divine alchemy).

This is how the female figure of Sapientia (the wisdom of God) is presented in Proverbs in the Bible:

Is not Wisdom calling?
 Is not Understanding raising her voice?
 [...] she takes her stand;
 [...] she cries out,
 'I am calling to you, all people,
 my words are addressed to all humanity.
 [...] All the words from my mouth are upright,
 nothing false there, nothing crooked,
 [...] I, Wisdom, [...] I am mistress of the art of thought.
 [...] From everlasting, I was firmly set,
 from the beginning, before the earth came into being.'¹¹⁰

The thirteenth-century illuminated manuscript, *Aurora Consurgens* (attributed to St Thomas Aquinas), opens with a description of wisdom in the form of a 'mystical lady' – this mystical muse seems to be Lady Alchymia, Lady Philosophy, Sapience:¹¹¹

Wisdom [...] crieth out at the head of the multitudes, [...] saying: Come ye to me and be enlightened [.]
 [...]

For she is a gift and sacrament of God and a divine matter, which deeply and in divers manners was veiled in images by the wise [...] she was the mother of all sciences [...] she is an infinite treasure to all men [.]¹¹²

Ficino writes in the *Epsitolae*: 'Philosophy [...] inventress and mistress [...] she is our mother and nurse'.¹¹³ Ficino's Diotima as a sacred 'sophist' appears to be appealing to

¹¹⁰ *The New Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), The Proverbs 8. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 23.

¹¹¹ Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 178.

¹¹² *Aurora Consurgens: A Document Attributed to Thomas Aquinas on the Problem of Opposites in Alchemy*, ed. by Marie-Louise von Franz, trans. by R. F. C. Hull and A. S. B. Glover (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 33, 43, 45. The *Aurora Consurgens* enjoyed wide circulation and was printed in Basel in 1593 and 1610. See Marie-Louise von Franz, 'Introduction', in *Aurora Consurgens*, ed. by Franz, pp. 1-29 (p. 5).

this tradition of sacrosanct female wisdom. Moreover, the aforementioned mosaic of Hermes in Siena Cathedral depicts the male prophet, Hermes, as being flanked by two female sibylline figures.¹¹⁴ These sibylline figures imply that Hermetic knowledge will be disseminated by women. Indeed, according to the renowned seventeenth-century alchemist, Michael Maier (1568-1622), the Hermetic

succession passed to Maria the Hebrew, who was closest to Hermes [...] the whole secret, she [Maria] says, is in the knowledge of the Vessel of Hermes, because it is divine [...] He who understands this properly grasps the truest mind of Maria, and she will open up to him those secrets of chemistry which [...] all have wrapped in dark silence.¹¹⁵

Maier depicts Maria as Hermes's *soror mystica* – a Hermetic sister-prophetess who carries and circulates the knowledge of Hermes's sacred alchemical 'Vessel'.¹¹⁶ Maier here seems to be harking back to Ficino's adumbration of the divine female muse, Diotima.

Reclaiming Diotima's voice was one way that Renaissance women could gain metaphysical agency. This is evinced through the French author and patron, Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549). According to the historian, Frances Yates, Marguerite of Navarre harboured a 'cult of Ficinian mysticism' at her royal court.¹¹⁷ Indeed, Marguerite of Navarre acted as patron to Ficinian disciples such as Lefèvre d'Étaples, who, in 1514, had brought together the publication of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.¹¹⁸ It was Marguerite of Navarre who instructed the publisher, Simon du Bois, to translate Ficino's *De amore*.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Marguerite of Navarre encouraged her protégée, Antoine Héroët, to write the Ficino-inspired monologue, *La Parfaicte amye* (1542, *The Perfect Friend*).¹²⁰ Marguerite of Navarre could read Latin, Italian, Greek and Hebrew

¹¹³ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, pp. 186-87.

¹¹⁴ Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, pp. 19, 20.

¹¹⁵ Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum* (1617), cited in Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 76, 77, 78.

¹¹⁶ According to Raphael Patai, the chief source for Maria is the ancient Greek alchemical author, Zosimos, who lived in Hellenistic Egypt at about 300 CE. Patai argues that Maria must have lived at least two generations before Zosimos himself. See Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, p. 60.

¹¹⁷ Frances A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1988, 1st pub. 1947), p. 76.

¹¹⁸ Claire Lynch Wade, 'Introduction', in Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons: A French and English Edition*, trans. by Claire Lynch Wade (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. vii-xxi (p. xi).

¹¹⁹ Simon du Bois's translation of Ficino's *De amore* was printed after 1540. Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 204.

¹²⁰ Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance*, pp. 204-205.

and read and disseminated Ficino's writings in their original Latin.¹²¹ We only have to turn to Marguerite of Navarre's manuscript poem, *Les Prisons* (c. 1549), to find a mystical blazon of Ficino's metaphysical medical practice:

Arbres, fleurs, fruitz, herbes et pierres dures,
 Tout ce qui est caché en leurs natures,
 Et leurs vertuz et leurs complexions,
 Leurs nourritures et leurs corruptions,
 Et de quoy l'un peult à l'autre servir.
 Celluy qui veult leur doctrine suyvir
 Et parvenir jusqu'au sçavoir parfaict,
 Sçaura garder l'homme que Dieu a fait
 [...]
 Ce mot icy je congneuz en Hermès
 [...]
 L'on ne sçauroit Pere et Filz demander
 Ne Saint Esprit plus clair qu'en Pimander;
 Or n'estoit il de nation juïfve,
 Mais il [Hermès] avoit congnoissance naïfve,
 Par cest esprit, qui tout homme illumine
 Venant au monde et qui çà bas chemine,
 De Cil qui Est, duquel l'election
 L'avoit tiré à la perfection
 [...]
 C'est qu'honorer le medecin il fault,
 Car son sçavoir est venu de là hault:
 Ministre il est du grand vouloir divin [.]

[The flowers, trees, fruits, herbs, and stubborn stones,
 All that is hidden in their secret zones,
 Their virtues and their complex inner folds,
 Their food and what corruption each one holds,
 And in what way can the other serve.
 The man who would their principles observe
 And reach the perfect knowledge of their aid
 Will learn to keep that man God has made
 [...]
 This same Word in Hermes I recognized
 [...]
 One could not ask for Father, Son more clear,
 Nor Holy Ghost, than in *Pimander's* sphere.
 Though not of Israel nor its tradition,
 He [Hermes] still had a native intuition
 Through the Spirit that lights every man
 Who comes among the earthly caravan
 From Him Who Is, Him by whose election
 Man was first attracted to perfection

¹²¹ Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 180.

[...]
 It is the doctor we must dignify
 Because his knowledge comes here from on high;
 He is a minister of will divine [.]¹²²

Marguerite here cites the *Hermetica*'s declaration that earthly 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices' have 'within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity'.¹²³

The flowers, trees, fruits, herbs, and stubborn stones,
 [...]
 The man who would their principles observe
 And reach the perfect knowledge of their aid
 Will learn to keep that man God has made [.]¹²⁴

Likewise, Marguerite's praise for the sacred doctor, the 'minister of will divine', recalls Ficino's *Epistolae*.¹²⁵

Apollo, the source of medicine, is said to have begotten two sons of special note, Aesculapius and Plato: Aesculapius was to heal bodies, but Plato souls. Doctors who follow Aesculapius usually treat pains of the body by applying ointments and poultices which they call anodyne because they soothe pain. It is also the practice of the Academy, which follows Platonic medicine, to apply a prescription of this kind to suffering souls, like a soothing poultice. Indeed, I use this myself more than anything else, and I make it available to all who are dear to me [.]¹²⁶

Marguerite, like Ficino, fuses Hermetic and Platonic healing practices in *Les Prisons*: 'It is the doctor we must dignify / Because his knowledge comes here from on high'.¹²⁷

Les Prisons, however, is a male-voiced poem, articulated by the hero, L'Amy. This male heroic voice is dramatically replaced in Marguerite of Navarre's play, *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan* (*The Comedy of Mont-de-Marsan*, 1547), which may have been performed by the women of the court in Mont-de-Marsan in 1548.¹²⁸ In this play, Marguerite confronts her audience with four distinct female voices: the Worldly Woman (la Mondainne); the Superstitious Woman (la Supersticieuse); the Wise Woman (la Sage); and the Woman Enraptured by the Love of God (la Ravie de l'amour de Dieu,

¹²² Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, trans. by Wade, pp. 39, 50-51, lines 1837-44, 2391, 2393-2400, 2437-39.

¹²³ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

¹²⁴ Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, trans. by Wade, p. 39, lines 1837, 1842-44.

¹²⁵ Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, p. 51, line 2439.

¹²⁶ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 51.

¹²⁷ Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, p. 51, lines 2437-38.

¹²⁸ We have no record about the performers and the scenery for *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*. However, the sixteenth-century courtier and memorialist, Pierre de Bourdeilles, abbot of Brantôme, records that Marguerite of Navarre often had her comedies and morality plays 'performed by the ladies of the court'. Pierre de Bourdeilles, abbot of Brantôme, *Recueil des dames*, cited in Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance*, p. 180.

bergère). Here Marguerite evokes Luce Irigaray's theory of 'parler femme' ('womanspeak'). Irigaray argues that 'womanspeak' emerges 'spontaneously when women communicate together'.¹²⁹ Marguerite (in the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*) uses a 'parler femme' to challenge the male homosocial world of Plato's *Symposium*. The *Symposium* is made up of a dialogue between men – philosophers, soldiers, physicians and satirists. Plato's Apollodorus tells us, 'whenever I discuss philosophy or listen to others doing so, I enjoy it enormously'.¹³⁰ Apollodorus speaks here of discussions between men, which exclude women – no women are invited to speak at Plato's banquet. In contrast to the *Symposium*'s male philosophical world, Marguerite in the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan* assembles a metaphysical 'parler femme' that contemplates the interconnections between soul and body and the transcendental consequences this has for women and men. Marguerite's Diotimean Wise Woman (la Sage) proclaims:

Mais l'ame au corps joincte et unie,
C'est l'homme: en cest compaignie
De parfaicte confaction
Ceste union apporte vie:
[...]
Et si en Dieu vous ne trouvez
Et sa presence n'esprouvez,
Vous avez beau partout trotter.

[It is the joining of the body and the soul
United that is man.
In the company of this perfect concoction,
This union brings life.
[...]
And unless you find yourself one with God
And feel his presence within yourself,
Then all your journeys are to no avail.]¹³¹

Inspired by this speech, the Woman Enraptured by the Love of God (la Ravie de l'amour de Dieu, bergère) declares:

Mais toy, amour,
S'il te plaict me faire ce tour,
Que tu me brusles sans séjour,
Ton consumer

¹²⁹ Luce Irigaray's coinage 'womanspeak' cited by Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995, 1st pub. 1985), p. 144.

¹³⁰ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Gill, p. 4.

¹³¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*, in Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. by Rouben Cholakian and Mary Skemp (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 304-369 (pp. 322-23, 330-31), lines 322-25, 463-65.

Me donra ung estre d'aymer,
 Me rellevant pour m'assommer,
 Et ta lumiere,
 Qui en moy sera toutte entiere,
 Comme toy me fera legiere.

[But if it pleases you, Love,
 To come around to me,
 May you consume me relentlessly,
 Your fire will make of me
 A being of love,
 Raising me up to strike me down.
 And your light,
 That will fill me completely,
 Will make me, like you, weightless.]¹³²

Marguerite, in the above quotations, foregrounds a vital aspect of Ficinian metaphysics: the syncretic joining of the 'heavenly soul' and the 'earthly body', which ultimately culminates in the holy love of God.¹³³ Ficino writes: 'Only those who love one another in this One can properly proclaim with the Prophet, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" [Psalm 133. 1]'.¹³⁴ But Ficino's 'brethren' is a male homosocial 'brethren' (no women are ever addressed in the *Epistolae*). Marguerite expands Ficino's metaphysical doctrine by including women and female voices. Marguerite's Wise Woman and the Woman Enraptured by the Love of God are Diotimean sophists, but their wise words are not being used exclusively to further divine male-male love, but all divine love for men *and* women.

Marguerite of Navarre's inclusive philosophy of love was made available to a wide readership through her published poem, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (*The Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 1531). *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* was republished eleven times in Marguerite's lifetime, and in 1539 a Geneva publisher produced an edition of two thousand copies, an astounding print-run for the times.¹³⁵ *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* was translated into English by Elizabeth Tudor (1533-1603) in 1544 and printed in 1548.¹³⁶ In *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, Marguerite of Navarre explicitly uses a female contemplative voice to access the divine:

¹³² Marguerite de Navarre, *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*, pp. 368-69, lines 1010-18.

¹³³ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance*, p. 163.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Tudor's manuscript translation of *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* was printed in 1548, 1568, 1582 and 1590. See Anne Lake Prescott, 'Introductory Note', in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Series I. Printed Writings, 1500-1640: Part 2, Vol. 5. Elizabeth*

Pere, pere, las! que puis je penser?
 Osera bien mon esperit s'avancer
 De vous nomme Pere?
 [...]

Mais, Monseigneur, si vous estes mon pere,
 Puis je penser que je suis vostre mere?
 Vous engendrer? vous par qui je suis faicte?

[Father, O Father, what must I think?
 Will my spirit be so bold
 as to name you father?
 [...]

But, Lord, if you are my father,
 may I think of myself as your mother,
 give birth to you, you by whom I am created?]¹³⁷

Marguerite of Navarre's repetition here of the verb 'penser' (to think) recalls Ficino's interlinking of the 'metaphysical' to earthly-spiritual meditative practices:

The divine Plato considers that the heavenly and immortal soul in a sense dies on entering the earthly and mortal body and lives again when it leaves it. But before the soul leaves the body by the law of nature, it may do so by the diligent practice of meditation, when Philosophy, the medicine of human ills, purges the sickly little soul [...] and enlivens it with her medicine of moral conduct. [...] Then step by step on the ladder of mathematics the soul accomplishes the sublime ascent to the topmost orbs of Heaven. At length, what is more wonderful than words can tell, on the wings of metaphysics, it [the soul] soars beyond the vault of heaven to the creator of heaven and earth Himself.¹³⁸

According to Ficino, human beings have the potential to soar on the 'wings of metaphysics' through the 'diligent practice' of earthly 'meditation'.¹³⁹ For Marguerite of Navarre, this practice of metaphysical meditation is specifically open to women, as women are imbued with a sacred-physical procreative power:

Mais, Monseigneur, si vous estes mon pere,
 Puis je penser que je suis vostre mere?
 Vous engendrer? vous par qui je suis faicte?

[But, Lord, if you are my father,
 may I think of myself as your mother,

and *Mary Tudor*, selected by Anne Lake Prescott, general eds. Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. ix-xiii (pp. x-xi).

¹³⁷ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, in *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. by Cholakian and Skemp, pp. 76-149 (pp. 88-89), lines 247-49, 261-63.

¹³⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 189.

¹³⁹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 189.

give birth to you, you by whom I am created?]¹⁴⁰

It is Marguerite of Navarre's distinctively female meditative practice that Elizabeth Tudor chooses to stress in her translation of *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*. Elizabeth Tudor's translation of *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* was a New Year's gift for her step-mother, Katherine Parr (1512-1548). Elizabeth decorates the hand-sewn cover of the manuscript copy of her translation with Katherine Parr's initials. On each corner of this hand-sewn cover, Elizabeth embroiders four pansies.¹⁴¹ As Lisa Klein observes, the pansies on this book cover are a pun on the French word 'pensee', meaning 'thought' or 'idea'.¹⁴² Moreover, Jacques Derrida notes that 'la pensée' is a feminine noun.¹⁴³ Elizabeth's pun on pansy/ 'pensee' harks back to Marguerite of Navarre's repetition of 'penser' in *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* and thus draws attention to a specifically female act of contemplation, meditation and prayer.

The action or practice of profound spiritual reflection or mental contemplation is what the seminal critic, Louis Martz, labels as the 'poetry of meditation'.¹⁴⁴ According to Martz, the meditative poem creates an 'interior drama of the mind', whereby the mind grasps a situation, 'evoked by [...] memory', brings it forward to 'consciousness' and concludes with 'illumination' where the speaker's self has 'found an answer to its conflicts'.¹⁴⁵ Martz posits that Donne is the 'master and father' of a new kind of English meditative poetry and is closely followed by his contemporaries, Robert Southwell, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw.¹⁴⁶ Martz states that meditative poetry is concerned with 'inward man' and his 'intellectual faculties'.¹⁴⁷ He ends by citing T. S. Eliot, who praises the way 'our [literary] fathers and grandfathers expressed themselves'.¹⁴⁸ Chapter 2 of this study argues that the metaphysical meditative tradition is not purely a male tradition, but a male *and* female tradition. I argue in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis that Renaissance women writers such as Marie Maitland, Elizabeth

¹⁴⁰ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 88-89, lines 261-63.

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Tudor, 'The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Cherry 36, cited in Lisa M. Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50 (1997), 459-93 (p. 487).

¹⁴² Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid', pp. 477-78.

¹⁴³ Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. by Avital Ronell, *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980), 55-81 (pp. 77-78).

¹⁴⁴ Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962, 1st pub. 1954).

¹⁴⁵ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 330.

¹⁴⁶ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 5, 1.

¹⁴⁸ T. S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', cited by Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 323.

Melville, Aemilia Lanyer and Constance Aston Fowler follow Marguerite of Navarre's example and create feminized meditative practices of their own.

Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse embodies Marguerite of Navarre's reformist and tolerant attitude towards religion. As Carol Thysell notes, Marguerite of Navarre remained a Catholic throughout her life, but she continued to offer refuge to many reformers, including John Calvin, at her court in Nérac during times of persecution.¹⁴⁹ The 1533 edition of *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* includes a French translation of the biblical Psalm 6 by Marguerite's Lutheran protégée, Clément Marot. As Rouben Cholakian observes, the French Catholic church fathers considered vernacular translations of biblical texts as a 'serious threat to their authority' and thus regarded the 1533 edition of *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* as a dissident text that queried the hegemonic religious order.¹⁵⁰ What is more, in *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, Marguerite of Navarre foregrounds an overtly amorous female dialogue with Christ and God that is not interrupted by any male priest or intercessor:

Car son amour est de si bonne sorte,
Que sans l'aymer il m'ayme, et est l'aymant
Par son amour (sans l'aymer) doublement.
Mon amour n'est pour l'aymer, mais la sienne
En moy ame, que je sens comme mienne.

Il s'ayme donc en moy et par m'aymer,
Il faict mon cueur par amour enflammer.
Par ceste amour il se faict aymer tant,
Que son effect (non moy) le rend content.
Se contentant, tousjours il multiplie
Trop plus d'amour, qu'amour ne luy supplie.

O vray ayment, de charité la source,
Et du tresor divin la seule bourse,
Doib je penser, ny oseroie je dire
Que c'est de vous? le puis je bien escrire?
Vostre bonté, vostre amour se poeut elle
Bien comprendre de personne mortelle?
Et s'il vous plaist ung petit l'imprimer
Dedans ung cueur, le poeut il exprimer?
Certes, nenny! car la capacité
N'est pour tenir la grande immensité [.]

[For his [Christ's] is that kind of love
that loves without being loved,
loves doubly without being loved.

¹⁴⁹ Carol Thysell, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Rouben Cholakian, 'Volume Editor's Introduction', in Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. by Cholakian and Skemp, pp. 1-42 (Note 31, p. 18).

My love does not love him, but his love
in me loves him, which I feel as my own.

He loves himself in me and by loving me,
he fills my heart with love.
In such loving he makes himself to be loved
that its consequence (not mine) brings him joy.
Making himself happy, he endlessly multiplies
greater love than love can give.

True lover, source of all devotion,
the unique font of heavenly riches,
may I believe, dare I say
that it comes from you? Am I able to write it?
Your munificence and love,
can a human heart understand them?
And whatever small amount you implant
in a heart, can the heart express it?
Surely not. For it is not large enough
to contain your vastness.]¹⁵¹

Sarah Hutton has argued that metaphysical poetry is ‘metaphysical’ in the ‘philosophical sense’ when it is Platonic.¹⁵² Hutton contends that ‘syncretic Christian Platonism’ offered seventeenth-century poets such as Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne a vehicle to transcend the ‘doctrinal divisions’ of their day.¹⁵³ Hutton’s theory can be expanded to include Marguerite of Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*. In the above-cited quotation from *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, Marguerite vividly uses chiasmic repetition to emphasise the words ‘amour’ and ‘aymer’ (love):

Car son amour est de si bonne sorte,
Que sans l’aymer il m’ayme, et est l’aymant
Par son amour (sans l’aymer) doublement.

[For his [Christ’s] is that kind of love
that loves without being loved,
loves doubly without being loved.]¹⁵⁴

For Marguerite’s speaker, the vastness (‘grande immensité’) of Christ’s ‘love’ can penetrate all human hearts, both Catholic and Protestant.¹⁵⁵ It is *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*’s implicit vision of religious toleration through Christ’s love that the French

¹⁵¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, pp. 140-43, lines 1302-22.

¹⁵² Sarah Hutton, ‘Platonism in Some Metaphysical Poets: Marvell, Vaughan and Traherne’, in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Baldwin and Hutton, pp. 163-77 (p. 163).

¹⁵³ Hutton, ‘Platonism in Some Metaphysical Poets’, pp. 163-64.

¹⁵⁴ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, pp. 140-41, lines 1302-1304.

¹⁵⁵ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, pp. 142-43, line 1322.

Catholic church fathers found to be dangerously dissident. Marguerite's focus on a transcendental religion of 'amour' is reminiscent of Ficino's Platonic philosophy of love. In the *Epistolae*, Ficino claims that he witnesses 'nothing [...] except arms made for [...] destruction [...] the clash of weapons, [...] the thundering of canon'.¹⁵⁶ Ficino here is referring to the ongoing war between Florence, Pope Sixtus IV and King Ferdinand of Naples (Ferrante), which began in 1478.¹⁵⁷ In order to surpass this external conflict, Ficino searches for a 'concord within' – a philosophy of love that challenges secular factionalism:¹⁵⁸

for we all are one in Him who alone in truth is one [...] We all love one another in Him who alone is worthy of love for His own sake; through Him alone each one is lovable; for His sake only each is worthy of love. Only those who love one another in this One can properly proclaim with the Prophet, 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' [Psalm 133. 1].¹⁵⁹

Ficino's syncretic *prisca theologia* seeks to unite all earthly factions through the holy love of God. It seems to be this philosophy of love that permeates Marguerite's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*. *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* posits that Christ's love is vast and multiplying, open to all – men and women, Catholic and Protestant. As we shall see, it is arguably Marguerite of Navarre's innovative poetic rendering of Ficinian philosophy that inspires late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century male metaphysical meditative poetry.

Sometime between 1590 and 1620, Donne had asked Christ to reveal his spouse, the bride, the church:

Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and cleare.
[...]
Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
When she's embrac'd and open to most men.¹⁶⁰

Donne's speaker, in the above-quoted sonnet, chooses not to (or is unable to) ventriloquize the voice of the female spouse – she thus remains speechless, passively

¹⁵⁶ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, V, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ 'Introduction', *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, V, pp. xiii-xvii (p. xiii).

¹⁵⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, V, p. 37.

¹⁵⁹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ John Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XVIII: Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and cleare', in *The Divine Poems*, ed. by Gardner, p. 15, lines 1, 11-14. For the arguments of the compositional dating of this sonnet (c. 1590-1620), see 'Notes to the Text, Note 256' and 'Note 261', in *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659*, ed. by Woudhuysen, pp. 821, 822.

opening herself to men. In *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, however, Marguerite's speaker adopts the voice of the bride from the biblical Song of Songs to access the capacious 'vastness' of Christ.¹⁶¹ Marguerite thus creates an active (rather than passive) female sensual-spiritual agency:

Or doncques, puis que nous n'avons qu'ung pere
 Je ne craindray de vous nommer mon frere.
 Vous l'avez dit en lieu bien autenique
 Par Salomon en vostre doulx cantique,
 Disant: Ma soeur tu as navré mon cuer,
 Tu as navré mon cuer par la doulceur
 D'ung de tes yeulx, et d'ung de tes cheveulx.
 Las! mon frere, aultre bien je ne veulx
 Que vous navrant navrée me sentir;
 Par vostre amour bien m'y veulx consentir.
 Pareillement espouse me clamez,
 En ce lieu là monstrant que vous m'aymez;
 Et m'appellez par vraye amour jalouse:
 Ma colombe, lieve toy mon espouse.
 Parquoy diray par amoureuse foy
 Qu'à vous je suis, et vous estes à moy.
 Vous me nommez amye, espouse, et belle.
 Si je le suis, vous m'avez faicte telle.
 Las! vous plaist il telz noms me departir?
 Ilz sont dignes de faire ung cuer partir,
 Mourir, brusler, par amour importable,
 Pensant l'honneur trop plus que raisonnable.

[Therefore, since we have but one father,
 I do not hesitate to call you [Christ] brother.
 You have stated as much in a reliable source
 which is your sweet Song of Solomon,
 saying: Dear Sister, you have broken my heart.
 By the sweetness in but one of your eyes,
 in but one hair, you have smitten me to the quick.
 Dear brother, I seek no other joy
 than that in breaking your heart, I should break my own.
 Because of your love, I gladly submit.

In the same manner you call me wife,
 proving thus your affection for me.
 And because of true love, you call me jealous.
 My dove and wife, arise.
 And in so loving faith, I say
 I am yours, and you mine.
 You call me friend, wife, and beautiful one.
 If I am all these, it is because you made me so.
 Does it please you to give me such names?

¹⁶¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 142-43, line 1322.

They are enough to make a heart flee,
burn, and expire from intolerable longing,
thinking the honor beyond reason.]¹⁶²

As we have seen, Donne's voice in his devotional sonnets is a fervent libidinal-spiritual voice, but this voice, I would argue, is presaged by Marguerite's impassioned female voice in the widely-circulating *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*:

Vous me nommez amye, espouse, et belle.
Si je le suis, vous m'avez faicte telle.
Las! vous plaist il telz noms me departir?
Ilz sont dignes de faire ung cueur partir,
Mourir, brusler, par amour importable,
Pensant l'honneur trop plus que raisonnable.

[You call me friend, wife, and beautiful one.
If I am all these, it is because you made me so.
Does it please you to give me such names?
They are enough to make a heart flee,
burn, and expire from intolerable longing,
thinking the honor beyond reason.]¹⁶³

Both Donne and Marguerite of Navarre are responding to, and gendering, the sensual-spiritual voice of the medieval mystical text, *De Imitatione Christi* (c. 1426, attributed to Thomas à Kempis). The speaking voice in *De Imitatione Christi* desires a physical-spiritual union with Christ: 'I shall loue hym [Christ], and I shall shewe & open my selfe to hym [...] My soule desyreth thy [Christ's] body'.¹⁶⁴ The 'My soule' of *De Imitatione Christi* is gendered as male by Donne in his Holy Sonnet XVIII: 'let myne amorous soule court thy [Christ's] mild Dove'.¹⁶⁵ The 'soule' in Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, however, is insistently gendered as female:

Mais mon ame traictez (si dire l'ouze)
Comme mere, fille, soeur, et espouse.

[But, if I may say so, you [God] treat my soul
like that of a mother, daughter, sister, and wife.]¹⁶⁶

Colin Burrow (following Dryden) claims that some Renaissance women could not engage with the 'metaphysical' because such writing depended on a 'training in rhetoric

¹⁶² Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 92-93, lines 325-46.

¹⁶³ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 92-93, lines 341-46.

¹⁶⁴ *De Imitatione Christi*, Books I-III trans. by William Atkynson, Book IV trans. by Margaret Beaufort, ed. by John K. Ingram (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1893), pp. 253, 264.

¹⁶⁵ Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XVIII', p. 15, line 12.

¹⁶⁶ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 84-85, lines 171-72.

which few women in this period had'.¹⁶⁷ Metaphysical writing, according to Burrow, dramatizes a desire to 'display' and 'persuade' in ways which 'were not associated with the feminine in this period'.¹⁶⁸ Reading Marguerite of Navarre alongside Donne, however, forces us to re-think Burrow's assumption. By taking on the voice of the bride, Marguerite of Navarre is able to create a persuasive feminine metaphysical rhetoric. Moreover, Book IV of *De Imitatione Christi* is translated into English and printed in 1504 by Elizabeth Tudor's great-grandmother, Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509). This again complicates Martz's model of the male meditative metaphysical tradition. It is my contention in this thesis that it is women writers such as Margaret Beaufort and Marguerite of Navarre who initiate influential models for metaphysical meditation.

Marguerite of Navarre's feminization of Ficinian metaphysics was continued not only by royal women (such as Elizabeth Tudor), but other Renaissance women who existed on the peripheries of court culture. This is exhibited by the sixteenth-century Italian Protestant writer, Olympia Morata (1526-1555). The principal patron of Morata's youth was Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara (1510-1575).¹⁶⁹ Renée de France had been a protégée of Marguerite of Navarre and travelled with Marguerite to Nérac in 1527.¹⁷⁰ In Renée's own royal court, Morata wrote dialogues in Greek and Latin, in imitation of Plato.¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, the manuscripts of Morata's Platonic dialogues were lost in the siege of Schweinfurt (1553).¹⁷² However, we only have to turn to Morata's mid-sixteenth-century published letters and dialogues with fellow female humanist, Lavinia della Rovere Orsini (1521-1601), to find Ficino's influence at work:

So my dear Lavinia, [...] I would not be able to bear my longing for my friends, especially for you, who always 'remain in the depths of my being' and whom I always mention in my prayers. [...] Since so great a friendship exists between us and there is no woman dearer to me than you, I have long shared all my secrets with you [...] take yourself to Him [Christ] Who calls all who labor and are heavy

¹⁶⁷ Colin Burrow, 'Introduction', *Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. by Colin Burrow (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. xix-lvii (p. xlv).

¹⁶⁸ Burrow, 'Introduction', p. xlv.

¹⁶⁹ Holt N. Parker, 'Introduction: Olympia Fulvia Morata (1526/27-55)', in *Olympia Morata: The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, ed. and trans. by Holt N. Parker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 1-57 (p. 7).

¹⁷⁰ Parker, 'Introduction', p. 7.

¹⁷¹ Parker, 'Introduction', p. 16.

¹⁷² Parker, 'Introduction', p. 16.

laden to Him to give them rest. [...] He Himself will strengthen you and give you, as He promised, the Holy Spirit [...]¹⁷³

Morata here adapts Ficino's discourse of divine Ciceronian *amicitia* and applies it to women. Morata configures a communal seeking of Christ through female-female dialogue and interaction. This study aims to prove that Marguerite's and Morata's feminization of Ficino are not isolated occurrences. Many women writers on the fringes of court culture accessed, disrupted and re-fashioned Ficinian metaphysics. As we shall see, these women writers included Marie Maitland, Elizabeth Melville, Aemilia Lanyer, Katherine Thimelby, Constance Aston Fower and Katherine Philips.

However, for a woman to appropriate a Ficinian sensual-spiritual agency could lead to scandalous accusations of sexual dissidence. This is demonstrated by Marguerite of Navarre's great-granddaughter, Henrietta Maria (1609-1669), who became queen consort to Charles I in 1625. According to Sears Jayne, Henrietta Maria circulated Guy Le Levre de la Boderie's French translation of the *De amore* in her court in England.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, Henrietta Maria's public use of Ficino is evinced by the court masques in which she performed. For instance, Henrietta Maria plays the role of Indamora in William D'Avenant's masque, *The Temple of Love* (1635). Indamora raises

strange doctrines, and new sects of
Love:
Which must not woo or court the person, but
The mind; and practice generation not
Of bodies but of souls.¹⁷⁵

'[G]eneration not / Of bodies but of souls' recalls Diotima's statements about spiritual generation in the *De amore*: 'the reproductive drive of the soul'.¹⁷⁶ *The Temple of Love*'s punning on 'In-da-mora' is not accidental. Henrietta Maria is literally *in* the *De amore*, forging emotional, spiritual and political *amore/amicitia* between the men and women of her court. The 'Temple' in the title of this masque is evocative of Henrietta Maria's chapel at Somerset House, which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and became

¹⁷³ Olympia Morata, 'Letter 28: Schweinfurt [winter 1551/52] Olympia Morata to Lavinia della Rovere Orsini'; 'Dialogue Between Theophila and Philotima [1551-52]', both in *Olympia Morata: The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, trans. by Parker, pp. 117-18 (p. 117); pp. 118-26 (pp. 119, 124). Morata's *Orationes, Dialogi, Epistolae, Carmina tam Latina quam Graeca* was posthumously printed in Basel in 1558, 1562 and 1570. See Diana Robin, 'Foreword', in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. by Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. xvii-xxii (p. xx).

¹⁷⁴ Jayne, 'Introduction', p. 22.

¹⁷⁵ William D'Avenant, *The Temple of Love*, in *The Dramatic Works of Sir William D'Avenant*, 5 vols (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1872-1874), I, pp. 286-305 (pp. 292-93).

¹⁷⁶ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 135.

the centre for the Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, which the queen led.¹⁷⁷ In her chapel at Somerset House, Henrietta Maria exercised forms of prayer ‘dissident from the common’ practices of the Church of England.¹⁷⁸ Indamora’s/Henrietta Maria’s ‘strange doctrines, and new sects of / Love’ are infused with dissident Catholic undertones. ‘Sect’ denotes a religious or philosophical order (*OED*) and ‘strange’ pertains to persons, languages and customs belonging to foreign territories (*OED*). ‘Strange’, in this context, has the additional connotation of being ‘exceptionally great’ (*OED*). Indamora’s ‘strange doctrines [...] of / Love’ thus presumably refers to Henrietta Maria’s foreign and seductive Catholicism. Henrietta Maria thus uses her role as a Diotimean Indamora to publicly affirm her religio-political power.

It is Henrietta Maria’s femininity, Catholicism and foreignness that Puritan thinkers such as William Prynne found to be a grave threat, both to the established English Church and the ‘Republick[e]’.¹⁷⁹ In the *Histrio-mastix* (1633), Prynne expostulates that it is a ‘detestable damning sinne, for a woman [such as Henrietta Maria] to act a females part upon the Stage’.¹⁸⁰ Prynne aligns female performative agency to ‘Sodomy’, ‘selfe-pollution’ and ‘whoredome’.¹⁸¹ Prynne proclaims that Christians should ‘detest this *Whore* [Stage-player], together with her head, her Pope, her *Supreme Pander*’.¹⁸² Although Prynne’s invective is primarily against female performers, it was not unusual for women poet-philosophers to be tarnished with a similar brush. Olympia Morata, for example, is accused of being a ‘Calvinistic Amazon’ by the seventeenth-century German Catholic, Gaspar Scioppius.¹⁸³ Given these virulent attacks on Henrietta Maria and Olympia Morata, how could other women appropriate a public metaphysical sensual-spiritual persona? As we shall see in Chapters 1 and 4 of this study, women writers such as Marie Maitland and Constance Aston Fowler use relative anonymity in a manuscript/coterie context to engage with a dissident female sensual spirituality. I propose that relative anonymity in a semi-private coterie context

¹⁷⁷ Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, 1st pub. 1999), p. 121.

¹⁷⁸ Collins, *Epphata to F. T.*, p. 283.

¹⁷⁹ William Prynne, *Histrio-mastix* (London, 1633), title-page.

¹⁸⁰ Prynne, *Histrio-mastix*, p. 215.

¹⁸¹ Prynne, *Histrio-mastix*, p. 215.

¹⁸² Prynne, *Histrio-mastix*, p. 215. Prynne was tried for sedition in 1633 because of the *Histrio-mastix* and his ears were cropped as punishment. In 1637 Prynne was exiled to the Channel Islands, but returned to England in 1640 when the Long Parliament was called. In 1648 Prynne became MP for Newport in Cornwall. See William Lamont, ‘Prynne, William (1600-1669), pamphleteer and lawyer’, *ODNB* [accessed 6 May 2012].

¹⁸³ Gaspar Scioppius cited in Parker, ‘Introduction’, pp. 2, 34.

enables Maitland and Fowler to avoid public condemnation from men such as Prynne and Scioppius.

Renaissance female metaphysicians also had to combat the hegemonic masculinist definitions of the ‘poet-philosopher’. Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, proposed in 1595 that the word ‘poet’ derives from the Greek word ‘poiein’, which is ‘to make’.¹⁸⁴ For Sidney, the male poet can mirror his ‘heavenly Maker’, God, who made ‘man to His own likeness’.¹⁸⁵ Mortal (male) poets, according to Sidney, can attain the ‘metaphysic [...] supernatural’ through their potentially divine *poesis*.¹⁸⁶ Following Sidney, the sixteenth-century literary theorist, George Puttenham, argued that poets ‘were the first astronomers and philosophers and metaphysics [sic]’.¹⁸⁷ Puttenham here seems to recall Ficino’s statement that ‘all antiquity [...] teaches us to combine poetry with philosophy’.¹⁸⁸ Puttenham held a number of Ficinian texts in his library, so the linguistic and conceptual echoes here may well be significant.¹⁸⁹ Puttenham goes on to propose, however, that ‘gentlewomen makers’ should not become ‘too precise poets’ lest they become ‘fantastical wives’.¹⁹⁰ Chapters 1 and 4 of this study considers how women ‘makers’ such as Marie Maitland and Constance Aston Fowler challenged Puttenham’s gender-biased ideology by establishing a female metaphysical ‘making’ tradition of their own.

But Marie Maitland is a sixteenth-century Scottish poet. What relevance does sixteenth-century Scotland have to Renaissance conceptions of the ‘metaphysical’? As already mentioned, there is archival evidence to suggest that Ficino’s metaphysical writings were circulating in sixteenth-century Scotland. The Scots humanist, Hector Boece (c. 1465-1536), owned and circulated a Latin copy of Ficino’s *De triplici vita* (Paris, c. 1496).¹⁹¹ Boece’s copy of *De triplici vita* was passed on to (and annotated by) the Scots mediciner, Robert Gray (Second mediciner at King’s College, Aberdeen c.

¹⁸⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, 1st pub. 1965), p. 84. Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* was first published in 1595, but composed in *circa* 1579-1580. See R. W. Maslen, ‘Introduction’, in Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 1-78 (p. 2).

¹⁸⁵ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 86.

¹⁸⁶ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 85.

¹⁸⁷ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, *George Puttenham: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 99. *The Art of English Poesy* was first published in 1589.

¹⁸⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, II, p. 10.

¹⁸⁹ Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, ‘Introduction’, in George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, *George Puttenham: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Whigham and Rebhorn, pp. 1-87 (p. 30).

¹⁹⁰ Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 336.

¹⁹¹ Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 105.

1522-1550).¹⁹² Moreover, prior to Boece's acquirement of the *De triplici vita*, extant records indicate that the fifteenth-century Scots scholar-cleric, William Turnbull (c.1400-1454), travelled to Pavia and mixed with Ficino, before returning to the Bishopric of Glasgow in 1447.¹⁹³ Furthermore, church library inventories show that the Scotsman, William Chisholm (1525/6-1593), Bishop of Dunblane and Vaison, owned a copy of Ficino's *De Religione Christiana* (Paris, 1559).¹⁹⁴ The examples of Turnbull, Boece, Gray and Chisholm demonstrate that Ficinian metaphysical texts and ideologies were trickling through to Scotland from France and Italy as early as the fifteenth century. We only have to consult the 1569 and 1578 inventory of books that Mary, Queen of Scots held at Holyrood Palace and Edinburgh Castle to find further evidence of Scottish accessibility to metaphysical Hermetic and Platonic writings. Mary, Queen of Scots, had at Edinburgh Castle a printed edition of Marguerite of Navarre's writings, *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses* (1547).¹⁹⁵ Mary also owned a Greek quarto edition of the 'Mercurii Trismegisti Poemander' (Paris, 1554).¹⁹⁶ She also possessed the complete works of Plato 'with a volume of commentaries besides'.¹⁹⁷ It is likely that Mary brought these texts over to Scotland from France on her return to the Scottish court in 1561. Mary's collection of books held in Scotland was inherited by James VI and I.¹⁹⁸ As Theo van Heijnsbergen and Nicola Royan point out, the inventories of Mary's and James's royal libraries indicate that a number of books were 'borrowit' or given away and this suggests that book circulation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland was common.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 105. See also Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, 'Ficino in Aberdeen: The Continuing Problem of the Scottish Renaissance', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 1:1 (2009), 64-87.

¹⁹³ R. D. S. Jack, *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), p. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 30.

¹⁹⁵ Julian Sharman, *The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots* (London: E. Stock, 1889), pp. 82-85; *Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France: Catalogues of the Jewels, Dresses, Furniture, Books and Paintings of Mary, Queen of Scots, 1556-1569*, ed. by J. Robertson (Edinburgh: The Bannatyne Club, 1863), pp. cviii-cix.

¹⁹⁶ Sharman, *The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots*, pp. 175-77; *Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France*, pp. cii-ciii.

¹⁹⁷ *Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France*, p. cii; Sharman, *The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots*, p. 171. See also John Durkan, 'The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots', *The Innes Review*, 83 (1987), 71-104 (p. 82).

¹⁹⁸ Durkan, 'The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots', p. 93.

¹⁹⁹ Theo van Heijnsbergen and Nicola Royan, 'Introduction', in *Literature, Letters and the Canonical in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. by Theo van Heijnsbergen and Nicola Royan (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002), pp. ix-xxx (p. xvii).

One Lowland Scottish literary family connected to Mary, Queen of Scots were the Maitlands of Lethington. From the Maitland family coterie two verse miscellanies survive – the Maitland Folio (c. 1570-1585) and the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586).²⁰⁰ Both books of poems contain verse by Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586), a Scottish writer, keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland, courtier to the Scottish King James V, and supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots.²⁰¹ Sir Richard was educated at St Andrews (c. 1510) and studied law at Paris (c. 1514).²⁰² In 1559 Sir Richard was made commissioner to Elizabeth I, his role to settle disputes in the Scottish and English borders.²⁰³ Sir Richard's son, William Maitland (1525x30-1573), acted as Secretary of State to Mary Stewart and married one of Mary's ladies-in-waiting, Mary Fleming.²⁰⁴ William Maitland formed a close bond with Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, William Cecil, and stayed at Cecil's London house during diplomatic missions.²⁰⁵ According to John Guy, the friendship between William Maitland and Cecil was based partly on their 'shared religious beliefs', and partly on their 'mutual admiration for classical literature'.²⁰⁶ William Maitland was known in England as 'the Scottish Cecil'.²⁰⁷ Sir Richard's other son, John Maitland (1543-1595), became James VI's chief minister in 1587.²⁰⁸ As Peter Herman notes, John Maitland was a contributor to Alexander Neville's published volume of Latin verse commemorating the death of Sir Philip Sidney, *Academiae Cantabrigiensis Lachrymae Tumulo Nobilissimi Equitis, D. Philippi Sidneii Sacratae* (1587).²⁰⁹ Sir Richard also had four daughters, two of whom seem to be involved in the creation of the Maitland verse miscellanies: Marie Maitland and Helyne (Helen) Maitland. The Maitland Folio comprises of poems by a variety of writers including Sir Richard Maitland, William Dunbar (1460?-1513x30) and Alexander Arbuthnot (1538-1583). The Maitland Quarto seems to be a companion codex that contains poems by Sir

²⁰⁰ Both these manuscripts are held in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. Maitland Folio, MS 2553; Maitland Quarto, MS 1408.

²⁰¹ Michael R. G. Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), *courtier and writer*', *ODNB* [accessed 22 May 2009].

²⁰² Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), *courtier and writer*', *ODNB*.

²⁰³ Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), *courtier and writer*', *ODNB*.

²⁰⁴ Mark Loughlin, 'Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573), *courtier and diplomat*', *ODNB* [accessed 22 May 2009].

²⁰⁵ John Guy, *My Heart is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004), p. 128.

²⁰⁶ Guy, *My Heart is My Own*, p. 128.

²⁰⁷ Guy, *My Heart is My Own*, p. 128.

²⁰⁸ Maurice Lee Jun, 'Maitland, John, first Lord Maitland of Thirlestane (1543-1595), *lord chancellor of Scotland*', *ODNB* [accessed 3 May 2011].

²⁰⁹ Peter C. Herman, 'Authorship and the Royal "I": King James VI/I and the Politics of Monarchic Verse', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 1495-1530 (p. 1505).

Richard, perhaps copied from the Folio. The Quarto also contains numerous poems that do not appear in the Folio, including works by, among others, Alexander Montgomerie (early 1550s-1598) and ‘Iacobus Rex’. Additionally, the Quarto consists of a number of anonymous female-voiced lyrics that do not appear in the Folio. On the title-page of the Quarto, Marie Maitland’s name is transcribed twice – once in Italian majuscule and once in Roman letter. Marie’s name is preceded by the date ‘1586’ – the year of Sir Richard’s death and Marie’s marriage.²¹⁰ This is how Marie Maitland is described in one of the anonymous lyrics from the Quarto:

To your self.

If sapho saige for saphic songe so sueit
[...]
amids the gods dois duell that dame devyne.

And now of lait that lustie ladie rair
Olimpia o lampe of latine land
[...]

A thrid o Maistres Marie maik I pray
[...]
for famous is your fleing fame
[...]

This buik then bear & beat your branis therin
a plesant poet perfyte sall ye be
& lytill labour lost the laurell Win
adorn’d with cumlie croun of poesie.

(MQ, LXXXV,²¹¹ 1, 4-6, 9, 11, 13-16)

Marie Maitland’s ‘labour’ (MQ, LXXXV, 15) in transcribing the Quarto is alluded to in the above-cited lyric, as well as her role as poet in her own right: it is she who possesses the ‘laurell’ and ‘croun of poesie’ here (MQ, LXXXV, 15-16). As Priscilla Bawcutt points out, ‘maister’ in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could denote a university graduate and this is feminized in this lyric through the phrase ‘Maistres Marie’ (MQ, LXXXV, 9) – this indicates that Marie Maitland may have had a certain level of classical education, modelled on the humanist educations of Mary, Queen of Scots,

²¹⁰ MS 1408, title-page.

²¹¹ *The Maitland Quarto Manuscript: Containing Poems by Sir Richard Maitland, Arbuthnot, and Others*, ed. by W. A. Craigie (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1920). This edition uses the spelling of the original manuscript, MS 1408. All alterations in spelling from the original manuscript are indicated by square brackets. I have modernised the long ‘s’ and the ‘z’ which represents the phoneme ‘y’. This edition has been used throughout this study and is abbreviated as MQ. From henceforth all references to the Maitland Quarto will appear in the main text, preceded by the poem number in roman numerals and the line reference.

Marguerite of Navarre and Elizabeth I.²¹² Marie Maitland in the lyric, ‘To your self’, is compared to the ancient Greek poet, Sappho (‘sapho saige for saphic songe so sueit’ [MQ, LXXXV, 1]), and the sixteenth-century Italian scholar and writer, Olympia Morata (‘Olimpia o lampe of latine land’ [MQ, LXXXV, 6]). In this way, the speaker in ‘To your self’ points to a polyglottal female *Respublica litterarum* to which Marie Maitland belongs. As we shall see in Chapters 1 and 2 of this study, further evidence survives from the Maitland Quarto to suggest that Marie Maitland was an influential female Ficinian metaphysical poet.

This thesis explores the ‘metaphysical’ in three ways. Chapters 1 and 4 of this study consider the metaphysics of poetic ‘making’ in the writings and compilations of Marie Maitland and Constance Aston Fowler. Chapter 2 draws upon the links between metaphysics and devotional meditation to illuminate our understanding of the poets, Elizabeth Melville and Aemilia Lanyer. Chapters 3 and 5 examine the use of metaphysical Hermeticism and alchemy in the poetry of Lanyer and Katherine Philips. Throughout the study I stress the ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ influences that these female poet-philosophers had on one another. The study concludes by considering the impact of female metaphysical poets on their male counterparts. This final supposition is elucidated by examining the potential influence of Marie Maitland, Aemilia Lanyer and Katherine Philips on the poet, Andrew Marvell (1621-1678).

²¹² Priscilla Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 6.

Chapter 1

‘Thair is mair constancie in o[u]r sex / Then euer ama[n]g men hes bein’:¹ The Metaphysics of Authorship in the Maitland Quarto Manuscript (c. 1586)

‘[G]o forth to the world (most auspiciously) under your name, or as the production of an unknown writer.’

(Katherine Parr)²

‘[T]hair ar divers in Scotland, baith men and women, that can counterfeit my hand-writing, and write the like maner of writing quhilk I use, as weill as myself, and principallie sic as ar in cumpanie with thameselfis.’

(Mary, Queen of Scots)³

‘[W]e must locate the space left empty by the author’s disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings that this disappearance uncovers.’

(Michel Foucault)⁴

The word ‘author’ stems from the Latin *auctor* and is etymologically linked to the concept of *auctoritas* – one who has ‘authority’.⁵ As Jeffrey Masten points out, in the Renaissance an ‘author’ carried with it meanings beyond ‘writer’, including ‘the Creator’, one who authorizes or instigates, and has authority over others.⁶ Absolute authority came from God. *Auctoritas* thus has religious, political, familial *and* literary connotations. This chapter proposes that a philosophical discourse emerges in the sixteenth century that engages with the idea of *auctoritas*. This discourse, I suggest, interplays with the notion of the poetic ‘maker’. I argue that the supremely male function of *auctoritas*, both literary and political, is questioned by Renaissance women writers, who manipulate male *auctoritas* to authorize themselves. I test this theory by examining the sixteenth-century Scottish verse miscellany, the Maitland Quarto Manuscript (c. 1586), where the literary, familial and political are conflated. I illustrate

¹ Anon., ‘Poem XLIX’, MQ, lines 67-68.

² Katherine Parr, ‘1544 to Princess Mary’, in *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance*, ed. by Betty Travitsky (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 78.

³ Mary Stewart, ‘THE ARTICLIS AND INSTRUCTIOUNIS COMMITTIT IN CREDIT BE OUR SOVERANE LADY THE QUENE’S MAJESTIE OF SCOTLAND, TO THE LORDIS COMMISSIONARIS’ (1568), in *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires de Marie Stuart, Reine d’Écosse*, ed. by Alexandre Labanoff, 7 vols (London: Dolman, 1844), II, pp. 195-210 (p. 203).

⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘What Is an Author?’, trans. by Josué V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 101-20 (p. 105).

⁵ For the etymological links between *auctor* and *auctoritas*, see Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 1st pub. 1990), p. 190.

⁶ Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 66.

how two contrasting forms of ‘authorship’ develop in this Quarto: the patriarchal, dominant voice of Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586), and a dissident, female voice associated with Sir Richard’s daughter, Marie Maitland (*d.* 1596). I analyse Marie’s presence in the Quarto in three ways: her physical presence as scribe and ‘maker’; her ‘metaphysical’ presence as vision and muse; and finally her presence as voice.

The patriarchal connotations of *auctoritas* are exhibited clearly by James VI and I. As Jeffrey Masten observes, in the ‘Authorized Version’ of the Bible in 1611, James is described as ‘King and Soueraigne’ and as ‘principall moouer and Author of the Worke’ – ultimate authorship and authority comes from God, the King and the father.⁷ However, the interaction among ‘authorship’, ‘authority’, the ‘self’ and the ‘divine’ is rapidly shifting in the Renaissance. St Augustine had written in his influential *Confessions* (AD 397-400): ‘I [...] return into myself [...] a hidden depth [of] a profound self-examination [...] To hear you [God] speaking about oneself is to know oneself’.⁸ Augustine implies that knowing ‘oneself’ is the way to knowing God. The fourteenth-century poet-philosopher, Petrarch, famously meditates on Augustine’s *Confessions* in his ascent to Mount Ventoux. Petrarch describes Augustine as an inspirational ‘writer’, as he prompts Petrarch to turn his gaze inward and search for a divine knowledge – a knowledge that is lost in the post-lapsarian world, but can be reclaimed through inner contemplation:⁹

I climbed the highest mountain in this region [...] Rising on the wings of thought from bodily things to spiritual things [...] I [...] look into Augustine’s book of *Confessions* [...] I turned my mind’s eyes in on myself [...] I was [...] marvelling at how noble our soul would have been if it had not strayed so soon after its creation [...] the soul as it draws closer to God [...] may finally turn towards the one true, certain, enduring source of goodness.¹⁰

Petrarch’s physical corporeal ascent mirrors his metaphysical spiritual ascent – he raises his soul as he does his body to ‘loftier heights’.¹¹ This discourse of divine self-knowledge is taken up in the fifteenth century by the Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino, who

⁷ Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, p. 66; ‘To the Most High and Mighty Prince James’, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. by Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. lxxi-lxxii (p. lxxii).

⁸ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 1st pub. 1991), pp. 123, 152, 180.

⁹ *Petrarch’s Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV, I*, ed. and trans. by Rodney Lokaj (Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 2006), p. 105. Petrarch’s letter describing his ascent to Mount Ventoux is dated 26 April 1336. *Petrarch’s Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV, I*, ed. and trans. by Lokaj, p. 107.

¹⁰ *Petrarch’s Ascent of Mount Ventoux*, pp. 95, 99, 105, 107.

¹¹ *Petrarch’s Ascent of Mount Ventoux*, p. 105.

states: 'Know thyself [...] return unto thyself, for thus shalt thou return unto greatness'.¹² Building on Petrarch's claim, Ficino posits that self-knowledge can lead to a form of self-authority or divine 'greatness'.

Sixteenth-century notions of *poesis* further the interplay between divine creativity and the earthly poet/philosopher, expounded by Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* or *The Defence of Poesy* (c. 1580).¹³ According to Sidney, the word 'poet' emanates from the Greek 'poiein' which is 'to make'.¹⁴ The poet can therefore mirror his 'heavenly Maker', God, who made 'man to His own likeness'.¹⁵ Mortal poets can reach the supernatural through their potentially divine *poesis*. It is within this context that Sidney applies the term 'metaphysic' to the supernatural realm.¹⁶

The links between inner contemplation and 'making' are explicitly tied to the metaphysical in Michel de Montaigne's *Les Essais* (1580-1588). Montaigne writes: 'I studie my selfe more than any other subject. It is my [...] Metaphisike, it is my naturall Philosophie'.¹⁷ According to M. A. Screech, Montaigne here is responding to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.¹⁸ Aristotle had claimed that '[b]y nature, all men long to know' – for Montaigne this 'knowledge' (*sophia*) does not come from without, but from within: 'I studie [...] my most secret thoughts and inward knowledge'.¹⁹ But Montaigne is also clearly responding to the tradition of metaphysical inner life posited by Augustine, Petrarch, and Ficino, using his self-identity to authorize himself: 'my selfe am the ground-worke of my booke'.²⁰

Montaigne's self is written as it is conceived and spoken – he exclaims: 'why is it not [...] lawfull for every man [...] to pourtray himselfe with his pen [...] I [...] not onely speake of my selfe: but speake alone of my selfe'.²¹ Writing, *auctoritas*, speaking and the self are thus merged to create what Jacques Derrida will later label as

¹² Marsilio Ficino cited by Nesca A. Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), p. 87.

¹³ Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* was first published in 1595, but composed in *circa* 1579-1580. See Maslen, 'Introduction', in Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 1-78 (p. 2).

¹⁴ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. by Shepherd, p. 84.

¹⁵ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 86.

¹⁶ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 85.

¹⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, trans. by John Florio (London, 1603), p. 638.

¹⁸ M. A. Screech, 'Introduction', in Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. xxiii-xlvi (p. xlv).

¹⁹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, p. 4; Montaigne, *The Essayes*, pp. 236, 587.

²⁰ Montaigne, *The Essayes*, sig. A6v.

²¹ Montaigne, *The Essayes*, pp. 379, 564.

the ‘metaphysics of presence’: writing that engages with spoken words, individual ‘mental experience’, ‘voice’, hearing, ‘sound’ and breath.²²

Yet Montaigne’s exploration of *auctoritas* is implicitly gender-biased: it is ‘every man’ and his own (phallic?) ‘pen’ that concerns him – women are never mentioned. What happens when a woman gains *auctoritas* – political, spiritual and literary authority? Female speaking and writing in the sixteenth century was regarded with suspicion by some male conduct-book writers. Princess Mary Tudor’s tutor, Juan Luis Vives, writes in *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1529) that woman should ‘be at home’ and ‘hold her tongue demurely’.²³ Contrary to Vives, Katherine Parr (in 1544) urges her step-daughter, Mary Tudor (1516-1558), to publish her translation of Erasmus, instructing her to ‘go forth to the world (most auspiciously) under your name, or as the production of an unknown writer’.²⁴ Parr complicates the notion of female ‘authorship’ – she implies that Mary can authorize herself as an ‘unknown writer’, as her voice will still be heard and arguably recognized.²⁵ Parr here invokes the Latinate tradition of ‘satis et sine nomine nota’ (‘known well enough even without name’).²⁶ This can be aligned to Derrida’s definition of the ‘metaphysics of presence’: writing as a phonetic practice intimately linked to voice, hearing, sound and speech.²⁷

This subculture of female *auctoritas* was challenged by the patriarchal hegemony and used perilously for political purposes, as exhibited in sixteenth-century Scotland with the case of Mary, Queen of Scots. Anti-Marian factionalism reaches a climax with the circulation of the so-called casket sonnets of which no authorial manuscript survives, but which first appear in a text designed to prove Mary guilty of murder and adultery: *Ane Detectioun of the duinges of Marie Quene of Scottes* (1571),

²² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997, rev. edn.), pp. 7, 11, 22.

²³ Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. by Richard Hyrde (London, 1585), p. 29.

²⁴ Katherine Parr, ‘1544 to Princess Mary’, p. 78.

²⁵ Even before Katherine Parr has seen a copy of Mary Tudor’s translation of Erasmus, she states that ‘all the world knows that you [Mary Tudor] have toiled and laboured much in this business [of writing/translating]’. However, Parr goes on to suggest that for the sake of ‘posterity’ Mary Tudor must print her translation ‘under the auspices of your [Mary’s] own name’. Parr, ‘1544 to Princess Mary’, p. 78. Mary Tudor’s translation of Erasmus’s paraphrase on St John was completed by Francis Mallett and published in 1548. The sixteenth-century editor of this translation, Nicholas Udall, refers in his preface to ‘Ladye Maries [...] greate studie, peine and trauayll in translatyng this paraphrase’. Desiderius Erasmus, *The first tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Newe Testamente*, ed. by Nicholas Udall (London, 1548), sig. 2r.

²⁶ ‘Satis et sine nomine nota’ cited by Lady Arbella Stuart, ‘To Sir Henry Brounker’ (1602/3?), *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, ed. by Sara Jayne Steen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 176. Lady Arbella Stuart ends her letter to Sir Henry Brounker with the Latin motto, ‘Satis et sine nomine nota’.

²⁷ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 7, 10, 22.

ascribed to the anti-Marian propagandist, George Buchanan. This text contains letters and sonnets that are said ‘to be written with the Scottishe Quenis awne hand’.²⁸ The *Detectiovn* attacks Mary for her *auctoritas*:

the Quene denyith it? What denyith sche? Forsooth that sche did [...] murder [her husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley]: as though there were sa greit a difference if ye be the author or the executor, gif ye commaund it or commit it. Sche gave hir counsell, hir furtherance, hir power and authoritie to the duing of it [...] by hir awin letters it must neidis be confessit [...]²⁹

‘Author’ functions in its full duality here: Mary is the inventor and instigator of crime; she kills her husband, the king, the *auctoritas patrum* with her corrupt female usurpation of *auctoritas*; she is also the literal writer of incriminating evidence.³⁰

If we turn to the *Detectiovn*’s casket sonnets themselves, we find a Montaigne-like metaphysical assertion of the ‘self’:

*I’ay mis la main au papier pour escrire
D’vn different que ie voulu transcrire.
Je ne scay pas quel sera vostre aduis
Mais ie scay bien qui mieux aymer scaura [...]
I put my hand to the paper to write,
Of ane differens that I haue willit cople.
I can not tell what shalbe your iugement,
But I know well quho can best loue [...]*³¹

Pounding repetition of ‘Ie’ becomes an affirmation of the female speaking and writing subject. Here we discover a powerful assertion of a voice of authority. Yet, as Sarah Dunningan implies, it is precisely the speaker’s articulation of an unsuppressed passionate love that is depicted by George Buchanan as a threat to rule, both ‘self-mastery’ and ‘public governance’.³² Buchanan states: ‘in all her words and deeds she [Mary] disregarded not only the majesty of a Queen but even the modesty of a married

²⁸ *Ane Detectiovn of the duinges of Marie Quene of Scottes* (London, 1571), sig. Qiiijr. A Scottish edition of the *Detectiovn* was published in St Andrews in 1572. See Sarah M. Dunningan, *Eros and Poetry at the Courts of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Note 2, p. 174.

²⁹ *Detectiovn*, sig. Miiiv.

³⁰ Mary declined to grant her husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, the crown matrimonial in parliament (Julian Goodare, ‘Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542-1587), *queen of Scots*’, *ODNB* [accessed 4 March 2011]). Yet throughout the *Detectiovn* Darnley is referred to as the ‘king’ (see for instance, *Detectiovn*, sig. Diiir).

³¹ *Detectiovn*, sigs Rijv, Sir.

³² Dunningan here cites the historian, Louise Fradenburg, who argues that there is a ‘long-standing construction of powerful emotion as [being] a threat to rule, whether self-mastery or public governance’. Dunningan, *Eros and Poetry*, p. 7.

woman'.³³ Amorous female 'words' and written 'letters' run counter to accepted modes of queenship and female 'modesty'.³⁴

After the circulation of the casket documents, Mary is ambiguous in her defence, stating: 'thair ar divers in Scotland, baith men and women, that can counterfeit my hand-writing, and write the like maner of writing quhilk I use, as weill as myself, and principallie sic as ar in cumpanie with thameselfis'.³⁵ As Sarah Dunnigan notes, this statement was made in relation to the casket letters, not the sonnets; neither Mary, nor her apologists such as John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, referred directly to the evidence of the sonnets.³⁶ Far from denying her writing practice in this statement of defence, Mary asserts herself as a writer: 'writing quhilk *I* use'. Mary does not wholly deny her *auctoritas*, for to do so would be to renounce her 'estait, crowne, auctoritie and titill'.³⁷ Mary, in fact, uses her literary *auctoritas* to defend herself against the *Detectioun*. In 1574 Mary publishes a verse meditation and religious sonnet in the Bishop of Ross's *Piae Afflicti Animi Consolationes*. In her published religious meditation, Mary foregrounds a female spiritual *auctoritas* that is gained through Christ and his Mother Church:

Christ, augmente la foi
Que j'ai reçue de ma Mère, l'Eglise
Ou j'ai recours pour mon lieu de franchise [.]

[O Christ, protect the faith
That my mother Church has given me
Where I withdraw to let myself be free [..]]³⁸

As Rosalind Smith argues, Mary's 1574 publications reflect a 'strategy of reinventing' Mary's 'public image' in terms of religious piety.³⁹

³³ George Buchanan, *Detectio Mariae Reginae Scotorum* (1571), in *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart: George Buchanan's Account*, ed. and trans. by W. A. Gatherer (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978, 1st pub. 1958), pp. 165-80 (p. 167).

³⁴ Buchanan, *Detectio Mariae Reginae Scotorum*, p. 167; *Detectioun*, sig. Miiiiv.

³⁵ Mary Stewart, 'THE ARTICLIS AND INSTRUCTIOUNIS' (1568), in *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires de Marie Stuart, Reine d'Écosse*, ed. by Labanoff, II, p. 203.

³⁶ Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, Note 17, p. 176.

³⁷ Mary Stewart, 'THE ARTICLIS AND INSTRUCTIOUNIS' (1568), in *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires de Marie Stuart, Reine d'Écosse*, ed. by Labanoff, II, p. 198.

³⁸ 'Méditation sur l'inconstance et vanité du monde, composée par la reine d'Écosse et douairière de France' ['Meditation on the Inconstancy and Vanity of the World, Composed by the Queen of Scotland and Dowager of France'], in *Bittersweet Within My Heart: The Collected Poems of Mary, Queen of Scots*, ed. and trans. by Robin Bell (London: Pavilion Books, 1992), pp. 66-77 (pp. 76-77).

³⁹ Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621*, p. 57.

The case of the casket sonnets demonstrates the difficulty in establishing an explicitly female sensual-spiritual voice in sixteenth-century Scotland. How can a woman write love poetry without being brandished a 'whore'? Nevertheless, as Mary purports in her defence, there is a writing culture in Scotland at the time to which both men *and* women contribute: writing in similar forms to their Queen in the 'cumpanie' of 'thameselfis' (either by themselves or in the company of others).

One family involved in the communal writing culture of Scotland during the sixteenth century are the Maitland family of Lethington, from which two verse miscellanies survive – the Maitland Folio (c. 1570-1585) and the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586).⁴⁰ Both books of poems contain verse by Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586), a Scottish writer, keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland, courtier to the Scottish King James V, and supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots.⁴¹ Sir Richard was educated at St Andrews (c. 1510) and studied law at Paris (c. 1514).⁴² In 1559 Sir Richard was made commissioner to Elizabeth I, his role to settle disputes in the Scottish and English borders.⁴³ Sir Richard's son, William Maitland (1525x30-1573), acted as Secretary of State to Mary Stewart and married one of Mary's ladies-in-waiting, Mary Fleming (1542-c.1600).⁴⁴ William Maitland formed a close bond with Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, William Cecil, and stayed at Cecil's London house during diplomatic missions.⁴⁵ According to John Guy, the friendship between William Maitland and Cecil was based partly on their 'shared religious beliefs', and partly on their 'mutual admiration for classical literature'.⁴⁶ Elizabeth I described William Maitland as the 'flower of the wits of Scotland'.⁴⁷ Sir Richard's other son, John Maitland (1543-1595), became James VI's chief minister in 1587.⁴⁸ As Peter Herman notes, John Maitland was a contributor to Alexander Neville's published volume of Latin verse commemorating the death of Sir Philip Sidney, *Academiae Cantabrigiensis Lachrymae Tumulo Nobilissimi Equitis, D.*

⁴⁰ Both these manuscripts are held in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. Maitland Folio, MS 2553; Maitland Quarto, MS 1408.

⁴¹ Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), *courtier and writer*', *ODNB*.

⁴² Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586)', *ODNB*.

⁴³ Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586)', *ODNB*.

⁴⁴ Loughlin, 'Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573), *courtier and diplomat*', *ODNB*.

⁴⁵ Guy, *My Heart is My Own*, p. 128.

⁴⁶ Guy, *My Heart is My Own*, p. 128.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Tudor cited by Loughlin, 'Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573)', *ODNB*.

⁴⁸ Jun, 'Maitland, John, first Lord Maitland of Thirlestane (1543-1595), *lord chancellor of Scotland*', *ODNB*.

Philippi Sidneii Sacratae (1587).⁴⁹ Sir Richard also had four daughters, two of whom seem to be involved in the creation of the Maitland verse miscellanies: Marie Maitland (*d.* 1596) and Helyne (Helen) Maitland. The Maitland Folio comprises of poems by a variety of writers including Sir Richard Maitland, William Dunbar (1460?-1513x30) and Alexander Arbuthnot (1538-1583). The Maitland Quarto seems to be a companion codex that contains poems by Sir Richard, perhaps copied from the Folio. The Quarto also contains numerous poems that do not appear in the Folio, including works by, among others, Alexander Montgomerie (early 1550s-1598) and ‘Iacobus Rex’.⁵⁰ Additionally, the Quarto consists of a number of anonymous female-voiced lyrics that do not appear in the Folio. On the title-page of the Quarto, Marie Maitland’s name is transcribed twice – once in Italian majuscule and once in Roman letter (Figure 1). Marie’s name is preceded by the date ‘1586’ – the year of Sir Richard’s death and Marie’s marriage.⁵¹

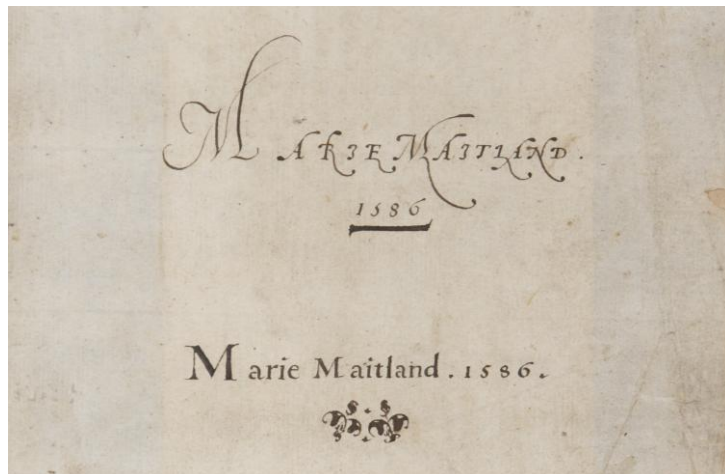


Figure 1, Title-page from the Maitland Quarto, Cambridge, Pepys Library, MS 1408. © The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

I have analysed the preface of the published writings of Montaigne, but what about prefatory material in verse miscellanies? What are their functions and to whom are they addressed? Among coterie readers of verse miscellanies the names of ‘authors’ are not necessarily needed, as voices and hands are potentially known and recognized

⁴⁹ Herman, ‘Authorship and the Royal “I:” King James VI/I and the Politics of Monarchic Verse’, p. 1505.

⁵⁰ ‘Iacobus Rex’ is likely to be James VI/I. Poem LXVII attributed to ‘Iacobus Rex’ in the Maitland Quarto (MS 1408, fols 105v-106r) is included by James Craigie in his edition of James VI’s poetry. *The Poems of James VI of Scotland*, ed. by James Craigie, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1955-1958), II, p. 133.

⁵¹ MS 1408, title-page.

by the select audience. The Maitland Quarto's title-page is read by W. A. Craigie as a sign of manuscript ownership.⁵² Yet if we turn to the Maitland Folio, evidence of ownership is described in explicit terms: 'This buke pertenis to helyne m.' – Helyne M. being Sir Richard's other daughter, Helen Maitland.⁵³ Marie's name does not appear to have this explicit tie to ownership on the title-page of the Quarto and is thus ambiguously placed. W. A. Craigie goes on to argue that the Quarto was written for Marie by 'some expert penman', but as Evelyn Newlyn rightly points out, the pre-eminent scribe in Scotland at that time was not a man, but a woman, Esther Inglis (1570/71-1624).⁵⁴ Inglis acted as scribe to her husband, Bartholomew Kello (*d.* 1631), a minor government official in charge of passports, testimonials and letters of commendation.⁵⁵ Inglis also worked as a professional calligrapher and used as many as forty different scripts, including French secretary hand, chancery script and mirror-writing.⁵⁶ Inglis's manuscript psalter, *Livret contenant diverses sortes de lettres*, has the date '1586' inscribed on it, which indicates that she was scribing in and around the time of the Maitland Quarto's composition.⁵⁷

The Quarto's title-page is a potential meditation on the nature of *auctoritas*. The two scripts on the title-page point to a duality, possibly suggesting that one hand is acting as 'scribe' and the other hand is acting as 'author'. One must remember that in the sixteenth century the word 'scribe' had numerous inferences including a writer, a secretary, one who writes at another's dictation, a copyist, a transcriber, a person skilled in penmanship, a person in the habit of writing (*OED*). Scribes therefore had a certain literary authority as they had the power to manipulate hands, title-pages and page layouts.⁵⁸ The Quarto's title-page/preface thus is an ambiguous textual space where no singular monolithic interpretation of 'authorship' will suffice.

⁵² W. A. Craigie, 'Preface', in MQ, pp. v-viii (pp. v-vi).

⁵³ The Maitland Folio, MS 2553, p. 256.

⁵⁴ Craigie, 'Preface', p. vi; Evelyn S. Newlyn, 'A Methodology for Reading Against the Culture: Anonymous, Women Poets, and the Maitland Quarto Manuscript (c. 1586)', in *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing*, ed. by Sarah M. Dunnigan and others (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 89-103 (p. 93).

⁵⁵ Elspeth Yeo, 'Inglis [*married name Kello*], Esther (1570/71-1624), *calligrapher*', *ODNB* [accessed 19 March 2011]; Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 146.

⁵⁶ A. H. Scott-Elliot and Elspeth Yeo, 'Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis (1571-1624): A Catalogue', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 84 (1990), 11-86 (p. 20).

⁵⁷ Esther Inglis, *Livret contenant diverses sortes de lettres*, London, British Library, MS Sloane 987, fol. 2r.

⁵⁸ See Georgianna Ziegler, 'More Than Feminine Boldness': The Gift Books of Esther Inglis', in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. by Mary E. Burke and others (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 19-37 (p. 35).

There seem to be two scripts at work throughout the Quarto itself: a large italic lettering and a smaller cursive secretary hand. As Arthur Marotti points out, the italic script was the hand that literate women in the sixteenth century learned to write.⁵⁹ Mary, Queen of Scots, for instance, uses italic hand.⁶⁰ Yet women also adapt their hands for different uses. The scribe, Esther Inglis, uses sixteen different styles of handwriting in her *Pseaumes de David* (1599), including *rogrosa* and French secretary hand.⁶¹ The early-seventeenth-century writer and amateur calligrapher, Anna Walker, uses three different autograph scripts in her manuscript of a sermon and other biblical material, *A Sweete Savor for Woman* (c. 1606).⁶² As Suzanne Trill observes, Walker in this manuscript uses secretary hand for the dedications to Queen Anna and the reader, italic hand for poetry, and Gothic script for the material relating to Walker's and the Queen's Danish heritage.⁶³ Given this varying usage, the scribe of the Maitland Quarto may well have intentionally used two different writing styles to indicate two contrasting aesthetics or voices. For instance, the greater part of Sir Richard's poems are written in secretary hand, while the majority of other poems are written in italic.⁶⁴

In the anonymous poem that opens the Quarto, 'Ane Sonet to the Authour In cōmendatioun of his buik', we find a rumination on masculine authorship that foregrounds values of male lineage ('Your predicessouris prayse & prowes hie' [MQ, I, 1]); fatherhood ('Vnto thair lyne & linage to give licht / Of Quhome ye come Quhose offspring yow to call' [MQ, I, 6-7]); authority and posterity:

manfull men of mekill might
[...]
valyeant warriour wicht
Hes With the pen the Poetis pairt weill playit
Quhairby your lordschip enlairgit hes thair fame
& to your self maid ane Immortall name.
(MQ, I, 9, 11-14)

⁵⁹ Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 25-26.

⁶⁰ See Sarah M. Dunnigan, 'Sacred Afterlives: Mary, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth Melville and the Politics of Sanctity', *Women's Writing*, 10 (2003), 401-24 (p. 401).

⁶¹ Scott-Elliot and Yeo, 'Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis', p. 36.

⁶² Anna Walker, *A Sweete Savor for Woman*, London, British Library, MS Egerton 1043.

⁶³ Suzanne Trill, 'A Feminist Critic in the Archives: Reading Anna Walker's *A Sweete Savor for Woman* (c. 1606)', *Women's Writing*, 9 (2002), 199-214 (pp. 206-209).

⁶⁴ This is not always the case. As Joanna Martin and Katherine McClune observe, some poems attributed to Sir Richard Maitland, particularly those of a religious or moral nature, are copied in italic script. Joanna M. Martin and Katherine A. McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 15 (2009), 237-63 (pp. 251, 262, Note 97). Moreover, the anonymous female-voiced love lyric, Poem XLIX, is written in secretary hand, MS 1408, fols 78v-79v.

The celebrated author here is Sir Richard Maitland and the Quarto is described as being ‘his buik’, which indicates that he either owns this manuscript or is being offered this book. The placing of this poem at the beginning anticipates James VI and I’s patriarchal usurpation of *auctoritas* – the beginning of writing comes from the Creator, the father. The poet here evokes the classical bardic tradition stemming from Virgil’s *Aeneid* (29-19 BC): ‘I sing of arms and [...] the man’, stories which are told by men who are poets, warriors and ‘manly [...] knight[s]’ (MQ, XC, 6).⁶⁵ Furthermore, Sir Richard’s ‘[i]mmortall name’ (MQ, I, 14) is reminiscent of William Dunbar’s ‘Lament for the Makaris’ (c. 1508) which is transcribed in the Maitland Folio. Dunbar laments that ‘makaris’ cannot transcend death: ‘I se ye maikaris ama[n]g the laif / [...] Sparit is no[ch]t thair faculte / Timor mortis conturbat me [fear of death disturbs me]’.⁶⁶ Yet Dunbar’s extensive quoting of dead poets – ‘The nobill chauseir of makaris flour / [...] The kny[ch]t [...] hew of eglintoun / [...] maister robert Hendersoun’ – proves that poetic makers’ bodies may die, but their verse and fame will live on.⁶⁷ The Maitland sonneteer, like Dunbar, implies that Sir Richard’s name will live on after death.

Although this sonnet is the first poem in the Quarto, it is not the first piece of writing. As outlined above, the first piece of writing is Marie Maitland’s name, which signifies an alternative beginning and an alternative female *auctoritas*. We cannot be sure at which point Marie’s name is added to the title-page (it could have been added at a later stage after copying/compilation, for example). However, it is not unusual for Renaissance scribes to sign their own names on the title-pages of their works. Esther Inglis, for instance, affixes her name to the title-page of *Livret contenant diverses sortes de lettres* (1586).⁶⁸ Moreover, it is not unusual for scribes to write their names sequentially in a variety of scripts. As Jonathan Goldberg points out, the late-sixteenth-century Dutch scribe, Maria Strick, signs her name in a variety of italic hands in her writing manual, *Tooneel der Leflijcke Schrijffen* (1607).⁶⁹ What I am suggesting here is that the signatures on the Maitland Quarto’s title-page are likely to be autograph signatures by Marie Maitland herself. Marie Maitland adds her name to the title-page of

⁶⁵ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by David West (London: Penguin, 1991), I. 1, p. 3. Gavin Douglas completed a Middle Scots translation of the *Aeneid* in 1513. See Priscilla Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976), p. 10.

⁶⁶ William Dunbar, ‘Lament for the Makaris’, in *The Maitland Folio Manuscript, Containing Poems by Sir Richard Maitland, Dunbar, Douglas, Henryson, and Others*, ed. by W. A. Craigie, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1919-1927), I, Poem LXIII, lines 44, 46-48.

⁶⁷ Dunbar, ‘Lament for the Makaris’, lines 50, 53, 82.

⁶⁸ MS Sloane 987, fol. 2r.

⁶⁹ Goldberg, *Writing Matter*, p. 245.

the Quarto before the sonnet glorifying Sir Richard's masculinity to delicately conceal and reveal her own scribal and literary *auctoritas*.

Sir Richard's voice is characterized by moral didacticism and judgement and this is revealed in the second poem in the Quarto, a sumptuary complaint poem that focuses on the 'wyfes of the borroustoŭn' who 'wonder vaine ar and wantoŭn [...] / Thair bodyis [...] thay attyire / of carnell lust' (MQ, II, 1, 2, 6-7).⁷⁰ What we find here is a fetishistic focus on the external female body: 'trimlie traillis / [...] sleif nek and taillis / [...] newfangilnes of geir' (MQ, II, 11, 12, 15). The poet regards wandering women of the town as morally suspect and this finds its origins in Tertullian, who rails against female physical display. For Tertullian, women who display their 'arrangement of dress' are objects of 'carnal appetite', evoking Sir Richard's phrase 'carnell lust' (MQ, II, 7).⁷¹ Moreover, Sir Richard seems to take his cue from *The Geneva Bible* (1560) where we find a wandering woman in the Book of Proverbs who has an unauthorized authority: 'Now *she is* without, now in the stretes [...] caused him to yelde [...] with her flattering lippes [...] wander thou not in her paths'.⁷² The 'masterless' woman, 'perversely straying' from the established order is, according to Jonathan Dollimore, a 'dissident' figure par excellence.⁷³ Indeed, it is precisely these women's religious loquacity that Sir Richard's speaker abhors: 'na preiching will gar thame foirbeir / To weir all thing that sinne provoikis' (MQ, II, 18-19). However, Sir Richard's critique of these women is not simply a gender-based attack, but one influenced by class consciousness. The 'borroustoŭn' (MQ, II, 1) might refer to the urban municipal burgh town of Edinburgh (which was in close proximity to Lethington). As Elizabeth Ewan points out, in *circa* 1500, Dunbar had complained about the noise and raucousness of Edinburgh market-women.⁷⁴ Late medieval Scottish court cases illustrate 'market disputes between sellers and buyers and between customers; many of those involved

⁷⁰ For an analysis of the Middle Scots sumptuary complaint tradition, see Roderick Lyall, 'Complaint, Satire and Invective in Middle Scots Literature', in *Church, Politics and Society: Scotland 1408-1929*, ed. by Norman Macdougall (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), pp. 44-64.

⁷¹ Tertullian, 'On Female Dress', in *Misogyny in the Western Philosophical Tradition: A Reader*, ed. by Beverley Clack (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), pp. 50-82 (p. 54). Tertullian's 'On Female Dress' was written in c. 160-c. 220 CE, see Beverley Clack, 'Tertullian c. 160-c. 220 CE: Introduction and Background', in *Misogyny in the Western Philosophical Tradition: A Reader*, ed. by Clack pp. 49-50 (p. 49).

⁷² *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Prouerbes 7. 12, 21, 25.

⁷³ Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, p. 119.

⁷⁴ Ewan here refers to Dunbar's poem, 'Quhy will ye, merchantis of renoun'. Elizabeth Ewan, 'For Whatever Ales Ye': Women as Consumers and Producers in Late Medieval Scottish Towns', in *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, ed. by Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), pp. 125-35 (p. 125). Dunbar, 'Quhy will ye, merchantis of renoun', in William Dunbar, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 209-13.

were women'.⁷⁵ Sir Richard's poem draws upon this increased visibility of the consuming independent woman of the 'borroustoŭn' (MQ, II, 1). The women of Sir Richard's poem are married – they are described as 'wyfes' (MQ, II, 1), yet they wander about the town as though they are masterless and single. The continuous refrain of 'all for newfangilnes of geir' (MQ, II, 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50), may allude to this new-found suspect female economic authority, which partly motivates the poet-speaker's scorn. The male poetic voice does not merely observe these women, but offers moral judgement, council and warning: 'My counsell I geve generallie / to all wemen quhat euer thay be / [...] ladyis tak gud heid' (MQ, II, 81-82, 96). Supreme moral authority (*auctoritas principis*) thus stems from the *pater familias* – the language of the father. Given this context, how can a daughter write or publish under her name, even within a coterie circle? Will she be accused of usurping the *auctoritas* of her father?

On closer examination of the Quarto, we find that this exclusive male *auctoritas* is tacitly queried. In the anonymous lyric, Poem LXIX, the figure of Marie Maitland emerges in a dream vision:

Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir
mait land and gold scho gave aboŭndantie
 Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir
 q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie [.]
 (MQ, LXIX, 41-44, my italics)

This is the only overt anagrammatic punning on a name that we find in the Quarto. The Quarto scribe uses several different forms of attribution for Sir Richard's poems, the most common of which is 'S. R. M.'. ⁷⁶ 'Sum wyfes of the borroustoŭn', however, ends with 'finis q̄ Richart Maitland of lethingtoun kny^t' (MQ, II, 111) – an affirmation of male *auctoritas* and status. In Poem LXIX, this unequivocal reference is absent, yet a name is embedded within the poem itself, recalling Katherine Parr's definition of female *auctoritas*: a presence that can be heard and felt, rather than explicitly authored.

The punning on Marie's name is highly complex. Marie's name is reminiscent of the Icelandic word 'maer', meaning a virgin or maid, echoed in the line: 'This is in sing of trew Virginitie' (MQ, LXIX, 45).⁷⁷ 'Virginitie' was associated with power in the

⁷⁵ Ewan, 'For Whatever Ales Ye': Women as Consumers', p. 125.

⁷⁶ Martin and McClune have highlighted the methods of attribution for Poems I-XX in the Maitland Quarto in an Appendix, see Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', pp. 255-56.

⁷⁷ The etymology of the word 'maer' is outlined by the lexicographer Alexander Jamieson. Jamieson uses this etymology to explain Mary Stewart's ladies-in-waiting being referred to as the 'Four Maries'. This

sixteenth century, as Philippa Berry points out: Elizabeth I used her chastity to wield political and spiritual authority.⁷⁸ The speaker of Poem LXIX draws upon Marie's virginal power and puissance. This is connected to the punning on 'land' (MQ, LXIX, 42). As the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* tells us, 'land' in this context can denote an open space in a wood, a clearing or glade and here Marie provides space for the poet in the redolent garden (*DSL*⁷⁹). 'Land' of course also refers to 'domain' (*OED*). The lyric that directly precedes Poem LXIX praises Sir Richard and his 'nobill sonnys thrie' (MQ, LXVIII, 149): 'Maitland bliūd / the best in all this *land*' (MQ, LXVIII, 141-42, my italics). In Poem LXIX, however, it is Marie, not her father or brothers, who has authority over land (MQ, LXIX, 42). It is also Marie who arguably constructs her own physical space within the Quarto, evinced in the title-page. 'Mate' meaning 'fellow-worker', 'companion', 'associate' or 'consort' was also spelt 'mait' in the sixteenth century (*DSL*), an ambiguity the speaker draws upon: Marie is a 'mait' (MQ, LXIX, 42) to Sir Richard, skilled in scribing. The term 'mait' in this context is most likely to mean 'meat' (food), and recalls the prelapsarian 'meat' of Genesis in *The Geneva Bible*: 'the woman (seing that the tre was good for meat [...] & a tre to be desired to get knowledge) toke of the frute thereof'.⁸⁰ Marie Maitland distributes the 'mait' of knowledge in Poem LXIX, but there is no Adam, serpent or fall here: 'ressaue no fall' (MQ, LXIX, 48).

The 'flourishit trie' (MQ, LXIX, 43) that Marie holds in her hand is not only a symbol for a branch from the tree of knowledge, but is synonymous to the art of limning. 'Flourishit' was associated with the embellishment or ornamentation of a book or illumination of manuscripts (*OED*) and Marie's hands are explicitly linked to 'letteris' (MQ, LXIX, 44). The 'trie' she holds betokens a flourishing writing instrument. This 'trie' could also be a laurel (a symbol of poetic achievement), bestowed by the goddess of chastity, Diana. Towards the end of the Quarto, we find an octave poem which refers to a female poetic tradition governed by the goddess Diana: 'I call / [...] diana ladye bricht / with nymphes of chastetie / Graunt me your favours [...] / to end this worthelie' (MQ, LXXXVI, 4-8). This idea of female divine creativity is reinforced in Poem LXIX through the litany of female goddesses, whose presence

etymology, however, is not cited in the *OED*. Jamieson cited by Rosalind K. Marshall, 'Queen's Maries (act. 1548-1567)', *ODNB* [accessed 22 May 2009].

⁷⁸ Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 1.

⁷⁹ *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/dsl> [accessed 12 June 2009]). From henceforth the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (online edition) has been abbreviated as *DSL*.

⁸⁰ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Genesis 3. 6.

Marie evokes: ‘Venus [goddess of gardens, love, beauty and fertility,] Iuno [goddess of marriage and childbirth,] and pallas / Minerua [goddess of wisdom, arts and trades,] [...] / diana [...] / Dame Beawtie [...] and [...] dame chastitie’ (MQ, LXIX, 59-62).

Marie Maitland’s presentation in Poem LXIX is reminiscent of the fifteenth-century Scots poem, *The Kingis Quair* (c. 1424, attributed to James I of Scotland), where a branch with golden letters is brought to the despairing male speaker, who declares himself to be ‘mate’ (weary of love suffering, checkmated):

‘Help now my game that is in poynt to mate.’
 [...]

 sodeynly, a turtur quhite as calk
 So evinly vpon my hand gan lyght,
 [...]

 This fair bird ryght in hir bill gan hold
 [...]

 A fair[e] branche, quhare writtin was with gold
 [...]

Awak, awake, I bring, [...]
The newis glad that blisfull ben and sure
*Of thy confort.*⁸¹

This scene in *The Kingis Quair* recalls the news of the coming of Christ in the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1. 28-33). In Poem LXIX it is Marie Maitland who invokes the Virgin Mary, as it is she who holds the sacred branch of golden ‘letteris’ (MQ, LXIX, 44). It is Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX who acts as a mediator between the earthly and the divine.

Marie Maitland’s bestowal of ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) links her to the colour of manuscript illumination and evokes the gift of the golden quill – the prize awarded in Renaissance European courts for writing contests.⁸² Marie’s ‘gold’ also affiliates her with a metaphysical alchemical tradition circulating in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scotland via alchemical enthusiasts such as James IV (1473-1513) and John Napier of Merchiston (1550-1617).⁸³ As Stanton Linden points out, ‘gold’ is a symbol of perfection, purity and incorruptibility.⁸⁴ The ancient mythical father of alchemy,

⁸¹ James I of Scotland, *The Kings Quair*, ed. by John Norton-Smith (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 42, 45, lines 1176, 1235-36, 1240, 1242, 1247-49.

⁸² For further exposition on the Scottish medieval poetics of illumination, see Lois Ebin, ‘Dunbar’s “Fresch Anamalit Termes Celical” and the Art of the Occasional Poet’, *The Chaucer Review*, 17 (1983), 292-99. For the Renaissance gift of the golden quill, see Ziegler, ‘“More Than Feminine Boldness”: The Gift Books of Esther Inglis’, Note 32, p. 34.

⁸³ For the circulation of alchemical discourses in late medieval and early modern Scotland, see E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), pp. 216-38.

⁸⁴ Linden, ‘Introduction’, in *The Alchemy Reader*, ed. by Linden, p. 16.

Hermes Trismegistus, was depicted in a fifteenth-century mosaic in Siena Cathedral as holding a sacred book, flanked by two Sibyls.⁸⁵ Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson observe that Siena Cathedral had particular relevance for Renaissance Scotland because the frescoes of the Piccolomini Library in the cathedral of Siena (painted between 1502 and 1507) include a representation of James I of Scotland (1394-1437) receiving the papal envoy, Aeneas Sylvius, in the year 1435.⁸⁶ It is not accidental that Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX is depicted as carrying ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) and a ‘flourishit trie’ (MQ, LXIX, 43) inscribed with cryptic ‘letteris’ (MQ, LXIX, 44) – she is evocative of a Hermetic Sibyl imparting spiritual esoteric knowledge. The name ‘Marie’ (MQ, LXIX, 41) in Poem LXIX not only invokes the sacred (and sensual) figures of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, but is a tacit allusion to the Prophetess Maria, the mother of alchemy.⁸⁷ Latin for ‘gold’ is *aureus* which is linked to the linguistic technique of ‘auration’ – rhetoric that involves the heightening of diction by the introduction of Latinate or polysyllabic terms: ‘aūreit termis and style most eloque[n]t’ (MQ, LXIX, 35). Thus Marie’s gift of ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) in Poem LXIX is an allusion to her rhetorical power of female ‘auration’.

Sarah Dunnigan reads Poem LXIX as foregrounding the ‘chaste and beautiful female body’.⁸⁸ However, Marie’s presence in Poem LXIX is also highly spectral – this is ultimately a dream vision that partly transcends the physical: ‘Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir / [...] all wes fantasie that I had sene’ (MQ, LXIX, 41, 70). Marie appears in a *phantastici* like Boethius’s Lady Philosophy, endowed with an enigmatic encoding.⁸⁹ This takes us back to Aristotle’s original ‘ta meta ta phusika’, interpreted by John Bullokar in 1616 as ‘the Metaphysickes [which] dealeth onely with incorporall [...] things’.⁹⁰ Given this context, Marie’s presence in Poem LXIX can be aptly described as ‘metaphysical’, as she fuses the physical with the spectral and is both physically present and absent. What is established here is an intricate metaphysics of

⁸⁵ Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, pp. 19, 20.

⁸⁶ Stevenson and Davidson, ‘Ficino in Aberdeen’, p. 76.

⁸⁷ Linden, ‘Introduction’, p. 9. See also the Introduction of this study.

⁸⁸ Sarah M. Dunnigan, ‘Undoing the Double Tress: Scotland, Early Modern Women’s Writing, and the Location of Critical Desires’, *Feminist Studies*, 29 (2003), 298-319 (p. 314).

⁸⁹ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 4-5, Book 1, lines 13-36. For the dating and circulation of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, see P. G. Walsh, ‘Introduction’, in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by Walsh, pp. xi-l. *The Consolation of Philosophy* was translated by Elizabeth Tudor in 1593. See *Queen Elizabeth’s Englishings of Boethius ‘De Consolatione Philosophiae’, AD 1593; Plutarch ‘De Curiositate’, and Horace ‘De Arte Poetica’ (part), AD 1598*, ed. by Caroline Pemberton (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1899), pp. 1-120.

⁹⁰ John Bullokar, *An English Expositor: teaching the interpretation of the hardest words vsed in our language* (London, 1616), sig. K6r.

authorship that evokes Michel Foucault's question 'what is an author?': an 'author' has numerous inferences in this poem including writer, a possessor/giver of poems, a scribe, a copier, a compiler, a literary muse, a woman who controls physical and textual space.⁹¹

Marie Maitland's dual role as 'maker' and scribe is made explicit in the lyric, 'To your self'. The 'self' explored in this poem is a female creative self that arguably dissents from the *pater familias* of Sir Richard Maitland:

o Maistres Marie maik I pray
[...]
for famous is your fleing fame
[...]

This buik then bear & beat your branis therin
a plesant poet perfyte sall ye be
& lytill labour lost the laurell Win
adorn'd with cumlie croun of poesie.
(MQ, LXXXV, 9, 11, 13-16)

Marie's 'labour' (MQ, LXXXV, 15) in transcribing the Quarto is alluded to as well as her role as poet in her own right: it is she who possesses the 'laurell' and 'croun of poesie' here (MQ, LXXXV, 15-16). As Priscilla Bawcutt points out, 'maister' in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could denote a university graduate and this is feminized in this lyric through the phrase 'Maistres Marie' (MQ, LXXXV, 9) – this suggests that Marie Maitland may have had a certain level of classical education.⁹² The notion of a female poetic tradition hinted at in Poem LXIX is developed in 'To your self', as Marie is compared to the ancient Greek poet, Sappho, and the sixteenth-century Italian scholar and writer, Olympia Morata (1526-1555):

If sapho saige for saphic songe so sueit
[...]
amids the gods dois duell that dame devyne.

And now of lait that lustie ladie rair
Olimpia o lampe of latine land
[...]
A thrid o Maistres Marie [.]
(MQ, LXXXV, 1, 4-6, 9)

⁹¹ Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', pp. 101-20.

⁹² Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 6. 'Maistres' can also denote a woman who wields authority or dominion (*DSL*).

This establishes a distinct female ‘making’ tradition that departs from the male classical tradition of ‘manfull men’ of ‘nicht’ (MQ, I, 9). It creates a female *auctoritas*. George Puttenham proposed in 1569 that ‘gentlewomen makers’ should not become ‘too precise poets’ lest they become ‘fantastical wives’.⁹³ Here the poet reclaims and celebrates a female ‘making’ tradition through the phrase ‘Marie maik I pray’ (MQ, LXXXV, 9). As demonstrated, Philip Sidney had declared that the male poet, through his *poesis*, can mirror his ‘heavenly Maker’, God, who made ‘man to His own likeness’.⁹⁴ However, in Poem LXIX and ‘To your self’ it is a female maker, Marie Maitland, who acts as an intermediary between the earthly and the sacred. Marie can potentially become a ‘dame devyne’ (MQ, LXXXV, 4) through her *poesis*.

Both Sappho and Olympia Morata are not only celebrated for the strength of their female voices, but are also known as creators of communities of women. The fragments of Sappho circulating in Europe via the sixteenth-century French printer, Henri Estienne, included Sappho’s ‘Ode to Aphrodite’ and ‘Phainetai moi’: ‘methinks, to sit before you and listen close by to the sweet accents and winning laughter which have made the heart in my breast beat so fast’.⁹⁵ Sappho confronts her audience with a female contemplative voice that delights in female speech, both her own and that of her female companions.⁹⁶ Likewise, Olympia Morata’s dialogues of her debates with fellow female humanist, Lavinia della Rovere Orsini (1521-1601), were posthumously published in Basel between 1558 and 1570.⁹⁷ The 1558 edition of Morata’s writings was held in William Drummond of Hawthornden’s library, which suggests that

⁹³ Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 336. Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesy* was published in 1589, but composed in c. 1569. See Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker, ‘Introduction’, in George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. ix-cii (p. li).

⁹⁴ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 86.

⁹⁵ Sappho, ‘Phainetai moi’, in *Lyra Graeca: Being the Remains of All the Greek Lyric Poets from Eumelus to Timotheus Excepting Pindar*, ed. and trans. by J. M. Edmonds, 3 vols (London: Heinemann, 1922), I, p. 187. For a chronology of the printed writings of Sappho in early modern France, see Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 313.

⁹⁶ Sarah Dunnigan argues that it is not yet established whether Sappho’s love lyrics were interpreted in the sixteenth century as ‘declarations of same-sex’ desire. Harriette Andreadis, however, has uncovered much evidence to suggest that Sappho was regarded in the Renaissance as an exemplar of female same-sex desire. Sarah M. Dunnigan, ‘Scottish Women Writers c.1560-c.1650’, in *A History of Scottish Women’s Writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 15-43 (p. 30); Harriette Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics, 1550-1714* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 39-45. I would like to suggest here that the Maitland Quarto provides essential evidence for Sappho’s reception in sixteenth-century Europe as a female poet and a creator of female community.

⁹⁷ Morata’s *Orationes, Dialogi, Epistolae, Carmina tam Latina quam Graeca* was posthumously printed in Basel in 1558, 1562 and 1570. See Robin, ‘Foreword’, in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. by Campbell and Larsen, p. xx.

Morata's writings were enjoying circulation in early modern Scotland.⁹⁸ In Morata's *Dialogue Between Theophila and Philotima* (1551-1552), Philotima (della Rovere) hears her friend speaking to her in an internal dialogue: 'I seem to hear the voice of my Theophila [Morata]. Here she is [...] Let's think about how we can talk together [...] there is no woman dearer to me than you, I have long shared all my secrets with you'.⁹⁹ By aligning Marie Maitland with two female creators of 'womanspeak', the poet of 'To your self' insinuates that Marie too participates in and creates such a discourse herself.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, there is evidence in the Quarto to suggest this. The anonymous lyric, Poem XLIX, celebrates the mental, physical and spiritual bonds between women from a female perspective. In Poem XLIX we find a distinct female voice: a voice that dissents not only from the male-voiced love poetry in the Quarto, but also from the male ventriloquism of female voices that becomes popular in sixteenth-century Europe.¹⁰¹ Yet, as I will demonstrate, the speaker of Poem XLIX shape-shifts into a male body so that she can play the man's 'pairt' (MQ, XLIX, 42) – the speaker adapts male discourse to authorize herself and simultaneously queries the male discourses that she mimics.

George Puttenham writes that poetry is a 'musical speech or utterance' and this has special applicability to the lyric form which is intimately connected to individual voice: it is a form whereby voice can be recognized without explicit authorship.¹⁰² As Sappho declares: 'thou hast heard and marked my voice afar'; Sappho self-consciously constructs a female voice (a feminized 'vox audienda/videnda') that is designed to be heard across the boundaries of time and space.¹⁰³ Evelyn Newlyn has made a detailed analysis of the love poems in the Maitland Quarto that do not specify the speaker's gender, yet in Poem XLIX we find a glorious, climactic affirmation and exaltation of the poet's sex.¹⁰⁴

Thair is mair constancie in o[u]r sex
Then euer ama[n]g men hes bein
no troubill / torment / greif / or tein [.]

⁹⁸ *The Library of Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. by Robert H. MacDonald (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), p. 167, Item 338.

⁹⁹ Morata, 'Dialogue Between Theophila and Philotima [1551-52]', in *Olympia Morata: The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, trans. by Parker, p. 119.

¹⁰⁰ Luce Irigaray's coinage 'womanspeak' cited by Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, p. 144.

¹⁰¹ The term 'ventriloquized voice' stems from Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁰² Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 98.

¹⁰³ Sappho, 'To Aphrodite', in *Lyra Graeca*, ed. and trans. by Edmonds, I, p. 183. The terms 'Vox audienda' and 'Vox videnda' (voice heard and voice seen), are used by the Renaissance phonetician, Robert Robinson, *The Art of Pronuntiatio* (London, 1617), cited in Goldberg, *Writing Matter*, p. 184.

¹⁰⁴ Newlyn, 'A Methodology for Reading Against the Culture', pp. 96-100.

(MQ, XLIX, 67-69)

The unified pronoun ‘o[u]r sex’ (MQ, XLIX, 67) advocates female unity and community, distinct from the world ‘ama[n]g men’ (MQ, XLIX, 68). Through this *sententia* (maxim), the female speaker deconstructs a number of male discourses. Montaigne had famously stated that women are incapable of nursing the ‘sacred bond’ of ‘true friendship’, as their ‘mindes’ are not ‘strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable’.¹⁰⁵ Here the poet challenges such phallocentrism by pointing to the supremacy of female constancy: ‘Sic constancie sall ws mantein’ (MQ, XLIX, 71).

Moreover, Poem XLIX’s celebration of female-female constancy subverts the Sapphic prosopopoeia of the sixteenth-century French poet, Pontus de Tyard. In an ‘Elegie pour une dame enamourée d’une autre dame’ (1573), Tyard’s female speaker declares: ‘Love enthralles me, woman, with woman’.¹⁰⁶ However, Tyard’s speaker goes on to slander her female beloved for inconstancy: ‘Where is thy promised faith, thy vows of love? [...] Nocturnal Morpheus has as many forms as the various thoughts of thine inconstant soul’.¹⁰⁷ By foregrounding the power of female constancy, the poet of Poem XLIX subtly undermines the ventriloquized Sapphic voice of Tyard.

‘[T]roubill / torment / greif / or tein’ (MQ, XLIX, 69) may refer to the hazardous consequences of heterosexual relations as delineated by Ovid’s populist *Heroides*, for example.¹⁰⁸ Ovid’s classical heroines bombard us with a series of desperate suicide notes. Dido writes to Aeneas: ‘you will see the tears of your abandoned bride, / her shoulders bent in grief, hair undone, / all stained with blood. [...] [W]hile I write [...] / a Trojan knife nestles in my lap’.¹⁰⁹ This is precisely the tormented, grieving female voice that the speaker in Poem XLIX seeks to deconstruct – her writing and speaking is

¹⁰⁵ Montaigne, *The Essayes*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁶ Pontus de Tyard, ‘Elegy for One Woman Enamored with Another (1573)’, in *Same-Sex Desire in the English Renaissance: A Sourcebook of Texts, 1470-1650*, ed. by Kenneth Borris (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 329-31 (p. 330). Tyard’s ‘Elegie pour une dame enamourée d’une autre dame’ was published in his *Oeuvres poétiques* (Paris, 1573). Tyard’s 1573 *Oeuvres poétiques* was held in William Drummond of Hawthornden’s library. Mary, Queen of Scots also owned Tyard’s *Erreurs Amoureuses* (1549). These surviving records indicate that Tyard’s writings were circulating in early modern Scotland. *The Library of Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. by MacDonald, p. 215, Item 1173; Sharman, *The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁰⁷ Tyard, ‘Elegy for One Woman Enamored with Another’, pp. 330-31.

¹⁰⁸ Between 1499 and 1580 forty-two editions of the *Heroides* were printed in France. See Paul White, ‘Ovid’s *Heroides* in Early Modern French Translation: Saint-Gelais, Fontaine, Du Bellay’, *Translation and Literature*, 13 (2004), 165-80 (p. 165). The first English translation of the *Heroides* was printed in 1567 (STC).

¹⁰⁹ Ovid, *Heroides*, trans. by Harold Isbell (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 60, 64.

not motivated by an Aeneas. The torment and grief that the speaker cites also recollects the Gaelic female ballad tradition, where female voices lament their rape and abandonment by men:

mo leannan am chòmhdhail,
[...]
Bhagair e mo léine shròiceadh,
Rinn e liadan beag' am chòta,
[...]
Rinn mi 'n diolanas ro'n phòsadh,
[...]
'S muladach caileag 'na h-ònar[.]

[my sweetheart came across me,
[...]
he made to rip down my bodice,
and left rents in my clothing,
[...]
I've got a baby without a promise,
[...]
sad is a woman all lonesome [..]]¹¹⁰

The speaker of Poem XLIX asserts that this female 'tein' (pain/sorrow) and physical 'disseuer[ing]' is absent amongst 'amitie' between women (MQ, XLIX, 69, 70, 72).

As Theo van Heijnsbergen observes, a key characteristic feature of the lyric is the expression of 'individual inward states' and in Poem XLIX we find an exploration of a female self and her relationship with her beloved 'madame' (MQ, XLIX, 4) that is imbued with a specifically female style, structure and form of address that subtly re-works the 'male' building blocks of myth, form and diction:¹¹¹

As phœbus in his spheris hicht
precellis the kaip Crepusculein
And phœbe all the starris licht
Yo[u]r splendo[u]r so madame I wein
Dois onlie pas all feminine
In sapience superlative
Indewit with vertewis sa devine
as leirned pallas rediviue.
(MQ, XLIX, 1-8)

¹¹⁰ Anonymous, 'I Rose Early on Sunday Morning', in *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, ed. by Catherine Kerrigan, with Gaelic translations by Meg Bateman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 34-37. This ballad is dated to *circa* 1600, but it may have been circulating earlier via oral transmission, see Catherine Kerrigan, 'Introduction', in *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, pp. 1-11 (p. 4) and Meg Bateman, 'Gaelic Women Poets', in *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, pp. 12-17 (p. 14).

¹¹¹ Theo van Heijnsbergen, 'Modes of Self-Representation in Older Scots Texts', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. by Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005), pp. 314-45 (p. 316).

A number of poems in the Quarto evoke ‘phœbus’ (MQ, XXXVIII, 73; XL, 52), god of poetry and the sun. Unusually, the poet here also evokes ‘phœbe’ (MQ, XLIX, 3), Phoebus Apollo’s twin sister and goddess of the moon. This shift recalls the octave poem, Poem LXXXVI, at the end of the Quarto, calling on Diana, another goddess affiliated with the moon (MQ, LXXXVI, 1-8). The poet of Poem XLIX is pointing to an alternative astral poetic tradition set by Phoebe and Diana, rather than Apollo.¹¹² The speaker’s madame ‘precellis’ (excels) the beauty of the sun: she is not a Petrarchan Laura, dwelling ‘among’st all women [...] a sun’, but transcends this tradition (MQ, XLIX, 2).¹¹³ Moreover, the ‘madame’ surpasses the splendour of the ‘starris licht’ (MQ, XLIX, 3): she goes beyond the glitter of Sidney’s ‘Stella, star of heavenly fire’.¹¹⁴ This intimates that the poet is carving out a space for a female form of address, distinct from the tropes of male love poetry.

Indeed, the use of the term ‘madame’ (MQ, XLIX, 4) is a latent deconstruction of the courtly tradition which addresses the female beloved as ‘lady’ or ‘mistress’: ‘my ladye [...] / [...] As phœbus tress hir hair’ (MQ, XLVIII, 6, 65); ‘onlie maistres myne’ (MQ, XXXIX, 73). As Theo van Heijnsbergen indicates, the male courtly tradition desires the lady/mistress to respond to his poetic missives and this is exhibited in the ballad that directly precedes Poem XLIX in the Maitland Quarto: ‘all power in hir handis / [...] Sa ladye for thy courtesie / have pitie of my miserie’ (MQ, XLVIII, 120, 132-33).¹¹⁵ In Poem XLIX there is no *la belle dame sans merci*: the madame has her own ‘will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15), but no ‘maistrye’. The speaker of Poem XLIX does not

¹¹² This female lunar tradition is discussed in further detail in Chapter 2 of this study.

¹¹³ Francesco Petrarca, Sonnet IX, *The Canzoniere*, trans. by Frederic J. Jones, 2 vols (Market Harborough, Hull: Troubadour, 2000), I, pp. 8-9, line 10. *The Canzoniere* was written in circa 1337, see Frederic J. Jones, ‘Introduction’, in Francesco Petrarca, *The Canzoniere*, trans. by Jones, pp. ix-xxxix (p. xii). In circa 1587 an anonymous Scottish sonneteer (possibly Lady Mary Beton) urges the Scottish poet, William Fowler (1560/61-1612), to appropriate the Petrarchan mode of writing (see *Early Modern Women Poets (1520-1700), An Anthology*, ed. by Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 99). Fowler makes a Scots translation of Petrarch’s *Trionfi* in 1587 and dedicates it to Lady Jane Fleming (wife to John Maitland). This suggests that Petrarch was a popular writer in sixteenth-century Scotland and was being read by both men and women. Fowler, *The Trivmphs of Petrarke*, in *The Works of William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne, Wife of James VI*, ed. by Henry W. Meikle and others, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1914-1940), I, pp. 13-134.

¹¹⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, ‘Eighth song’, from *Astrophil and Stella*, in *The Oxford Authors: Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 195-98 (p. 196), line 31. *Astrophil and Stella* was published in 1591 (STC), but written in circa 1581. See Katherine Duncan-Jones, ‘Chronology’, in *The Oxford Authors: Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Duncan-Jones, pp. xxi-xxiii (p. xxii). The Scottish writer, William Fowler, owned a manuscript copy of Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*, which suggests that *Astrophil and Stella* may have been scribally circulating in early modern Scotland. See H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 357-58.

¹¹⁵ Heijnsbergen, ‘Modes of Self-Representation in Older Scots Texts’, p. 327.

demand a response from her beloved – we have no anguished imperatives here and this thus dissents from the male courtly tradition.

Jane Farnsworth claims that the poet's use of 'madame' in Poem XLIX indicates the 'marital state of the beloved' and therefore her superior position.¹¹⁶ But 'madame' is an ambivalent form of address and was employed chiefly in addressing any lady of rank (*DSL*). 'Madame', for instance, is the term used by sixteenth-century Scottish courtiers and ladies-in-waiting for their French-speaking Queen. Sir Richard Maitland, for example, uses this form of address for Mary, Queen of Scots in Poem IX, which honours the widowed Queen's arrival in Scotland:

Our native Princes and Illuster Quene
[...]
Madame I wes trew s[e]ruand to thy mother
[...]
Viue marie trenoble royne d'Escoss–.
(MQ, IX, 10, 49, 64)

Moreover, given the punning that we have seen on Marie Maitland's name in the Quarto, it is tempting to see the subtle internal consonantal patterning of 'madame' in Poem XLIX as a reference to Marie's name. This corresponds to the emphatic majuscule lettering found in the third stanza: '*My Mynd*' (MQ, XLIX, 19, my italics), which points to the power of female intellect and may also be an indirect initialling of the poet's *auctoritas* – her consciousness and identity.

This metaphysics of naming and un-naming is sustained in the reference to 'leirned pallas rediviue' (MQ, XLIX, 8) As Jane Farnsworth points out, the poet chooses the name 'pallas' rather than Athena to refer to the goddess's childhood female friend, Pallas.¹¹⁷ According to the mythographer, Apollodorus, Athena accidentally killed Pallas and being 'exceedingly grieved for her', she made an image of her, the Palladion.¹¹⁸ This not only places the poet's relationship with her 'madame' in the company of a celebrated pair of female friends, as Jane Farnsworth argues, but also points to the Petrarchan concept of 'altra vita' (new existence/another life) which is essential to the Renaissance concept of 'rebirth'.¹¹⁹ Here the poet-speaker of Poem

¹¹⁶ Jane Farnsworth, 'Voicing Female Desire in 'Poem XLIX'', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36 (1996), 57-72 (p. 60).

¹¹⁷ Farnsworth, 'Voicing Female Desire in 'Poem XLIX'', p. 60.

¹¹⁸ Apollodorus, *The Library*, trans. by Sir James George Frazer, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1921), II, p. 41.

¹¹⁹ Farnsworth, 'Voicing Female Desire in 'Poem XLIX'', p. 60; Francesco Petrarca, 'Sonetto XVII', in *One Hundred Sonnets, Translated after the Italian of Petrarch and A Life of Petrarch*, by Susan

XLIX imparts that her name and identity are instilled within her ‘madame’: she has been ‘redivue[d]’ (MQ, XLIX, 8) and reborn in her, just like Athena’s own ‘cosmic transformation’ through Pallas/Palladion.¹²⁰ This signifies that anonymity is an aesthetic choice in Poem XLIX, as individual names disappear and find new forms of expression through the identity of the beloved.

The validation of female *auctoritas* in Poem XLIX is furthered by the poet through reference to the madame’s ‘sapience superlative’ (MQ, XLIX, 6). As Philippa Berry observes, Sapience (the wisdom of God) is described in the Old Testament as a female figure who often appeared in medieval texts as Lady Philosophy or Lady Reason.¹²¹ As a bestower of wisdom, Sapience was affiliated with the goddesses Minerva and Pallas Athena, echoed in the poet’s phrase ‘leirned pallas’ (MQ, XLIX, 8).¹²² The vivid femininity of Sapience’s voice is stressed in the biblical Proverbs: ‘*Wisdom declareth her excellē[n]cie [:] [...] vtter my voice [...] I [...] speake of excellent things [...] the opening of my lippes shal teache things that be right. [...] All [...] wordes of my mouth are righteous*’.¹²³ Sapience therefore offers an alternative representation of female *auctoritas* from the ‘wonder[ing]’ (MQ, II, 2) women alluded to by Sir Richard in his ‘Sum wyfes of the borroustoūn’. Sapience qualifies John Knox’s contention that ‘man is the author [...] of [...] woman’, as it is she who aids God with the creation: ‘The Lord hath possessed me in the beginning [...] before his workes of olde [...] from the beginning & before the earth [...] was I with him [...] and I was daily *his delite*’.¹²⁴ ‘Sapience’ also takes us back to Poem LXIX where Marie Maitland is figured as Lady Philosophy imparting metaphysical knowledge (*sophia*). Sapience infiltrates Poem XLIX, as the speaker herself possesses a wandering/wondering, philosophical voice: ‘I wein [think] [...] contemplating [...] My Mynd’ (MQ, XLIX, 4, 14, 19). Poem XLIX therefore offers a very different adumbration of the straying female from Sir Richard’s attack in ‘Sum wyfes of the borroustoūn’. In Poem XLIX we discover a lyrical introspective voice that concentrates on female interiority as opposed to exteriority. I argued earlier in this chapter that there

Wollaston (London: E. Bull, 1841), pp. 70-71, line 6; Petrarca, Sonnet LXII, *The Canzoniere*, trans. by Jones, I, pp. 74-75, line 6.

¹²⁰ Karl Kerényi, *Athene: Virgin and Mother, A Study of Pallas Athene*, trans. by Murray Stein (Zurich: Spring Publications, 1978), pp. 26, 58.

¹²¹ Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 10.

¹²² Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 10.

¹²³ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Prouerbes 8. 1, 4, 6, 8.

¹²⁴ John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* (Geneva, 1558), sig. 21r; *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Prouerbes 8. 22, 23, 30.

is a rich male contemplative tradition in the Renaissance stemming from Petrarch and Ficino and the poet in Poem XLIX takes this tradition further through her specific focus on female contemplative life.

Yet this celebration of the feminine is put under pressure through the poet's highly ambivalent phrase: 'Dois onlie pas all feminine / In sapience superlative' (MQ, XLIX, 5-6). This potentially denigrates the idea that 'feminine' and 'sapience' can go together – it destabilizes essentialist gender construction and suggests that the 'madame' can potentially transcend physical femininity.

Indeed, the transcendence of physical femininity is what the poet desires:

Wald michtie Ioue grant me the hap
With yow to haue yo[u]r brutus pairt
and metamorphosing our schap
My sex intill his vaill convert
No brutus then sould caus ws smart [.]
(MQ, XLIX, 41-45)

The most obvious allusion here is to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whereby Iphis miraculously changes her sex in order to marry her female beloved, Ianthe.¹²⁵ Although we find a desire for a change of sex in Poem XLIX, there is no mention of a change of gender: 'My sex intill his vaill convert' (MQ, XLIX, 44). 'My sex' foregrounds the notion of physical sex, but what about the 'vnknawin [...] spreit [spirit]' and 'Mynd' (MQ, XLIX, 9, 13, 19)? Although physically the speaker desires a change of shape, her gendered intellect and emotion arguably remains intact.

The allusion to Brutus (MQ, XLIX, 42) refers to the Portia-Brutus narrative of the fifth stanza of Poem XLIX: Portia out of devotion to her husband 'devoir[s] the fyrie brayiss' (MQ, XLIX, 39) to follow Brutus in death. However, 'yow to haue yo[u]r brutus pairt' (MQ, XLIX, 42) is an equivocal phrase. As Jane Farnsworth argues, 'pairt' has multiple connotations, including 'place', 'role', and the male sexual organ.¹²⁶ As we have seen, the opening sonnet of the Quarto associates the 'Poetis pairt' (MQ, I, 12) with 'manfull men of mekill micht' (MQ, I, 9). In Poem XLIX, however, it is the female speaker who takes on the poetic 'pairt' to authorize her desire.

The line 'My sex intill his vaill convert' (MQ, XLIX, 44) is highly cryptic. Terry Castle transcribes 'vaill' (MQ, XLIX, 44) as 'will', which, as outlined below, has

¹²⁵ Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Arthur Golding, ed. by Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin, 2002), Book 6, lines 919-37, p. 293. Arthur Golding's complete English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was first printed in 1567 (STC).

¹²⁶ Farnsworth, 'Voicing Female Desire in 'Poem XLIX'', p. 64.

political, literary and sexual inferences.¹²⁷ Yet 'vaill' (MQ, XLIX, 44) could also be 'veil', 'vail' or 'phial'. In *The Geneva Bible*, 'vaile' refers to Christ's flesh: we enter the 'Holie place By the new and liuing way, [...] through the vaile, that is, his [Christ's] flesh'.¹²⁸ The speaker of Poem XLIX may be using this tacit Christian metaphor to meditate on spiritual-sensual female-female love. 'Vail' can also mean advantage, benefit, '[t]o have might or power' (*OED*): the couple will covet Brutus's 'vaill' (might/power) to control their own destiny. Consequently 'vaill' (MQ, XLIX, 44) becomes an apt metaphor for the 'veiling' gender fusion that we find in this stanza. The poet articulates this desire for sex change within the gender ambiguous 'Crepusculein' (twilight) where both 'phœbus' (sol) and 'phœbe' (luna) rule (MQ, XLIX, 1, 2, 3): gender and explicit *auctoritas* is thus veiled and unveiled simultaneously. Within this context, 'vaill' (MQ, XLIX, 44) could be a glass transforming vessel ('phial') which in alchemical discourses contained the chemical wedding of male and female, sol ('phœbus') and luna ('phœbe').¹²⁹ This is an appropriate allusion given Marie Maitland's association with alchemical 'gold' (MQ, LXIX, 42) in Poem LXIX.

What develops in Poem XLIX is a metaphysics of gender that counters Thomas Laqueur's theory of the early modern 'one-sex model'.¹³⁰ Laqueur maintains that in the Renaissance 'sex and gender' are bound up in a circle of meaning from which to escape a 'biological substratum is impossible'.¹³¹ However, what we find in Poem XLIX is a pointed difference between biological, physical sex and interior metaphysical gender.

The literary connotations of 'pairt' (MQ, XLIX, 42) in Poem XLIX recalls the reference to the madame's capacious 'will': 'Ye weild me holie at yo[u]r will' (MQ, XLIX, 15). Jeffrey Masten posits that 'will' is a potent male signifier in the Renaissance pertaining to futurity/purpose, lust, and the male sexual organ.¹³² 'Will' is repeated in Montaigne's description of his intimate relationship with his friend, Etienne de La Boétie: 'having seized all my will, induced the same to plunge and loose it selfe in his [...] having seized all his will, brought it to loose and plunge it selfe in mine'.¹³³ 'Will'

¹²⁷ Terry Castle, 'Anonymous: "Poem XLIX" from the Maitland Quarto Manuscript (1586)', in *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall*, ed. by Terry Castle (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 82-85 (p. 84).

¹²⁸ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Epistle to the Ebrewes 10. 20.

¹²⁹ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, pp. 35-36.

¹³⁰ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 25, 142.

¹³¹ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 128.

¹³² Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, p. 35.

¹³³ Montaigne, *The Essayes*, p. 93.

of course, most famously, becomes a pun for phallic male *auctoritas* in Shakespeare's Sonnet 136: 'And then thou lov'st me for my name is Will'.¹³⁴

Female 'will', however, has an alternative lexical history. As Wendy Wall and Winifred Coumts point out, in sixteenth-century England and Scotland a married woman could not make her own legal will.¹³⁵ Wendy Wall argues that there was a continuous struggle in the sixteenth century for women's testamentary rights, of which wills formed a vital part.¹³⁶ Indeed, in 1544 the English Parliament renewed the statute that forbade women to make their own wills, which implies that women in England were contesting this law.¹³⁷ Winifred Coumts has found evidence to suggest that Scottish women at the turn of the sixteenth century, such as Margaret Winton, were attempting to overturn the law by passing on their goods to their daughters.¹³⁸ Coumts has found a number of Scottish testaments from *circa* 1600 that show mothers drawing up wills for the provision of their children.¹³⁹ In these documents the husband's prior consent is implied, but never specifically mentioned – it is precisely this female marital independence that poses a threat to Sir Richard's speaker in 'Sum wyfes of the borroustoūn'.¹⁴⁰ The notion of 'will' becomes vital to Marie Maitland's English contemporary, Isabella Whitney (*fl.* 1566-1573): 'My bookes and Pen I wyll apply'; 'I [...] / Did write this Wyll with mine owne hand'.¹⁴¹ Female 'will' for Whitney conflates literary *auctoritas* with legal and political *auctoritas*. 'Will' can, of course, also denote female genitalia, as Shakespeare's Sonnet 135 to the Dark Lady exhibits: 'Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious'.¹⁴² Within this context, the poet's reference to her madame's 'will' (MQ, XLIX, 15) in Poem XLIX evokes female literary agency and

¹³⁴ William Shakespeare, Sonnet 136, in *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. by John Kerrigan (London: Penguin, 1995, 1st pub. 1986), p. 144, line 14. Shakespeare's *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* was first printed in 1609 (STC).

¹³⁵ Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 294; Winifred Coumts, 'Wife and Widow: The Evidence of Testaments and Marriage Contracts c. 1600', in *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, ed. by Ewan and Meikle, pp. 176-86 (pp. 176-77).

¹³⁶ Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, p. 299.

¹³⁷ Wall here cites the historian, Pearl Hogrefe. Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, p. 294.

¹³⁸ Coumts, 'Wife and Widow', p. 183.

¹³⁹ Coumts, 'Wife and Widow', p. 177.

¹⁴⁰ Coumts, 'Wife and Widow', p. 177.

¹⁴¹ Isabella Whitney, 'To her Sister Misteris. A. B.', line 28; 'The maner of her Wyll, and what she left to London: and all those in it: at her departing', lines 313-17, in *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanier: Renaissance Women Poets*, ed. by Danielle Clarke (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 13, 28. Whitney's 'To her Sister Misteris. A. B.' and 'The maner of her Wyl' were printed in her volume of poems, *A Sweet Nosgay* (London, 1573).

¹⁴² Shakespeare, Sonnet 135, in *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. by Kerrigan, p. 144, line 5. See also Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, p. 35.

legal authority, as well as representing female sexual agency and female sexual *auctoritas*. Poem XLIX's exaltation of the female textual/sexual 'pairt' (MQ, XLIX, 42) and 'will' (MQ, XLIX, 15) offers tantalizing evidence for the presence of a community of women in the Maitland circle who are collaborating in the 'making' of the Maitland Quarto.

According to Lucy Irigaray, a key component to the development of 'womanspeak' is 'mimétisme': mimicking male discourses in order to 'thwart' them.¹⁴³ 'Mimétisme' can become a dissident linguistic mechanism, as dominant voices are imitated only to be countered. 'Mimétisme' seems to be at work in Poem XLIX exhibited through the repetition of the word 'amitie'. 'Amitie' is repeated four times in Poem XLIX (MQ, XLIX, 25, 53, 61, 72), as the poet employs the rhetorical technique of *heratio* (repeating and, in so doing, emphasizing the different meanings of a word).¹⁴⁴ 'Amitie' has a wide range of meanings encompassing the concepts of friendship, affection and love.¹⁴⁵ By using the word 'amitie' the speaker of Poem XLIX begins an intertextual dialogue with Cicero's *De Amicitia* (44 BC). *De Amicitia* is structured by a dialogue between Laelius and his sons-in-law, Scaevola and Fannius, who conceive a world of male-male speaking, listening, gazing and bonding. Cicero states:

Since we had learned from our forefathers that the intimacy of Gaius Laelius and Publius Scipio was most noteworthy, I concluded that Laelius was a fit person to expound the very views on friendship which Scaevola remembered that he had maintained. [...] discourses of this kind seem in some way to acquire greater dignity when founded on the influence of men of ancient times, especially such as are renowned; [...] in this book I have written as a most affectionate friend to a friend on the subject friendship.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 76, 220.

¹⁴⁴ This definition of *heratio* is outlined by Sasha Roberts, 'Women's Literary Capital in Early Modern England: Formal Composition and Rhetorical Display in Manuscript and Print', *Women's Writing*, 14 (2007), 246-69 (p. 252).

¹⁴⁵ See Daniel T. Lochman and Maritere López, 'Introduction: The Emergence of Discourses: Early Modern Friendship', in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*, ed. by Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López and Lorna Hutson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 1-28.

¹⁴⁶ Cicero, *Laelius De Amicitia*, in *Cicero in Twenty-Eight Volumes*, trans. by William Armistead Falconer, 28 vols (London: Heinemann, 1923), XX, pp. 108-211 (pp. 111, 113). The Scottish scholar-cleric, James Wilkie (Principal of St Leonard's, 1570-1590), held the 1547 Paris edition of Cicero's *De Amicitia* in his library, Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 160. The first printed English translation of the *De Amicitia* appears in 1481 (*STC*).

Cicero accosts us with the root meaning of male homosociality – ‘social intimacies’ that exist between men for the functioning of the ‘commonwealth’ that are simultaneously tinged with ambiguous sensual undertones:¹⁴⁷

For it is love (*amor*), from which the word ‘friendship’ (*amicitia*) is derived, that leads to the establishing of goodwill.
[...]

For nothing gives more pleasure than the return of goodwill and the interchange of zealous service. [...] nothing so allures and attracts anything to itself as likeness does to friendship [...]¹⁴⁸

Cicero’s Laelius aligns his ‘amor’ for Scipio with three ‘pairs’ of male ‘friends’: Theseus and Pirithous; Achilles and Patroclus; Orestes and Pylades, and it is precisely this allusion that the poet makes in Poem XLIX:¹⁴⁹

In amitie perithous
To theseus wes not so traist
Nor Till Achilles patroclus
nor pilades to trew orest [.]
(MQ, XLIX, 25-28)

In this way, the poet of Poem XLIX enters into the supremely male arena of *amicitia* and questions it. The poet refers to these pairs of male friends and negates their example with the repeated negative ‘Nor’ (MQ, XLIX, 27, 28, 29). ‘[A]untient heroicis love’ (MQ, XLIX, 21) is not as ‘holie and religious’ as the speaker’s own ‘experie[n]ce’ with her madame (MQ, XLIX, 23-24).

Feminization of *amicitia* is continued through the biblical allusion to Ruth and Naomi:

In amitie
[...]
Nor Ruth the kynd moabitiss
Nohemie as the scripture sayis [.]
(MQ, XLIX, 25, 35-36)

As Terry Castle and Jane Farnsworth point out, Ruth says to Naomi in the Bible: ‘Intreat me not to leaue thee [...] whither thou goest, I wil go: and where thou dwellest,

¹⁴⁷ Cicero, *Laelius De Amicitia*, pp. 147, 151. The term ‘homosociality’ is coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁴⁸ Cicero, *Laelius De Amicitia*, pp. 139, 161.

¹⁴⁹ Cicero, *Laelius De Amicitia*, Note 1, p. 124; p. 125.

I wil dwel [...] Where yu dyest, wil I dye'.¹⁵⁰ This is a Christian womanspeak 'holie and religious' (MQ, XLIX, 24) that emerges when husbands and sons have died – Ruth and Naomi travel solely in each other's company in search for their promised land.¹⁵¹ 'Die', of course, had implicit orgasmic connotations in the Renaissance and the poet of Poem XLIX may be indirectly drawing upon this in her reference to Ruth and Naomi (MQ, XLIX, 35-36).¹⁵² However, this allusion to Ruth and Naomi in Poem XLIX is also negated by the poet: '*Nor* Ruth the kynd moabitiss' (MQ, XLIX, 35, my italics). Ultimately the widowed Ruth marries Bóaz – womanspeak is interrupted by the appearance of the male.¹⁵³ Thus the poet-speaker seeks to go beyond female homosociality and search for a language that transcends both male 'historeis' (MQ, XLIX, 38) and scriptural orthodoxy.

Indeed, the poet destabilizes 'mimétisme' by foregrounding the importance of a female spiritual-libidinal voice and agency that is partly 'hid' (MQ, XLIX, 9) from the language 'ama[n]g men' (MQ, XLIX, 68):

And as be hid vertew vnknawin
The adamant drawis yron y[air]till
Your courtes nature so hes drawin
My hairt yo[u]r[is] to continew still
Sa greit Ioy dois my spreit fulfill
contempling your perfectioun
Ye weild me holie ar yo[u]r will
and raviss my affectioun.

Your perles Vertew dois provoike
and loving kyndnes so dois move
My Mynd to freindschip reciproc [.]
(MQ, XLIX, 9-19)

Female 'vertew' (MQ, XLIX, 9) becomes a highly scopophilic issue for some sixteenth-century male writers. Juan Luis Vives, for instance, claims 'chastitie is the principal vertue of a woman [...] if she haue that, no man will *looke* for anye other'.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, female 'virtue' is literally clad onto the female body in Robert Henryson's poem, 'The Garmont of Gud Ladeis', which is transcribed in the Scottish miscellany, the Bannatyne

¹⁵⁰ Castle, 'Anonymous: "Poem XLIX"', p. 82; Farnsworth, 'Voicing Female Desire in "Poem XLIX"', p. 63; *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Ruth 1. 16, 17.

¹⁵¹ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Ruth 1. 18, 19.

¹⁵² See, for instance, John Donne's line 'none doe slacken, none can die', in 'The Good-morrow', in Donne, *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. by Gardner, pp. 70-71 (p. 71), line 21.

¹⁵³ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Ruth 4. 9, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, p. 91, my italics.

Manuscript (c. 1568). Henryson's speaker posits that a 'gud' lady donnes a 'sark' of 'chestetie', a 'gown' of 'gudliness', and a 'belt' of 'benignitie' about 'hir middill meit' that guards her pudenda and her physical virtue.¹⁵⁵ When female 'virtue' is hidden or ambiguous it is perceived as dissident, demonstrated by George Buchanan's description of Mary, Queen of Scots, who possesses a 'mere shadowy representation of virtue'.¹⁵⁶ The poet-speaker of Poem XLIX counters this male scopophilia: her madame's 'hid vertew vnknawin' (MQ, XLIX, 9) provokes ravishing 'affectioun' (MQ, XLIX, 16) and moves the internal female 'Mynd' (MQ, XLIX, 19) – female sensual-spiritual 'vertew' (MQ, XLIX, 9) exists between women in Poem XLIX and is not necessarily visible to the male eye.

As Jane Farnsworth and Sarah Dunnigan observe, the words 'raviss' and 'affectioun' (MQ, XLIX, 16) are commonly ascribed with sexual meanings in sixteenth-century writings.¹⁵⁷ However, in Poem XLIX it is not just the body that experiences 'Ioy' (MQ, XLIX, 13), but the 'spreit' (spirit, MQ, XLIX, 13): the poet amalgamates the physical with the metaphysical, evoking the spiritual-erotic language of Marsilio Ficino's *De amore*. As John Durkan and Irena Backus point out, Mary Stewart's confessor, René Benoist, had edited Ficino's works and was in Scotland at around 1561 as part of Mary's Catholic entourage.¹⁵⁸ The *De amore* may well have been circulating in sixteenth-century Scotland via Mary's court culture.¹⁵⁹ In the *De amore*, Ficino sanctifies the physical and spiritual beauty of the male: 'Love is most blessed because he is beautiful [...] the Soul [...] emanates into the body [...] from that body of a younger man it shines out through the eyes [...] anyone who is beautiful bewitches us with his youthful eyes'.¹⁶⁰ Similarly to Cicero, Ficino foregrounds the male subject position and privileges male-male spiritual-physical relations. Yet (as outlined above) in

¹⁵⁵ Robert Henryson, 'The Garmont of Gud Ladeis', in *The Bannatyne Manuscript Writtin in Tyme of Pest, 1568*, ed. by W. Tod Ritchie, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1928-1934), III, Poem CCXLV, pp. 252-54 (pp. 252-53), lines 1, 9, 10, 17, 21, 22.

¹⁵⁶ George Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, Book XVII, in *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart*, ed. and trans. by Gatherer, pp. 43-101 (p. 54). *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* was first published in 1582 (STC)

¹⁵⁷ Farnsworth, 'Voicing Female Desire in "Poem XLIX"', p. 62; Sarah M. Dunnigan, 'Feminising the Early Modern Erotic: Female-voiced Love Lyrics and Mary Queen of Scots', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. by Mapstone, pp. 441-66 (p. 448).

¹⁵⁸ Durkan, 'The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots', p. 87; Irena Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe: Lives of Reformers by Friends, Disciples and Foes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 76.

¹⁵⁹ For further evidence of the circulation of Ficino's writings in Renaissance Scotland see the Introduction of this study.

¹⁶⁰ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, pp. 83, 126, 127.

Poem XLIX this male-male dynamic is replaced by the glorification of female-female erotic spirituality.

Moreover, female sensual spirituality is implicitly denied to women in Ficino's *De amore*. Ficino tells us that there are two Venuses. The 'Heavenly' Venus is born of Uranus, without any mother.¹⁶¹ The 'Vulgar' Venus is born of Jupiter and Dione.¹⁶² Mothers for Ficino are associated with the 'Matter of the world', so the Vulgar Venus is thought to have 'commerce' with 'matter'.¹⁶³ The economical 'commerce' brings to mind the notion of monetary exchange and prostitution. The insinuation is understated, but clear: women cannot be sensual; they cannot associate with 'matter', otherwise they become 'vulgar' prostitutes. The 'madame' (MQ, XLIX, 4) in Poem XLIX, however, stands apart from this spirit/matter binary, as the poet-speaker creates a pro-woman muse, whose 'perfectioun' (MQ, XLIX, 14) is both physical *and* spiritual:

Sa greit Ioy dois my spreit fulfill
contempling your perfectioun
Ye weild me holie ar yo[u]r will
and raviss my affectioun.
(MQ, XLIX, 13-16)

The creation of a feminized 'vox videnda/audiena' in Poem XLIX can be aligned to the twentieth-century feminist notion of 'Women's Time'. For Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' is 'exploded, plural, fluid [...] this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities [...]. Such a feminism rejoins, on the one hand, the archaic (mythical) memory and, on the other hand, the cyclical or monumental temporality of marginal movements'.¹⁶⁴ Building on Kristeva's notion of a transcendental feminist 'Time', Valerie Traub argues that 'sequence, causation' and 'temporality' are left behind in Poem XLIX.¹⁶⁵ The female voicings of Poem XLIX, according to Traub, stay in the 'present moment of desire' and articulate a vision of love 'existing outside human time'.¹⁶⁶ This is delineated through the uninterrupted use of the present tense both in the first stanza of Poem XLIX and throughout the rest of the poem: 'wein [...] drawin [...] provoike' (MQ, XLIX, 4, 11, 17). It seems that external time does not exist, but gives

¹⁶¹ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 53.

¹⁶² Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 53.

¹⁶³ Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 53.

¹⁶⁴ Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', trans. by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 187-213 (pp. 194-95).

¹⁶⁵ Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 289.

¹⁶⁶ Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, p. 289.

way to an internal time. What Traub neglects to mention, however, is that the representation of earthly time in the Maitland Quarto has a specific aesthetic function. Joanna Martin and Katherine McClune have observed that the Maitland Quarto is a collection of verse that partly seeks to memorialize a dead father and head of household, Sir Richard Maitland.¹⁶⁷ According to Martin and McClune, the scribe of the Maitland Quarto preserves poems in a chronological fashion, in a sequence that reflects the lifetime of the father-poet, Sir Richard.¹⁶⁸ As indicated, this is evinced in the opening poem of the Quarto, ‘Ane Sonet to the Authour In cōmendatioun of his buik’. Yet in Poem XLIX this ‘Father Time’ is interrupted, giving way to an alternative arguably anti-patriarchal form of being and existing.

Nature and fortune in Poem XLIX are described as conspirators, who the lovers eventually defeat through their transcendent eternal love: ‘nature and fortoun doe co[n]iūre / [...] Sic constancie sall ws mantein / In perfyte amitie *for euer*’ (MQ, XLIX, 58, 71-72, my italics). The poet aligns the conspirators ‘nature’ and ‘fortoun’ (MQ, XLIX, 58) with Hymen, the goddess of marriage: ‘hymen also be our fo’ (MQ, XLIX, 59). As Sarah Dunnigan argues, the poet-speaker’s love in Poem XLIX is debarred by nature, fortune and Hymen because it is a desire that cannot publicly be proclaimed through the institution of marriage.¹⁶⁹ However, the couple possess an alternative marital bond, as ‘not bot deid sall ws divorce’ (MQ, XLIX, 64): it is a marriage that exists outside of patriarchal ceremony; vows exchanged between women in a ‘hid [...] vnknawin’ (MQ, LXIX, 9) space separate from the external world ‘ama[n]g men’ (MQ, XLIX, 68).

‘What does it matter who is speaking[?]’, Samuel Beckett famously asks.¹⁷⁰ I have shown that in sixteenth-century verse miscellany culture, the speaking voice is essential to *auctoritas*: writing is recognized through voice and the ‘metaphysics of presence’, as opposed to explicitly named authorship.¹⁷¹ This play with voice can become a dissident linguistic tool, especially for daughters attempting to construct an aesthetic away from the dominant *auctoritas principis*: the Maitland Quarto provides essential evidence for this. The eighteenth-century editor, John Pinkerton, describes Marie Maitland as a dutiful ‘daughter writing from the diction of the venerable old bard

¹⁶⁷ Martin and McClune, ‘The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context’, p. 252.

¹⁶⁸ Martin and McClune, ‘The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context’, p. 253.

¹⁶⁹ Dunnigan, ‘Feminising the Early Modern Erotic’, p. 449.

¹⁷⁰ Samuel Beckett cited by Foucault, ‘What Is an Author?’, p. 101.

¹⁷¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 22.

[Sir Richard]’.¹⁷² But daughters can and do write back. Pinkerton’s paradigm of the perfect father-daughter literary collaboration is put under pressure once we analyse the divergent forms of authorship that exist in the Maitland Quarto. Most prominently in this manuscript we find a ‘hid [...] vnknawin’ (MQ, LXIX, 9) community of women that covertly resists patriarchal structures and strictures. As Jeffrey Masten argues, James VI and I genders ‘authorship’ by identifying it with the father in the ‘Authorized Version’ of the Bible.¹⁷³ But James does this in reaction to the dangerous *auctoritas* of his mother, Mary Stewart. The case of Mary, Queen of Scots exhibits how definitions of *auctoritas* were in flux in the sixteenth century and I have shown how certain members of the Maitland circle may have been manipulating this shifting dynamic to authorize themselves. But is the Maitland Quarto simply circulating in a closed coterie? In the late seventeenth century Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) acquires the Maitland manuscripts from Sir Richard’s great-grandson, John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682), which prompts the question: just how far is the Maitland Quarto disseminated amongst other coterie on the Renaissance British Isles?¹⁷⁴ It is to this issue that I now turn.

¹⁷² John Pinkerton, ‘Preface’, in *The Maitland Folio*, ed. by Craigie, II, pp. 13-26 (p. 16).

¹⁷³ Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, pp. 66, 73.

¹⁷⁴ Pepys acquires the Maitland Folio and Quarto from the sale of the Duke of Lauderdale’s books. See Martin and McClune, ‘The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context’, pp. 238-39.

Chapter 2

‘[T]wo nations, being both [...] one Ile of *Britaine*’:¹ The Union of Crowns and the Metaphysics of a Female Tradition

‘Sic constancie sall ws mantein / In perfyte amitie for euer.’
(Marie Maitland [?], MQ, XLIX, 71-72)

‘[I]t seems unlikely that one shall ever have a precise idea of the extent to which sixteenth-century manuscript collections of Middle Scots verse continued to be consulted during the [...] seventeenth century, such consultation certainly did occur, and very possibly with regularity.’

(A. A. MacDonald)²

‘[M]y silence speaketh [...]’
(Katherine Parr)³

In her recent provocative article, ‘Still Kissing the Rod? Whither Next?’, Jane Stevenson argues that women writers in the Renaissance period did not function in linguistic isolation, but worked in a female international republic of letters.⁴ A female *Respublica litterarum* can be defined as an international community of women writers who are reading and responding to one another both explicitly and implicitly. This chapter tests Stevenson’s theory within the context of post-1603 ‘Britain’. In 1603, King James becomes James VI and I of Scotland and England and as Kate Chedgzoy points out, ‘textual and personal border-crossings’ were by no means unique in this post-1603 world of ‘increasing interaction between the English and Scottish elite’.⁵ This chapter proposes that women writers contributed to this interaction and explores this by examining the ‘intertextuality’ between the Maitland Quarto, the Scots poet Elizabeth Melville’s poem, *Ane Godlie Dreame* (1603), and the London-based writer Aemilia Lanyer’s volume of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611). I connect Maitland, Melville and Lanyer through their use of the female ‘metaphysical’ meditative voice.

¹ James Stuart, *Basilicon Doron* (1599), in *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. by Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-61 (p. 59).

² A. A. MacDonald, ‘Sir Richard Maitland and William Dunbar: Textual Symbiosis and Poetic Individuality’, in *William Dunbar, ‘The Nobill Poyet’: Essays in Honour of Priscilla Bawcutt*, ed. by Sally Mapstone (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001), pp. 134-49 (pp. 136-37).

³ Katherine Parr, *Prayers or Medytacions* (1547, 1st pub. 1545), in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works: Part 1, Printed Writings, 1500-1640, Vol. 3: Katherine Parr*, selected and introduced by Janel Mueller, ed. by Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), sig. 8r.

⁴ Stevenson, ‘Still Kissing the Rod? Whither Next?’, p. 290.

⁵ Kate Chedgzoy, *Women’s Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 98.

The Maitlands of Lethington were a Lowland Scottish family with border-crossing connections. In 1559 Sir Richard Maitland was made commissioner to Elizabeth I, his role to settle disputes on the English and Scottish borders.⁶ As Secretary of State to Mary, Queen of Scots, William Maitland travelled to both the French and English courts and maintained a relationship with William Cecil (at whose London house he stayed).⁷ Sir Richard's third son, Thomas Maitland, had humanist interests and travelled to both France and north Italy, where he died in 1572.⁸ John Maitland was chief minister to James VI and was a contributor to Alexander Neville's published volume of Latin verse commemorating the death of Sir Philip Sidney, *Academiae Cantabrigiensis Lachrymae Tumulo Nobilissimi Equitis, D. Philippi Sidneii Sacratae* (1587).⁹ In 1588 John Maitland met the English ambassador to Scotland, Sir Philip Sidney's brother, Robert Sidney.¹⁰ This suggests that the Maitland literary circle may have been known to its English counterpart, the Sidney circle.¹¹ Additionally, the English poet-musicians, Thomas Hudson (*d.* in or before 1605) and Robert Hudson (*d.* 1596), both wrote epitaphs on Sir Richard Maitland's death, which are transcribed in the Maitland Quarto (MQ, XC, XCI). The Hudsons held various positions at the Scottish court and were 'frequently employed on missions to England'.¹² The Maitlands' links to sixteenth-century English manuscript culture are revealed by some of the poems collected in the Maitland Folio and Quarto, a number of which had an 'English circulation or provenance'.¹³ For instance, the Maitland Folio contains the anti-woman punctuation piece, 'All wemeine Ar guid noblle and excellent', which also exists in the English miscellanies, the Devonshire Manuscript (*c.* 1530-1540) and the Arundel Harington Manuscript (*c.* 1550).¹⁴

⁶ Spiller, 'Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586)', *ODNB*.

⁷ Loughlin, 'Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573)', *ODNB*; Guy, *My Heart is My Own*, p. 128.

⁸ Wm. S. McKechnie, 'Thomas Maitland', *Scottish Historical Review*, 4 (1907), 274-93.

⁹ Herman, 'Authorship and the Royal "I": King James VI/I and the Politics of Monarchic Verse', p. 1505.

¹⁰ Maurice Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane and the Foundation of Stewart Despotism in Scotland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 172.

¹¹ For the Sidney circle's interest in Scottish literature, see James E. Phillips, 'George Buchanan and the Sidney Circle', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 12 (1948), 23-55. Theo van Heijnsbergen has recently drawn attention to the similarities and connections between the Maitlands and the Sidneys, Theo van Heijnsbergen, 'Coteries, Commendatory Verse and Jacobean Poetics: The Textual Community of James VI', conference paper delivered at 'Manuscript Identities and the Transmission of Texts in the English Renaissance', University of Sheffield, Sheffield, 25 May 2012.

¹² Henry W. Meikle, 'Introduction', in *The Works of William Fowler*, ed. by Meikle and others, III, pp. ix-xlii (p. xix).

¹³ Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 242.

¹⁴ 'All wemeine Ar guid noblle and excellent', in *The Maitland Folio*, ed. by Craigie, Poem CLXXXVI, p. 433; MS 2553, p. 356; Devonshire Manuscript, London, British Library MS Additional 17492, fol. 18v;

Extant scribal evidence from the seventeenth century indicates that the Maitland family manuscripts were enjoying circulation in Lowland Scotland. This is evinced through the Reidpeth Manuscript (c. 1622-1623), which is a partial transcription of the Maitland Folio and contains poems by William Dunbar, Sir Richard Maitland and others.¹⁵ The Reidpeth Manuscript's copyist was John Reidpeth, who has recently been identified as being connected to the King's Signet.¹⁶ The Reidpeth Manuscript was probably compiled for Master Christopher Cockburn of Clerkington, a servitor of John Maitland, Earl of Lauderdale.¹⁷ Sir Richard's daughter, Helen Maitland, married Sir John Cockburn of Clerkington in 1560.¹⁸ Helen Maitland's name ('helyne m.') appears on page 256 of the Maitland Folio and it may have been through her that the Maitland Folio came to the attention of the commissioner of the Reidpeth Manuscript.¹⁹ This indicates that the Maitland literary circle was not restricted to Lethington, but had regional links within East Lothian. Moreover, it is likely that the transmission of the Maitland family manuscripts was initiated in part by women such as Helen Maitland.

In *circa* 1620, the Scottish poet, William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649), obtained a partial transcription of the Maitland Quarto.²⁰ Drummond's extant copy of the Maitland Quarto contains selected poems by Sir Richard Maitland.²¹ Drummond could have acquired access to the Maitland Quarto through his friend, the poet, George Lauder (*fl.* 1622-1677), son of Marie Maitland. In 1650 Lauder writes a memorial poem commemorating his 'honoured friend', William Drummond of

The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry, ed. by Ruth Hughey, 2 vols (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1960), I, p. 185, II, pp. 208-11; Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 248; Priscilla Bawcutt, 'Manuscript Miscellanies in Scotland from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. by Mapstone, pp. 189-210 (p. 201).

¹⁵ Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS L1. 5. 10. For the contents of the Reidpeth Manuscript, see W. A. Craigie, 'The Reidpeth Manuscript', in *The Maitland Folio*, II, pp. 7-10 (pp. 7-9).

¹⁶ Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 238; Sally Mapstone, 'Introduction: Older Scots and the Sixteenth Century', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. by Mapstone, pp. 175-88 (p. 181).

¹⁷ Bawcutt, 'Manuscript Miscellanies in Scotland', p. 197; Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 238.

¹⁸ Bawcutt, 'Manuscript Miscellanies in Scotland', p. 197; Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 238; Sir Robert Douglas, *The Scots Peerage*, ed. by Sir J. B. Paul, 9 vols (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1904-1914), V, p. 298.

¹⁹ MS 2553, p. 256; Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 238.

²⁰ Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 239; *The Library of Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. by MacDonald, p. 226, Item 1372.

²¹ Drummond's copy of the Maitland Quarto is held in Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, MS De. 3. 71.

Hawthornden, which points to the literary kinship between Lauder and Drummond.²² Of course Drummond had border-crossing connections. He kept up a correspondence with Ben Jonson, and Jonson himself visited Drummond in Scotland in 1619.²³ As John Kerrigan points out, Ben Jonson was interested in his own Scottish-border ancestors and moved into Scottish households in London.²⁴ Whether or not Ben Jonson obtained a copy of the Maitland Quarto via his associate, Drummond, is yet to be uncovered.²⁵

Evidence from the later seventeenth century survives to suggest the circulation of the Maitland family manuscripts through the diarist and antiquarian, Samuel Pepys (1633-1703). As indicated, the Maitland manuscripts physically reach England in the seventeenth century via Sir Richard's great-grandson, John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682). Lauderdale was an associate of Samuel Pepys and had a house in north London which Pepys visited.²⁶ As Joanna Martin and Katherine McClune observe, Pepys acquired the Maitland manuscripts from the sale of Lauderdale's books in 1692.²⁷ But why would Pepys have been specifically interested in Scottish manuscripts? One reason is because in 1667 he discovers his own Scots heritage.²⁸ Roger Pepys tells Samuel Pepys that 'we did certainly come out of Scotland'.²⁹ Is this why Pepys is interested in Scottish literature and history? As Kate Loveman points out, members of the seventeenth-century English elite, such as Lord and Lady Hinchinbrooke, visited Pepys's library and consulted his books.³⁰ Pepys's book collection 'served a range of evolving social functions and [acted] as a locus for [seventeenth-century] sociability'.³¹ Thus the Maitland family manuscripts may have

²² George Lauder, 'Damon, or, A pastoral elegy on the death of his honoured friend, William Drummond of Hawthornden', in William Drummond of Hawthornden, *Poems* (Edinburgh, 1711), cited by T. W. Bayne, rev. Gerard Carruthers, 'Lauder, George (fl. 1622-1677), poet', *ODNB* [accessed 19 June 2012].

²³ The extant correspondence between Drummond and Jonson is printed in *Ben Jonson*, ed. by C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), I, pp. 204-10.

²⁴ John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History and Politics, 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 11.

²⁵ Ben Jonson's interest in Scottish literature and culture is currently being researched by James Loxley, Julie Sanders and Anna Groundwater. Loxley, Sanders and Groundwater are working on an annotated edition of a newly discovered manuscript account of Ben Jonson's celebrated walk from London to Scotland in 1618 (forthcoming, 2014).

²⁶ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. by Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: Bell, 1970-1983), VII, p. 224.

²⁷ Martin and McClune, 'The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context', p. 239.

²⁸ Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, VIII, p. 261.

²⁹ Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, VIII, p. 261.

³⁰ Kate Loveman, 'Books and Sociability: The Case of Pepys's Library', *Review of English Studies*, 61 (2010), 214-33 (p. 219).

³¹ Loveman, 'Books and Sociability', p. 214.

been circulating in seventeenth-century literary culture through Pepys and his connection to the Duke of Lauderdale.

None of the female-voiced lyrics from the Maitland Quarto (such as Poem XLIX) have been found in other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish and English manuscripts. This does not mean to suggest, however, that these female-voiced lyrics were not circulating. The material aspects of the Maitland Quarto's composition indicate that it was designed for circulation in its entirety. Unlike the Maitland Folio, the Maitland Quarto does not contain any informal marginalia or doodles, but is a fair presentation copy of poems produced by the Maitland circle. Indeed, the use of presentation hands throughout the Quarto points to an anticipated scribal publication.³² Scribal publication would explain the need for explicit anonymity for certain poems: a woman writer like Marie Maitland might not want her name to be actively circulated beyond her immediate coterie.

The outward-looking aesthetic of the Maitland Quarto is (in part) articulated through the female 'making' principle and this is exhibited in the lyric, 'To your self':

If sapho saige for saphic songe so sueit
[...]
amids the gods dois duell that dame devyne.

And now of lait that lustie ladie rair
Olimpia o lampe of latine land
[...]

A thrid o Maistres Marie maik I pray
[...]
for famous is your fleing fame
[...]

This buik then bear & beat your branis therin
a plesant poet perfyte sall ye be
& lytill labour lost the laurell Win
adorn'd with cumlie croun of poesie.

(MQ, LXXXV, 1, 4-6, 9, 11, 13-16)

As discussed in Chapter 1, this poem, 'To your self', points to a female 'making' tradition. It also appeals to a European female *Respublica litterarum*: the Greek writings of Sappho and the Greek and Latin works of the sixteenth-century Italian polymath, Olympia Morata. As Sappho declares in her fragment, 'To Aphrodite', 'thou hast heard

³² The term 'scribal publication' stems from Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

and marked my voice afar', she prophetically predicts that her voice will be heard beyond geographical boundaries.³³ The poet in 'To your Self' is alluding to this female literary polyglottal voice and is implicitly appealing to other female literary polyglottal voices. Furthermore, '[t]his buik', the Maitland Quarto, 'bear[s]' (MQ, LXXXV, 13) Marie's name, and 'bear' has a number of connotations including to sustain, to bring forth and to have written or inscribed upon (*OED*). 'This buik' (MQ, LXXXV, 13), the Maitland Quarto, will sustain and bring forth Marie Maitland's literary reputation. Moreover, the term 'Maistres Marie' (MQ, LXXXV, 9) recalls and feminizes the role of the 'maister poet' of James VI's court, Alexander Montgomerie (*d.* 1598). By describing Marie Maitland as a 'Maistres' and 'poet' (MQ, LXXXV, 9-14), the speaker of 'To your self' intimates that Marie has a public literary status. Indeed, Matthew McDiarmid posits that Marie Maitland may be the anonymous female poet whom the Scots writer, John Stewart of Baldynneis (*c.*1545-*c.*1605), praises in his manuscript book of poems (composed in *c.* 1585-1588):

Thair is No Muse your ladischip [Marie Maitland?] misknaws,
Bot honors yow as Patrone principall,
The sisters thrie your famus fame furthblaws,
Sibilla sayis ye salbe speciall.³⁴

Stewart's above-quoted line, 'your [Marie Maitland's?] famus fame furthblaws', is reminiscent of the Maitland Quarto lyric, 'To your self': 'for famous is your [Marie Maitland's] fleing fame' (MQ, LXXXV, 11).³⁵ Moreover, Stewart's phrase, 'Sibilla sayis ye salbe speciall', recalls Poem LXIX from the Maitland Quarto, where Marie Maitland is figured as a Hermetic Sibyl, distributing esoteric knowledge: 'Marie I thoct in this wod did appeir / mait land and gold scho gave aboūndantlie' (MQ, LXIX, 41-42).³⁶ Stewart's above-cited poem provides textual evidence for the circulation of Marie Maitland's 'voice' and literary reputation in sixteenth-century Scottish manuscript culture.

But just how far did the Maitland Quarto lyric, 'To your self', travel? As indicated, members of the Maitland circle travelled throughout Scotland, France, England and Italy in the sixteenth century. Within this context, the statement, 'famous is

³³ Sappho, 'To Aphrodite', in *Lyra Graeca*, I, p. 183.

³⁴ Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'John Stewart of Baldynneis', *Scottish Historical Review*, 29 (1950), 52-63 (pp. 59-60); John Stewart of Baldynneis, 'ANE ANSUEIR TO THE LETTER OF ANE HONORABILL LADIE', *Poems of John Stewart of Baldynneis*, ed. by Thomas Crockett, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1913), II, pp. 141-42 (p. 142).

³⁵ Stewart, 'ANE ANSUEIR', p. 142.

³⁶ Stewart, 'ANE ANSUEIR', p. 142.

your [Marie Matiland's] fleing fame' (MQ, LXXXV, 11), evokes a potential European literary reputation. As the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* tells us, 'fleing' meant 'travelling fast' (DSL), hence Marie's name may be travelling beyond the borders of Lowland Scotland.

In 1603, James VI/I moved down to London and a group of Scottish poets and scribes followed him, including William Fowler (1560/61-1612), Secretary to Queen Anne and uncle of William Drummond of Hawthornden; Alexander Craig (1567?-1627); Sir Robert Ayton (1570-1638); Esther Inglis and Bartholomew Kello.³⁷ These Scottish writers published and scribally circulated their writings in England. For instance, *The Poeticall Essays of Alexander Craige, Scotobritane* was published in London in 1604 and was followed by *The Amorose Songes, Sonets, and Elegies of M. Alexander Craige, Scoto-Britaine*, which was printed in London in 1606. The Scottish manuscript poet, William Fowler, sent anagrammatic love poems to Lady Arbella Stuart (1575-1615).³⁸ The Franco-Scottish calligrapher, Esther Inglis, searched for patronage in England and sent manuscripts and poems to members of the English elite, including the Countess of Bedford and Robert, Baron Sidney.³⁹

Renaissance Scottish poets did not necessarily have to be present in James VI/I's English court to have their writings disseminated. For example, James VI/I may have brought with him to England a manuscript copy of the poetry of the Scots writer, John Stewart of Baldynneis. In the extant manuscript copy of John Stewart's poetry is written in what appears to be an eighteenth-century hand, the following statement: 'King James ye first Brought this Booke with him out of Scotland'.⁴⁰ Sarah Dunnigan has argued that the poetry of John Stewart of Baldynneis could have been a 'metonymi[c]' textual 'presence at the English Jacobean court'.⁴¹ What I would like to suggest here is that Marie Maitland is a 'metonymic' presence both in the Maitland Quarto and within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century polyglottal scribal culture.

³⁷ Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, p. 148; Yeo, 'Inglis [married name Kello], Esther (1570/71-1624), calligrapher', ODNB.

³⁸ William Fowler, 'VERSES. To the true, Ho:^{ble}, most vertuous, and onlie = deseruing La: of Highest titles: The La: Arbella = Steward'; 'TO MY ONLY L. ARB.', in *The Works of William Fowler*, ed. by Meikle and others, III, pp. 317-19.

³⁹ Esther Inglis, *A New Yeers Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lord my Lord Sidnay* (1606); *Une Estreine pour tresillustre et vertueuse Dame la Contesse de Bedford* (1606), cited in Scott-Elliot and Yeo, 'Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis (1571-1624): A Catalogue', pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 19. 2. 6, cited by Dunnigan, *Eros and Love*, p. 107.

⁴¹ Dunnigan, *Eros and Love*, p. 107.

The post-structuralist critic, Julia Kristeva, posits that texts are constructed as a ‘mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another [...] poetic language is [...] an infinity of pairings and combinations’.⁴² According to Kristeva, the task of the literary critic is to discover ‘different modalities of word-joining’ within the ‘dialogical space of texts’.⁴³ She describes this theoretical stance as ‘metaphysical’ because she is examining the ‘hidden dialogue’ that exists between and beyond the explicit physical words on the page.⁴⁴ Indeed, this notion of ‘silences’ or ‘metalanguage’ has particular resonance in the Renaissance, at a time where silences speak: that which is unwritten and unstated has a certain validity.⁴⁵ This is exhibited by the fifteenth-century Neoplatonist, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who writes:

Aristotle said that his books of *Metaphysics*, which treat of divine things, are published and not published. [...] Origen asserts that Jesus Christ the master of life revealed many things to his disciples which they did not want to write down, lest they become common to the vulgar. Dionysius the Areopagite especially confirms this, who says that the more secret mysteries were handed down by the founders of our religion [...], from soul to soul, without writing, by means of words passing down. [...] Esdras proclaimed at the beginning in a clear voice that in these books [of Cabala] was rightly the heart of understanding, that is, an ineffable theology of supersubstantial deity, the fountain of wisdom, that is, an exact metaphysics of intelligible angels and forms [...]⁴⁶

Similarly to Kristeva, Pico in the above-quoted extract, aligns the construction of a secret language (a known and unknown discourse) with the ‘metaphysical’.⁴⁷

Of course, Renaissance women were instructed by male conduct-book writers to paradoxically ‘boast of silence’ and this is manipulated by Katherine Parr as she states, ‘my silence speaketh’.⁴⁸ Parr’s prayers and meditations take the form of an inner dialogue with God and Christ: a speech that transcends physical utterance. This is precisely what Aemilia Lanyer draws upon in her representation of Christ in *Salve Deus*

⁴² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp. 66, 69. Kristeva here cites and comments on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin.

⁴³ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, pp. ix, 73.

⁴⁵ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man* (1496), trans. by Charles Glenn Wallis, with an Introduction by Paul J. W. Miller (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998, 1st pub. 1965), pp. 30-31.

⁴⁷ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. ix.

⁴⁸ John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Household Government* (1612, 1st pub. 1598), cited in Lorna Hutson, ‘The Housewife and the Humanists’, in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 82-105 (p. 83); Katherine Parr, *Prayers or Medytacions*, sig. 8r.

Rex Judæorum: ‘with none [of his persecutors] he [Christ] holdes Debate, / [...] No answere would his holy wisdome make’ (SDRJ,⁴⁹ 603, 694). Christ does not physically speak in the events leading up to the Passion, but Lanyer’s readers are invited to hear his voice through the inner ear or ‘internall senses’.⁵⁰

This notion of speaking silences can have particular relevance in a secular context. A ‘silent language’ exists in the female *Respublica litterarum*. We can trace echoes of women’s writing in other women’s writing without explicit referencing. Female intellectual community requires a ‘silent language’ because it is open to satiric attack by men. This is exhibited in a much-cited scene from Jonson’s play, *Epicoene* (1609-1610). Truewit warns Morose that his future wife may:

live with her she-friend or cousin at [...] college, that can instruct her in all the mysteries of writing letters [...]; be a stateswoman, know all the news [...] so she may censure poets and authors and styles, and compare ’em, Daniel with Spenser, Jonson [...] and so forth; [...] be thought cunning in controversies or the very knots of divinity, [...] have often in her mouth [...] mathematics [...] religion [...] bawdry [...].⁵¹

Truewit foregrounds a male concern with the female *Respublica litterarum*. He fears the separatist female community that celebrates female speech, learning, knowledge and the critique of men’s writing. Women have to construct a silent language of their own to counter this satiric demarcation of female intellectual kinship. Within this context, is there evidence for silent allusions to Marie Maitland’s voice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

One such example comes from the English writer, Elizabeth Cary (1585-1639). Cary is linked to Lowland Scotland in three ways. Her husband is made Viscount Falkland in the Scottish peerage in 1620.⁵² Her eldest daughter, Katherine, marries James, 2nd Earl of Home (contract dated at Edinburgh, 10 August 1622).⁵³ Katherine Cary Home’s sister-in-law is Lady Anne Home.⁵⁴ The Homes seem to be connected to

⁴⁹ Aemilia Lanyer, *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, ed. by Susanne Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). This edition has been used throughout this study and is abbreviated as *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*. From henceforth, Lanyer’s title poem, ‘Salve Deus Rex Judæorum’, has been abbreviated as SDRJ and is proceeded by the line reference.

⁵⁰ Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, trans. by T. B., 2 vols (London, 1594, 1st pub. 1586), II, p. 63.

⁵¹ Ben Jonson, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, ed. by R. V. Holdsworth (London: A & C Black, 1996, 1st pub. 1979), II. 2. 98-119.

⁵² Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, ‘Cary [*née* Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585-1639), *writer and translator*’, *ODNB* [accessed 17 March 2010].

⁵³ *The Scots Peerage*, IV, p. 467.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, *Life and Letters*, ed. by Heather Wolfe (Cambridge: RTM, 2001), Note 199, p. 368.

the seventeenth-century branch of the Maitlands, as Lady Anne Home eventually becomes Lady Maitland through her marriage to John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale in 1632.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Elizabeth Cary is likely to have been tutored by the writer, Michael Drayton (1563-1631), who praises her ability as a linguist in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597).⁵⁶ Drayton kept up a friendship and correspondence with the Scottish poets, William Alexander (1577-1640) and William Drummond of Hawthornden.⁵⁷ Could Elizabeth Cary therefore have come across the Maitland Quarto through one of these Scottish links? One Kristevan silent allusion to Marie Maitland can be found in Elizabeth Cary's dedicatory sonnet to her sister-in-law, also named Elizabeth Cary.⁵⁸

To Diana's Earthly Deputess, and my
worthy sister, Mistress Elizabeth Cary

When cheerful Phoebus his full course hath run,
His sister's fainter beams our hearts doth cheer;
So your fair brother is to me the sun,
And you his sister as my moon appear.
You are my next beloved, my second friend,
For when my Phoebus' absence makes it night,
Whilst to th' Antipodes his beams do bend,
From you my Phoebe, shines my second light.
He like to Sol, clear-sighted, constant, free,
You Luna-like, unspotted, chaste, divine;
He shone on Sicily, you destined be
T'illumine the now obscured Palestine.
My first was consecrated to Apollo,
My second to Diana now shall follow.
E. C.⁵⁹

The above-quoted sonnet triangulates female-female desire through the absent male body: 'You are my next beloved, my second friend, / For when my Phoebus' absence

⁵⁵ Ronald Hutton, 'Maitland, John, duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682), *politician*', *ODNB* [accessed 17 March 2010].

⁵⁶ Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary [*née* Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585-1639), *writer and translator*', *ODNB*.

⁵⁷ Morna R. Fleming, "'The End of an Auld Sang?'" Scottish Poetry of the English Reign of James VI and I', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. by Mapstone, pp. 560-73 (Note 5, p. 561). Drayton's friendship with Alexander is described by Bernard H. Newdigate. Newdigate also prints a series of letters between Drayton and Drummond, Bernard H. Newdigate *Michael Drayton and his Circle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1941), pp. 95-96, 179-88.

⁵⁸ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 73.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Cary, 'To Diana's Earthly Deputess, and my worthy sister, Mistress Elizabeth Cary', in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), p. 49. This sonnet is published in 1613 in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, The Faire Queene of Iewry* (London, 1613).

makes it night, / [...] From you my Phoebe, shines my second light'.⁶⁰ As Laurie Shannon observes, the reference here to the goddess of chastity and virginity, Diana, is a 'matrix enabling female association'.⁶¹ Not only is one 'E. C.' Diana's 'Earthly Deputess', but the other 'E. C.' is 'consecrating her work to Diana'.⁶² Cary is clearly drawing upon Neoplatonic ideas of the friend as a 'second self', literally figured here through the mirroring of names.⁶³ But what is Elizabeth Cary's source? The sacred lunar light of Phoebe/Diana and its links to female-female love had been foregrounded in the Maitland Quarto ('And phoebe all the starris licht / Yo[u]r splendo[u]r so madame I wein'; 'diana ladye bricht / with nymphes of chastetie / Graunt me your favours' [MQ, XLIX, 3-4; LXXXVI, 4-7]) and this is echoed by Cary in her sonnet: 'You Luna-like, unspotted, chaste, divine'.⁶⁴ Is Cary consciously, but silently aware of the female *Respublica litterarum* posited in the Maitland Quarto?

References to the 'woman in the moon' abound throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Yet in some male writings the creative matrix associated with the woman in the moon is imbued with a suspicious and paradoxical hermeneutic. This is illustrated in William Basse's poem, 'Urania: The Woman in the Moone' (c. 1610). Basse's speaker tells us that in the moon we find no man, no Endymion, but a woman, Urania.⁶⁵ Urania originates from the shores of Ethiopia and is described as 'amorous, [...] subtile, and [...] fayre'.⁶⁶ She ensnares Jove's two male messengers to reach the heavens:

she one's eyes had hidden in her lap,
[...]
with a bayte the other she beguiles,
Ensnareing him that comes within her hands,
And angleing him that furthest off her stands.⁶⁷

She is thus a Siren-like Duessa, a seductress, foreign, invading, dangerous and compelling, associated with 'double dealing': 'She seldom sells a momentary pleasure /

⁶⁰ Cary, 'To Diana's Earthly Deputess', p. 49

⁶¹ Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 86.

⁶² Cary, 'To Diana's Earthly Deputess', p. 49; Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, p. 86.

⁶³ Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, I, p. 131.

⁶⁴ Cary, 'To Diana's Earthly Deputess', p. 49

⁶⁵ William Basse, 'Urania: The Woman in the Moone in Foure Cantoes, or Quarters', in *The Pastorals and Other Workes of William Basse*, ed. by John Payne Collier (London: Thomas Richards, 1870), pp. 75-110 (Canto I, Stanza 3, p. 79).

⁶⁶ Basse, 'Urania', Canto II, Stanza 6, p. 84.

⁶⁷ Basse, 'Urania', Canto II, Stanza 19, p. 87.

But for a bargain of some speciall treasure'.⁶⁸ To punish her and contain her, Jove places her in the 'enclosure' of the 'Moone'.⁶⁹ Yet Basse's narrator censures the 'slanderous and uncivill' men who entrap Urania: 'Where from her [Urania's] influence succeeds some ill / [...] tis their [men's] faults, and not her will'.⁷⁰ Indeed, Urania is a personification of the female mistress of the mind that exists within the male creative matrix: 'this Dame [Urania] [...] represents this minde'.⁷¹ Although Urania possesses a Siren-like 'strangenes' and 'dange[r]', she is simultaneously endowed with a protean creative aspect, providing 'precious balme[s] to cure the wounds of thought'.⁷²

What happens when Basse's Urania 'raignes o're' earthly 'women'?⁷³ Can she inspire female literary creativity in the way that she inspires Basse's speaker? According to Basse's narrator, Urania fills earthly women with 'fancies, frenzies, lunacyes, [...] strange / Feares [...] / [...] fugacy, and change'.⁷⁴ Simultaneously she endows women with 'patience, silence, modestie, sobrietie, / Chastitie, beauty, bounty, pittie, pietie'.⁷⁵ Earthly women in this poem seem to be subject to continual change: a chaste virgin can easily metamorphose into a frenzied seductress. Moreover, female community is regarded with scepticism in the poem. Mercury tells Cynthia (the Goddess of the Moon): 'thou [...] shalt have a mate, / [...] This Woman here [Urania] shall beare thee companie'.⁷⁶ Yet Cynthia responds by declaring 'Woman to woman yeilds contentment small'.⁷⁷ Female-female relations are defined by rivalry rather than solidarity. Both Cary and Maitland, however, offer an alternative, arguably dissident configuration of female literary community through the woman in the moon. The woman in the moon for Cary and Maitland is a positivist signifier for a female creative tradition that tacitly questions patriarchal representations of female kinship. The lunar woman points to an astral female poetic tradition and functions as a potential code for the female *Respublica litterarum* to which both Cary and Maitland are responsive to.

The outward-looking polyglottal flavour of the Maitland Quarto is exhibited in the lyric, 'Ane Elagie translatit out of frenche in English meter [by] G. H.', which is

⁶⁸ Basse, 'Urania', Canto II, Stanza 23, p. 88; Stanza 31, p. 90.

⁶⁹ Basse, 'Urania', Canto III, Stanza 27, p. 99.

⁷⁰ Basse, 'Urania', Canto I, Stanza 1, p. 79; 'The Story Morallized', p. 110.

⁷¹ Basse, 'Urania', Canto III, Stanza 2, p. 94.

⁷² Basse, 'Urania', Canto III, Stanza 10, p. 95, Stanza 22, p. 98; Canto II, Stanza 10, p. 85.

⁷³ Basse, 'Urania', Canto IV, Stanza 27, p. 106.

⁷⁴ Basse, 'Urania', Canto IV, Stanza 27, p. 105.

⁷⁵ Basse, 'Urania', Canto IV, Stanza 28, p. 106.

⁷⁶ Basse, 'Urania', Canto IV, Stanza 6, p. 101.

⁷⁷ Basse, 'Urania', Canto IV, Stanza 11, p. 102.

transcribed in the Quarto in italic hand.⁷⁸ The title of this lyric itself points to a polyglottal culture: it is a French translation, written in Scots, following an 'English meter' of decasyllabic rhyming couplets. As Sarah Dunningan observes, the 'frenche' text alluded to is the twentieth elegy of Clément Marot's *La Suite de l'Adolescence Clementine* (1533) in which a woman mourns the end of her marriage.⁷⁹ The identity of 'G. H.' is yet to be ascertained. I would like to propose here that one potential candidate for 'G. H.' is the Lowland Scotswoman, Grizel Hay of Yester (born after 1560). Grizel Hay was the daughter of William Hay, fifth Lord Hay of Yester (1537/8-1586), who had a sasine of the lands of Lethington.⁸⁰ The Maitlands may have been connected to the Hays of Yester in a literary/textual capacity. This is evinced through John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale, who owned an English religious miscellany that seems in the late fifteenth century to have belonged to the Hays of Yester.⁸¹ In 1576 a marriage contract was arranged by the Hays of Yester and the Homes of Heuch for Grizel Hay and Robert Home.⁸² This marriage contract was annulled in 1585.⁸³ It is the end of an arranged marriage that the speaker of the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', mourns, as she censures both her husband's 'stonie hart' (MQ, LXVI, 63) and the 'negligence' (MQ, LXVI, 123) of her parents:

for faithfull treuth & for ane honest pairt
 I get dissait & doubilnes of hairt
 for my chaist love & cheirfull coûtenance
 I get againe bot anger & greifance
 his [the husband's] stonie hart to fauld can not be brocht
 quhome I With all humilitie haue socht
 [...]
 quhomto sall I my cruell paine lament
 to pleinyie to my parentis is bot Vaine
 that quhilk is done can not be brocht againe
 Quhen that ye mater wes not past remeid
 O god give then thay had taine better heid
 Alace quhair then wes thair experience
 I prayis thair mynd bot curs thair negligence
 quhy wald thay not at leist seik my consent [.]

⁷⁸ MS 1408, fols 102v-105r.

⁷⁹ Dunningan, 'Female-voiced Love Lyrics and Mary Queen of Scots', p. 443.

⁸⁰ *The Scots Peerage*, VIII, pp. 441, 442.

⁸¹ See Priscilla Bawcutt, 'The Earliest Texts of Dunbar', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays Celebrating the Publication of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, ed. by Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 183-98 (Note 33, p. 191). This manuscript of religious verse is now held in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, MS 1584.

⁸² *The Scots Peerage*, VIII, p. 442; Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Ref. GD110/169. I am grateful to Diane Baptie for transcribing this marriage contract for me.

⁸³ *The Scots Peerage*, VIII, p. 442; Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Ref. RD1/24/1, fols 299r-302v. I am grateful to Diane Baptie for finding and transcribing this annulment record for me.

(MQ, LXVI, 59-64, 117-24)

G. H.'s assailment against her parents – 'to pleinyie to my parentis is bot Vaine / [...] I prayis thair mynd bot curs thair negligence / quhy wald thay not at leist seik my consent' (MQ, LXVI, 118, 123-24) – is absent from Marot's original French elegy.⁸⁴ This intimates that the poet-speaker of the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', wishes to stress the non-consensual nature of her marriage contract. G. H. (Grizel Hay?) uses the semi-public/semi-private nature of the Maitland Quarto to subtly critique both her parents and the institution of non-consensual arranged marriage. What I am suggesting here is that the biographical context of Grizel Hay's 1585 marriage contract annulment provides compelling evidence that Grizel Hay is the 'G. H.' of the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie'.

One reader of this Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', may have been the Renaissance Fifeshire poet, Elizabeth Melville (*fl.* 1599-1631). As Germaine Greer and her fellow editors point out, Elizabeth Melville's father, Sir James Melville (1535/6-1617), had been a successful diplomat for Mary, Queen of Scots, Henry II of France, and Queen Elizabeth and had been invited to accompany King James to London.⁸⁵ Elizabeth Melville is likely to have encountered the Maitland Quarto through her father's court connections. Elizabeth Melville may have had particular interest in 'Ane Elagie translatit out of frenche in English meter [by] G. H.' because it follows a political and religious aesthetic similar to her own poem, *Ane Godlie Dreame*. In particular, both Melville and G. H. develop a strategy for deconstructing the pejorative demarcation of the feminine found in John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women* (1558). Knox propounds that women should have no 'power' or 'authoritie' to 'speake, to reason, to interpret' or 'teache'.⁸⁶ Woman's 'iudgeme[n]t' and 'opinio[n]' must be corrected by 'learned' and 'godlie' men.⁸⁷ Knox maintains that all women should regard themselves as 'doughters of Heua [Eve]'.⁸⁸ He cites the 'godlie write[r]', Tertullian, to substantiate his claim that women are the 'porte

⁸⁴ Clément Marot, 'XX: L'infortunée en manage', in *Les Oeuvres de Clément Marot*, ed. by Georges Guiffrey, 5 vols (Paris: Jean Schemit Libraire, 1876-1931), V, pp. 47-51. G. H.'s castigation against her parents is also absent from Humfrey Gifford's 1580 English translation of the Marot lyric. Humfrey Gifford, 'One that had a frowarde Husband, makes complaynt to her mother: Written in French, by Clement Marott', in *A Posie of Gilloflowers* (London, 1580), pp. 55-57. I am grateful to Annwyl Williams for providing me with an English translation of Marot's Elegy XX.

⁸⁵ *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse*, ed. by Germaine Greer and others (London: Virago, 1988), p. 32. For Melville's court connections, see also Jamie Reid Baxter, 'Afterword', in *Poems of Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross, Unpublished Work from Manuscript and 'Ane Godlie Dreame'*, ed. by Jamie Reid Baxter (Edinburgh: Solsequium, 2010), pp. 98-108 (pp. 102-103).

⁸⁶ Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 16v.

⁸⁷ Knox, *The First Blast [...] Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 17r.

⁸⁸ Knox, *The First Blast [...] Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 18r.

and gate of the deuil'.⁸⁹ As Roger Mason explains, the premise on which Knox's *First Blast* is based is hardly exceptional.⁹⁰ Knox is merely articulating a prejudice common among his contemporaries.⁹¹ Indeed, the 1564 Scottish 'Order of Baptisme' states that it is not '*permitted by Gods worde, that Women should preache or minister the Sacraments*'.⁹² It is a woman's 'duetie' to 'studie' to please 'her husband', for she is under his 'subiection' and 'gouernance'.⁹³ Yet this patriarchal hegemony was also subtly challenged and we find evidence for this in the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', and Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame*.

Contrary to Knox's masculinist definition of the 'godlie', the female speaker of 'Ane Elagie' reaches God through 'hir awin langage' (MQ, LXVI, 91).⁹⁴

I am phœnix of ladyis dissolat
 [...]
 the sillie bird full painfullie dois pyne
 Evin so it is become now of me
 taine in ye snair of fals subtilitie
 & thocht the sillie bird into hir caidge
 Wareis hir taker in hir awin langage
 [...]
 I knaw not ane bot the eternall lord
 quha of my bitter paine can beir record
 to the only I doe my plaint out pour
 & ye I thank bayth of the sueit & sour
 thow creat me & formit hes of nocht
 thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht
 quhairin I am all Iustice is With the
 thocht men be blind yit thow dois cleirly sie
 the Iust ressoun is patent in thy sight
 quhy thow me thoillis to be a Wofull Wicht
 Quhen thou thinkis gud thow will redres my paine
 & gif thow Will that I this still remaine
 In paine & wo arme me With patience
 & gif it pleis thy godlie providence
 to send remeid send it In sicker sort
 that efter paine I may resaeue confort
 With honestie without my syne or schame
 Grant this o lord in Iesus christis name.

⁸⁹ Knox, *The First Blast* [...] *Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 18r.

⁹⁰ Roger A. Mason, 'Introduction', in *John Knox: On Rebellion*, ed. by Roger A. Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. viii-xxiv (p. xv).

⁹¹ Mason, 'Introduction', pp. xv-xvi.

⁹² Church of Scotland, *The Forme of Prayers and administration of the Sacramentes vsed in the Eng. Church at Geneua, approued & receiued by the Church of Scotland* (Geneva, 1584, 1st pub. 1564), sig. L5v.

⁹³ Church of Scotland, *The Forme of Prayers* [...] *receiued by the Church of Scotland*, sig. O3v.

⁹⁴ Knox, *The First Blast* [...] *Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 17r.

(MQ, LXVI, 11, 87-91, 128-45)

The speaker here claims that she is part of God's sacred creation: 'thow creat me & formit hes of nocht / thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht' (MQ, LXVI, 132-33). The speaker declares that she will receive 'confort' (MQ, LXVI, 143) from Christ after earthly human suffering and, by implication, the original fall ('after paine' [MQ, LXVI, 143]). Women may be 'doughters of Heua [Eve]' as Knox argues, but they too can attain salvation and 'perfectioun' (MQ, LXVI, 133) through God and Christ: 'thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht' (MQ, LXVI, 133).⁹⁵ The image of the 'phœnix' (MQ, LXVI, 11) in 'Ane Elagie' ultimately becomes a symbol for the rebirth of the soul and the resurrection of the female self through Christ: 'I am phœnix of ladyis dissolat / [...] efter paine I may resauē confort / [...] Grant this o lord in Iesus christis name' (MQ, LXVI, 11, 143, 145). The phoenix was also seen as an ideal androgynous figure in the Renaissance and is arguably being used in this context to recall Galatians from *The Geneva Bible*: 'there is nether male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Iesus'.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the phoenix image complicates the notion of 'hir awin langage' (MQ, LXVI, 91), as we ask the question: who precisely is speaking here? Marot ventriloquizes the female voice, while the female translator, G. H. (Grizel Hay?), reclaims and rewrites this voice. In this way an androgynous phoenix-like polyvocality can be heard: Marot's voice, the voice of the female speaker, and the voice of the potential female translator. As Sarah Dunningan argues, this Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', is an example of *inventio* rather than *imitatio*.⁹⁷ Marot's original French elegy leaves the plaintive woman in an 'entirely secular realm', yet the Maitland lyric grants the speaker spiritual transcendence.⁹⁸ As indicated above, this transcendence emanates from 'godlie providence' (MQ, LXVI, 141). The speaker intimates that the divine is not simply a male prerogative, but is open to women.

The climactic meditative closure of the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', recalls both the *De Imitatione Christi* (c. 1426) and Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (1531). In the *De Imitatione Christi*, the speaker's self reaches the 'perpetuall' joy of heaven by meditating on Christ's 'peyne' on the cross:

⁹⁵ Knox, *The First Blast [...] Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 18r.

⁹⁶ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Galatians 3. 28. For further exposition on the image of the 'phoenix' in the Renaissance, see 'Appendix 3: Glossary of Classical Names', in *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659*, ed. by Woudhuysen, pp. 863-78 (p. 874).

⁹⁷ Dunningan, 'Female-voiced Love Lyrics and Mary Queen of Scots', p. 444.

⁹⁸ Dunningan, 'Female-voiced Love Lyrics', p. 446.

why ferest *thou* to take the crosse [...] wherby *thou* mayste come suerly to the perpetuall ioyfull kyngdome [...] He [Christ] hath gone before the, berynge the crosse / & therupon for thy loue suffred deth / [...] if thou wilt be assembled to hym in pacientlye sufferynge peyne, trybulacion & deth / than thou shalt be *pertener* of his plesure, consolacion, & perpetuall lyfe & ioy.⁹⁹

The *De Imitatione Christi*'s emphasis on suffering, 'peyne' and 'trybulacion' is utilised by the speaker of the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', as she acquires the 'confort' (MQ, LXVI, 143) of Christ through her endurance of earthly pain:

I knaw not ane bot the eternall lord
 quha of my bitter paine can beir record
 [...]
 Quhen thou thinkis gud thow will redres my paine
 & gif thow Will that I this still remaine
 In paine & wo arme me With patience
 & gif it pleis thy godlie providence
 to send remeid send it In sicker sort
 that efter paine I may resaue confort
 With honestie without my syne or schame
 Grant this o lord in Iesus christis name.
 (MQ, LXVI, 128-29, 138-45)

Moreover, God's creation of woman and 'hir awin langage' (MQ, LXVI, 91) had been stressed in Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*:

Mais, Monseigneur, si vous estes mon pere,
 Puis je penser que je suis vostre mere?
 Vous engendrer? vous par qui je suis faicte?
 [...]
 Vous estes Dieu, je suis vostre facture [.]

 [But, Lord, if you are my father,
 may I think of myself as your mother,
 give birth to you, you by whom I am created?
 [...]
 You are God; I am of your making.¹⁰⁰

G. H. draws upon the sacred pro-woman language of Marot's patron, Marguerite of Navarre: 'thow creat me & formit hes of nocht / thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht' (MQ, LXVI, 132-33). By echoing the feminized meditative language of

⁹⁹ *De Imitatione Christi*, Books I-III trans. by William Atkynson, Book IV trans. by Margaret Beaufort, pp. 191-92. The 1517 Paris edition of the *De Imitatione Christi* was owned by the Scotsman, John Gray. Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 104. Margaret Beaufort's 1504 printed English translation of the *De Imitatione Christi* may have reached Scotland via Margaret Tudor (wife to James IV of Scotland and goddaughter to Margaret Beaufort).

¹⁰⁰ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 88-89, 120-21, lines 261-63, 877.

Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, the speaker of the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', indirectly appeals to a female spiritual *Respublica litterarum*.

As the speaker of the Maitland lyric outpours her lament to God – 'I knaw not ane bot the eternall lord / [...] to the only I doe my plaint out pour' (MQ, LXVI, 128-30) – so too does Elizabeth Melville confront her reader with an implicit female meditation in *Ane Godlie Dreame*: 'I [...] / musit alone and divers things did think. / [...] Than I began my lamentatioun' (AGD,¹⁰¹ 7-8, 27). Both the Maitland lyricist and Melville Christianize Ovid's *Heroides*, as the lamenting female voice is utilised to reach a Christian God. Melville's speaker powerfully addresses Christ: 'Awalk, O Lord, quhy sleipest thou sa lang? / [...] O shaw thy selfe' (AGD, 34, 39). Here we find a very different assertive preaching voice to that of the blustering rhetoric of Knox. Access to God and Christ is not solely a male privilege, Melville purports, as Christ addresses the implicit female speaker intimately with no interruptions from 'learned' men.¹⁰² Christ declares to Melville's speaker: 'I heir thy sighs, I sie thy twinkling teares, / [...] ryse up [...] / And follow mee [...] I sall be thy gyde: / [...] I am thy spous' (AGD, 97, 113-14, 130). As Christ describes himself as the speaker's 'spous' (AGD, 130), he infers that she is his bride: a personification of the female Church and a reclamation of the female divine. Yet 'spous' (AGD, 130), like 'phoenix' (MQ, LXVI, 11), is also gender ambiguous. In the biblical Song of Salomón, the male speaker continually refers to the female speaker as 'My sister, my spouse'.¹⁰³ In Melville's poem, however, Christ is the spouse, not the female speaker. In this way, Melville dissents from Donne who had famously described the church as Christ's 'spouse [...] / open to most men'.¹⁰⁴ For Melville it is Christ who is open to men *and* women. Melville's intentional gender fluidity, like the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', questions the violent stress on gendered difference foregrounded by Knox. Could Melville have been inspired by the Maitland lyric, 'Ane Elagie', to offer her own reinterpretation of the 'godlie'? No annotated copy of 'Ane Elagie' has been found amongst Melville's recently discovered manuscript writings.¹⁰⁵ However, as Jamie Reid Baxter and Sara Ross point out, Melville was an

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Melville, *Ane Godlie Dreame* (Edinburgh, 1603), in *Poems of Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross, Unpublished Work from Manuscript with 'Ane Godlie Dreame'*, ed. by Baxter, pp. 71-91. From henceforth *Ane Godlie Dreame* is abbreviated as AGD and is preceded by the line reference.

¹⁰² Knox, *The First Blast [...] Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women*, sig. 17r.

¹⁰³ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, The song of Salomón 4. 9, 10, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XVIII', in *The Divine Poems*, ed. by Gardner, p. 15, lines 1, 14.

¹⁰⁵ See Baxter, 'Afterword', pp. 98-108.

around 1587 and as Wallace MacCaffrey points out, during this time Hunsdon was regarded as the privy council's Scottish expert.¹⁰⁹ Hunsdon was the 'recipient of a steady flow of correspondence' from both English and Scottish sources.¹¹⁰ The Scottish government regarded him as 'their spokesman on the privy council' and he frequently travelled to Edinburgh and the border town, Berwick-upon-Tweed, throughout the 1570s and 1580s.¹¹¹ In *circa* 1591, Hunsdon employed the poet, Henry Lok (*d.* in or after 1608), as his secretary.¹¹² As Deirdre Serjeantson observes, Lok spent time in the Scottish court and one of his sonnets is included in James VI's *His Maiesties poetically exercises at vacant houres* (1591).¹¹³ As indicated, it is in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish literary circles that the Maitland Quarto is likely to have been scribally circulating. Lanyer therefore may have been introduced to manuscript and printed Scots literature via her lover, Hunsdon, and his Scottish connections.

One reason why Lanyer would have been interested in polyglottal culture is because she wants her published volume of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, to appeal to an international audience. This is evinced in her use of a Latin title. As Janel Mueller observes, Lanyer's title, 'Salve Deus Rex Judæorum', is a citation of the Latin Vulgate of the Gospels (Matthew 27. 29; Mark 15. 18; John 19. 3), where Christ's persecutors address him in mockery, 'Haile king of the Jewes'.¹¹⁴ Yet as Mueller points out, Lanyer adds one new word, 'Deus' meaning 'God', and thus makes 'fully explicit her expression of personal faith'.¹¹⁵ However, Lanyer's use of Latin is not simply 'personal', but political. Lanyer chooses this particular moment in the Gospels because it highlights Christ's marginal status – he is a Jew and by implication the original dissident, challenging the 'High Priests and Scribes, and Elders of the Land' (SDRJ, 490). Christ, like Lanyer, is a marginal figure, but will wield power through the *auctoritas* of God: 'he will give me Power and Strength to Write' (SDRJ, 298). Lanyer's use of Latin advocates a certain level of humanist education: she implies that

¹⁰⁹ Susanne Woods, 'Introduction', in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. xv–xlii (p. xviii); Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596), *courtier and administrator*', *ODNB* [accessed 25 March 2010].

¹¹⁰ MacCaffrey, 'Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596)', *ODNB*.

¹¹¹ MacCaffrey, 'Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596)', *ODNB*.

¹¹² Deirdre Serjeantson, 'English Bards and Scotch Poetics: Scotland's Literary Influence and Sixteenth-Century English Religious Verse', in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, ed. by Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 161–89 (p. 188).

¹¹³ Serjeantson, 'English Bards and Scotch Poetics', pp. 162, 164.

¹¹⁴ Janel Mueller, 'The Feminist Poetics of "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum"', in *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*, ed. by Marshall Grossman (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), pp. 99–127 (p. 116).

¹¹⁵ Mueller, 'The Feminist Poetics of "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum"', p. 116.

she can read, cite, understand and interpret the Latin Vulgate in the original, and this is potentially a supplication to other international female Latinists. Lanyer addresses her poem to ‘all vertuous Ladies in generall’ and ‘ladie’ connotes an educated female reader or *lectrix*.¹¹⁶ We know that Lanyer’s text reaches as far as Ireland through her husband who presents a copy of his wife’s published book to Thomas Jones, Lord Chancellor of Ireland from 1605.¹¹⁷ Additionally, Lanyer may have intended her poem to reach other border-crossing destinations through her chief potential patron, Lady Margaret Clifford (1560-1616), who had wide international connections through her sponsoring of New World voyages.¹¹⁸ What I wish to propose here is that Lanyer combines the devotional meditative practice of Melville with the Neoplatonic contemplative practice of Maitland, so that her text is infused by an appealing polyglottal intertextuality.

The action or practice of profound spiritual reflection or mental contemplation is what the seminal critic, Louis Martz, labels as the ‘poetry of meditation’.¹¹⁹ According to Martz, the meditative poem creates an ‘interior drama of the mind’, whereby the mind grasps a situation, ‘evoked by [...] memory’, brings it forward to ‘consciousness’ and concludes with ‘illumination’ where the speaker’s self has ‘found an answer to its conflicts’.¹²⁰ Martz posits that Donne is the ‘master and father’ of a new kind of English meditative poetry and is closely followed by his contemporaries, Southwell, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw.¹²¹ Martz states that meditative poetry is concerned with ‘inward man’ and his ‘intellectual faculties’.¹²² He ends by citing T. S. Eliot, who praises the way ‘our [literary] fathers and grandfathers expressed themselves’.¹²³ More recently critics have started to explore how and why the ‘metaphysical’ and ‘meditative’ are interlinked. Michael Schoenfeldt, for example, has shown how Herbert’s meditative practice intimately conflates the corporeal with the transcendental.¹²⁴ But women writers also actively contribute to the metaphysical genre of meditation and evidence for

¹¹⁶ Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To all vertuous Ladies in generall’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 12-16 (p. 12). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as TAVL and is proceeded by the line reference.

¹¹⁷ Theresa D. Kemp, ‘Women’s Patronage-Seeking as Familial Enterprise: Aemilia Lanyer, Esther Inglis, and Mary Wroth’, *Literature Compass*, 4/2 (2007), 384-406 (p. 390).

¹¹⁸ Penny Bayer, ‘Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book and the John Dee Circle’, *Ambix*, 52 (2005), 271-84 (p. 275).

¹¹⁹ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*.

¹²⁰ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 330.

¹²¹ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 2.

¹²² Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 5, 1.

¹²³ T. S. Eliot, ‘The Music of Poetry’, cited by Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 323.

¹²⁴ Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 96-130.

this can be found in the Maitland Quarto, *Ane Godlie Dreame* and *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*.

In Poem XLIX of the Maitland Quarto, the poet writes:

Yo[u]r splendo[u]r so madame I wein
[...]

Sa greit Ioy dois my spreit fulfill
contempling your perfectioun
Ye weild me holie at yo[u]r will
and raviss my affectioun.

[...]
My Mynd to freindschip reciproc
That treuth sall try sa far above
The auntient heroicis love
as salbe thocht prodigious
and plaine experie[n]ce sall prove
Mair holie and religious.

(MQ, XLIX, 4, 13-16, 19-24)

The poet of Poem XLIX is responding to, and tacitly dissenting from, a male Neoplatonic contemplative tradition. Plato had argued in the *Symposium* that divine love ‘derives from the Heavenly goddess’ who has ‘nothing of the female in her but only maleness; so this love is directed [...] towards the male’.¹²⁵ This is Christianized in the fifteenth century by the influential writings of Marsilio Ficino. Ficino posits that Platonic philosophers defined ‘true friendship’ as the ‘permanent union of the lives of two men’.¹²⁶ He intimates that ‘this bond, our [male] friendship’ will ‘serve us’ in ‘discovering the divine’.¹²⁷ Contemplation of the male beloved enables Ficino to soar on the ‘wings of metaphysics’ to the ‘creator of heaven and earth’.¹²⁸ The poet in Poem XLIX injects the female into this metaphysical meditative tradition. In Poem XLIX the ‘will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15) referred to evokes the ‘blessed Will’ of Christ.¹²⁹ The speaker is ravished by her female beloved who possesses a capacious spiritual-erotic will: ‘Ye weild me holie at yo[u]r will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15). This sacrosanct sensuality is enhanced through the cluster of spiritual-erotic vocabulary: ‘Ioy’, ‘spreit’, ‘holie’, ‘will’ ‘raviss’, ‘affectioun’, ‘religious’ (MQ, XLIX, 13, 15, 16, 24). These words are tinged with

¹²⁵ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Gill, p. 13.

¹²⁶ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 96.

¹²⁷ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 97.

¹²⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 189.

¹²⁹ Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To the Lady Anne, Countesse of Dorcet’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 41-47 (p. 41), line 11.

sacred/earthly connotations. Poem XLIX implies that a contemplative woman can reach the divine through the female beloved.

The sacred subtext of Poem XLIX is furthered by the poet through the predominant use of huitains (stanzas composed of eight, eight-syllabled lines). According to the sixteenth-century numerologists, Francesco Giorgio and Guy Le Levre de la Boderie, Christ rose from the dead on the eighth day, so by pursuing the number eight and the octave, we shall return to God.¹³⁰ Moreover, St Augustine had written to his companion, Januarius:

Read Genesis; you will find the seventh day without an evening, which signifies rest without end [...] for this reason the eighth day will have eternal blessedness [...] the eighth shall be as the first, so that the first life may be restored to immortality.¹³¹

In Poem XLIX we find a woman-to-woman love that is associated with eternity, divinity and the suspension of earthly time: ‘Sic constancie sall ws mantein / In perfyte amitie *for euer*’ (MQ, XLIX, 71-72, my italics). The poet-speaker of Poem XLIX, through her use of huitains, alludes to (and arguably feminizes) the sacredness of the number eight.

Lanyer develops this tradition of female Neoplatonic meditation. Lanyer’s patron, Margaret Clifford, like Poem XLIX’s ‘madame’ (MQ, XLIX, 4), possesses a ‘beautie of [...] mind’ (SDRJ, 1452) and Lanyer depicts Margaret Clifford as a sacrosanct meditator. Margaret walks amongst the ‘sweet woods’ (TDC,¹³² 81) of Cooke-ham:

With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you [Margaret Clifford] therein did see:
With *Moyses* you did mount his holy Hill [.]
(TDC, 82-85)

Lanyer here harks back to the original sixteenth-century meaning of ‘tradition’: the doctrine of divine authority orally transmitted through Moses and Christ (*OED*). Lanyer

¹³⁰ Francisci Georgii Veneti, *De Harmonia Mundi Totivs Cantica Tria* (1525), translated into French by Guy Le Levre de la Boderie in 1579, both cited in Maren-Sofie Røstvig, ‘The Hidden Sense: Milton and the Neoplatonic Method of Numerical Composition’, in *The Hidden Sense and Other Essays*, by Maren-Sofie Røstvig and others (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963), pp. 1-112 (p. 32).

¹³¹ St Augustine, *Letters*, cited by Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, p. 369. This letter is dated to circa AD 400.

¹³² Aemilia Lanyer, ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 130-38. From henceforth, ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’ has been abbreviated as TDC and is preceded by the line reference.

feminizes this ‘tradition’ by placing Margaret Clifford at the heart of it – it is Margaret Clifford who receives the ‘holy Writ’ and sacred ‘talke’ of Christ (TDC, 82, 83). Additionally, it is through Margaret Clifford that Lanyer contemplates ‘Gods powrefull might’ (ADLM,¹³³ 159), as God resides in Margaret’s ‘selfe confind’ (SDRJ, 1547) there to be sought by the poet-speaker. However, Lanyer goes a step further than Poem XLIX, as it is not only the female beloved who possesses Christ’s ‘blessed Will’, but the poet-speaker herself: ‘Saint *Peter* gave health to the body, so I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule’.¹³⁴ Lanyer’s speaker can thus be aptly described as a metaphysician, providing a salve for the soul through her physical-spiritual discourse.

Both the Maitland lyricist and Lanyer are arguably responding to the feminized Neoplatonism existent in the international female *Respublica litterarum*. Olympia Morata, for instance, writes to her beloved, Lavinia della Rovere Orsini:

So my dear Lavinia, [...] I would not be able to bear my longing for my friends, especially for you, who always ‘remain in the depths of my being’ and whom I always mention in my prayers. [...] Since so great a friendship exists between us and there is no woman dearer to me than you, I have long shared all my secrets with you [...] take yourself to Him [Christ] Who calls all who labor and are heavy laden to Him to give them rest. [...] He Himself will strengthen you and give you, as He promised, the Holy Spirit [...]¹³⁵

Morata here configures the communal seeking of Christ through woman-to-woman dialogue and interaction, and Lanyer may be reading Morata through the Maitland Quarto: ‘And now of lait that lustie ladie rair / Olimpia o lampe of latine land / [...] A thrid o Maistres Marie maik I pray’ (MQ, LXXXV, 5-6, 9).

Both Melville and Lanyer place the feminized sensual-spiritual language of Poem XLIX into a specific biblical moment – the sensual-spiritual tears of Christ’s female pilgrims. Melville writes: ‘My [...] / [...] twinkling teares abundantlie ran down,

¹³³ Aemilia Lanyer, ‘The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 21-31 (p. 29). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as ADLM and is proceeded by the line reference.

¹³⁴ Lanyer, ‘To the Lady *Anne*, Countesse of Dorcet’, p. 41, line 11; Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To the Ladie *Margaret* Countesse Dowager of Cumberland’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 34-35 (p. 34), lines 9-10.

¹³⁵ Morata, ‘Letter 28: Schweinfurt [winter 1551/52] Olympia Morata to Lavinia della Rovere Orsini’; ‘Dialogue Between Theophila and Philotima [1551-52]’, both in *Olympia Morata: The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, trans. by Parker, pp. 117-18 (p. 117); pp. 118-26 (pp. 119, 124). Morata’s *Orationes, Dialogi, Epistolae, Carmina tam Latina quam Graeca* was posthumously printed in Basel in 1558, 1562 and 1570. See Robin, ‘Foreword’, in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. by Campbell and Larsen, p. xx.

/ [...] In sighs and sobbs now chaingit is our sang' (AGD, 21-25, 36). The universal 'our sang' (AGD, 36) evokes the Gospel of St Luke where we are told that 'there followed him [Christ] a great multitude of people, and of women, which women bewailed and lamented him'.¹³⁶ Melville's 'our sang' (AGD, 36) is reminiscent of this all-female threnody: the female pilgrims following Christ at his 'pitifull Procession' (SDRJ, 953). Similarly, the tears of the daughters of Jerusalem take centre stage in Lanyer's poem:

The Serjeants watching, while the women cri'd.

[...] whose teares powr'd forth apace
On *Flora's* bankes, like shewers of Aprils raine:
[...]

Most blessed daughters of Jerusalem,
[...]
Your tearefull eyes, beheld his [Christ's] eies more bright;
[...]
To have reflection from this Heav'nly Light [.]
(SDRJ, 968, 973-74, 985, 988, 990)

Lanyer describes the male apostles as 'Spectators' (SDRJ, 482) and they are thus akin to the 'Serjeants' who are merely 'watching' Christ (SDRJ, 968), but it is the daughters of Jerusalem who meditate on Christ's 'great grieve and paine' (SDRJ, 972), mirroring Christ's 'sigh[s]' and 'groane[s]' (SDRJ, 1006) through their own bodies: 'By teares, by sighes, by cries intreat' (SDRJ, 996). Their tears are aligned to salvific fecundity: '*Flora's* bankes [...] Aprils raine' (SDRJ, 974). In this way, Melville and Lanyer reclaim and rewrite the pejorative accounts of the porous female body found in the influential writings of Aristotle and Galen. Aristotle continually refers to the 'fluid' and 'discharge' that flows copiously out of the female body.¹³⁷ Galen sees the female as 'less perfect than the male' because of her wet, cold body.¹³⁸ Such notions are taken up in the seventeenth century by physicians such as Helkiah Crooke who associates the

¹³⁶ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Luke 23. 27.

¹³⁷ Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals*, in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook, Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. by Kate Aughterson (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 44-47 (p. 45).

¹³⁸ Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Aughterson, pp. 47-48 (p. 48). *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* was written in c. AD 169-175. The first complete French translation was completed by Jacques Dalechamps and printed in Lyons in 1566. See Margaret Tallmadge May, 'Introduction', in *Galen: On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, trans. by Margaret Tallmadge May, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), I, pp. 3-64 (pp. 3, 7).

cold/leaky female body with ‘petulanc[e]’ and ‘imperfectio[n]’.¹³⁹ The fluid body for Melville and Lanyer, far from being a negative trait, demonstrates how women are closer to Christ. Women’s tears enable them to reach the divine. In this manner, Melville and Lanyer implicitly redefine the ‘metaphysical’. According to the Neoplatonist, Pierre de la Primaudaye, ‘Physike [...] is the studie of naturall things: Metaphysike, [...] of supernaturall things’.¹⁴⁰ However, Melville and Lanyer question this binary opposition by suggesting that physicality facilitates interaction with the transcendental and supernatural.

Martz’s model of meditation is further complicated by the notion of the contemplative dreamer who features in the Maitland Quarto, *Ane Godlie Dreame* and *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. In the ancient Greek Orphic Hymns or *Orphica* (which were translated into Latin by Ficino in 1462), dreams intimately speak to the soul and ‘rouse men’s minds’:

TO DREAM

[...]

I call upon you, blessed, long-winged and baneful
 Dream,
 messenger of things to come, greatest prophet to
 mortals.
 In the quiet of sweet sleep you come silently
 and, speaking to the soul, you rouse men’s minds
 and in their sleep you whisper to them the will of
 the blessed ones.¹⁴¹

The potency of the divine Orphic dream is Christianized by the seventeenth-century philosopher, Thomas Tryon. According to Tryon, during the body’s ‘Nocturnal Repose’, the soul can enter into the ‘suburbs of *Eternity*; of the *secret Intercourses of Spirits* with Humanity, and the *wonderful Communications* of the *divine*’.¹⁴² As S. J. Wiseman points out, Tryon posits that dreams are part of God’s work and can tell the dreamer about him or her self – ‘[s]o that if a man would but turn their Eyes inward, and learn to know themselves, and the Principles and degrees of their own nature’ by

¹³⁹ Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia* (1618), in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Aughterson, pp. 54-57 (pp. 56, 57).

¹⁴⁰ Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, I, p. 72.

¹⁴¹ *The Orphic Hymns*, trans. by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), p. 107. *The Orphic Hymns* date from the second or third century AD. See Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 83.

¹⁴² Thomas Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions* (London, 1689), p. 3.

interpreting their dreams they could ‘consequently know their own Complection’.¹⁴³ Dreams are therefore also Martzian ‘interior drama[s] of the mind’, linked to contemplative physical and spiritual experience.¹⁴⁴ In Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto and Lanyer’s ‘The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*’, we find a meditative dreaming ‘self’ concerned with a female *Respublica litterarum*. The lyricist in Poem LXIX writes:

Into my dreame [...] I lay
[...]

Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir
mait land and gold scho gave aboūndantie
Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir
q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie
This is in sing of trew Virginite
[...]

In quhose crope ane plesand sicht thair wes
of ladyis fair as phœbus in mid day
for thair wes Venus Iuno and pallas
Minerua cleo and tersiphone
proserpina and diana the may
Dame Beawtie bricht and als dame chastity [.]
(MQ, LXIX, 25, 41-45, 57-62)

As discussed in Chapter 1, Marie Maitland appears in this dream vision endowed with a cryptic encoding. The ‘trie’ (MQ, LXIX, 43) that she holds in her hand could be the laurel of the female *Respublica litterarum*, handed down from Sappho to Olympia Morata (MQ, LXXXV, 1, 6, 9) and here presented to other women by Marie Maitland herself.

Like the Maitland lyricist of Poem LXIX, Lanyer presents us with a semiotically ambiguous female figure in her dream vision:

Me thought I pass’d through th’ *Edalyan* Groves,
[...]

The eie of Reason did behold
[...]

bright *Bellona* [...]
Whom these faire Nymphs so humbly did receive,

¹⁴³ Tryon, *A Treatise of Dreams and Visions*, p. 57, cited and commented on by S. J. Wiseman, ‘Introduction: Reading the Early Modern Dream’, in *Reading the Early Modern Dream: The Terrors of the Night*, ed. by Katharine Hodgkin and others (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1-13 (p. 3).

¹⁴⁴ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 330

A manly mayd which was both faire and tall,
[...]

With speare, and shield, and currat on her breast,
And on her head a helmet wondrous bright,
With myrtle bayes, and olive branches drest,
Wherein me thought I tooke no small delight.

(ADLM, 1, 6, 33-35, 37-40)

Similarly to the figure of Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX, Bellona is caught between two worlds: the supernatural spectral world ('Me thought I pass'd' [ADLM, 1]) and the rational, physical cognitive world ('eie of Reason' [ADLM, 6]). Like the adumbration of Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX, Bellona becomes a kaleidoscopic symbol of femininity where no singular interpretation will suffice.

Bellona is traditionally the Goddess of War, wife of Mars. But in Lanyer's poem she appears with no man, no Mars beside her. Her presence evokes the cross-dressed figure of Elizabeth I, who whilst rallying the troops at Tilbury had famously declared: 'I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king'.¹⁴⁵ Yet Lanyer classifies Bellona as the goddess of 'Wisdom' in her marginal note and this is visually figured through her helmet of 'myrtle bayes' (ADLM, 39), which is not simply a symbol of victory, but a signifier for the poetic maker. Dante, for instance, presents the poet, Statius, as crowned with myrtle and perhaps it is the myrtle 'trie' of 'letteris' (MQ, LXIX, 43-44) that Marie Maitland holds in her hand in Poem LXIX.¹⁴⁶ Bellona as a 'manly mayd' (ADLM, 35) combines both male and female 'making' traditions.

'[M]anly mayd' (ADLM, 35) takes us back to Olympia Morata, who had been classed by her critics as a 'Calvinist Amazon'.¹⁴⁷ Although for male Renaissance thinkers the male androgyne is the ideal muse of poetry (typified by the 'master-mistress' of Shakespeare's Sonnet 20), for a woman to possess both gender traits within a literary context was regarded by some as dissident or dangerous.¹⁴⁸ This is exemplified not only through Morata, but the seventeenth-century writer, Lady Mary

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth Tudor, 'Speech to the Troops at Tilbury' (1588), in *Women's Writing of the Early Modern Period, 1588-1688: An Anthology*, ed. by Stephanie Hodgson-Wright (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Dante, *Purgatorio* (c. 1307), 21. 90, cited by Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 133.

¹⁴⁷ Morata's critic, Gaspar Scioppius, cited in Parker, 'Introduction', in *Olympia Morata: The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, ed. and trans. by Parker, pp. 2, 34.

¹⁴⁸ William Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 20', in *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. by Kerrigan, p. 86, line 2.

Wroth (1587?-1651/1653), who is accused of being a ‘Hermaphrodite in show [...] a monster’.¹⁴⁹ We had seen in Chapter 1 how Poem XLIX of the Maitland Quarto had eulogized female gender fluidity, and Lanyer here also rewrites the female androgynous ideal from a celebratory perspective through Bellona.

Bellona appears exclusively to a community of women, ‘nine faire’ Nymphs (ADLM, 9, 34) and the poet Mary Sidney (1561-1621) herself (ADLM, 29). After Bellona’s appearance, Lanyer’s poet-speaker tells us that this female group will sit and meditate on ‘holy hymnes [...] / Those rare sweet songs which *Israels* King did frame’ (ADLM, 116-17). This is, of course, an allusion to the biblical Psalms newly translated by Mary Sidney.¹⁵⁰ But another sixteenth-century woman writer who offered her own rendition of the Psalms in Greek hexameters and sapphics is Olympia Morata, and here Lanyer portrays a female community of harmonious singing voices: ‘Those holy sonnets they did all agree, / With this most lovely Lady here to sing’ (ADLM, 121-22).¹⁵¹ Lanyer is arguably suggesting that Mary Sidney is singing in unison with Olympia Morata and thus potentially appeals to a European female literary and spiritual community. In this context, Bellona (like Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX) figures as a muse uniting the female *Respublica litterarum*.

Meditation on spiritual dreams was associated with dissenting communities by James VI and I. In his *Basilicon Doron* (1599), James attacked religious dissenters, the ‘brain-sicke’ and ‘headie Preachers’ who resist the royal authorities, leaning to ‘their owne dreams and reuelations’ in ‘making’ the ‘scriptures to be ruled by their conscience’.¹⁵² It is precisely the ‘dreame’ (AGD, 90) for Melville that guides her speaker to God through Christ. Melville highlights the power of individual dream-life and its links to *sola scriptura*:

Into my dreame I thocht thair did appeir
Ane sicht maist sweit, quhilk maid me weill content:
Ane Angell bricht with visage schyning cleir [.]
(AGD, 90-92)

¹⁴⁹ Lord Edward Denny, ‘To Pamphilia from the father-in-law of Seralius’ (c. 1621?), cited by Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women’s Writing*, p. 191.

¹⁵⁰ The presentation copy of the Sidney Psalter was completed in 1599, see Danielle Clarke, ‘Table of Dates’, in *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets*, ed. by Clarke, pp. xlv-xlv (p. xlv).

¹⁵¹ Olympia Morata, ‘Psalms’, in *Olympia Morata: The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, ed. and trans. by Parker, pp. 186-92.

¹⁵² James Stuart, *Basilicon Doron*, pp. 6, 7.

As Jamie Reid Baxter points out, here Melville is alluding to the Mary Magdalene, who at the tomb of Christ sees an angel (Matthew 28. 1-5).¹⁵³ This moment in the gospels is communicated to Melville's speaker through a sensual-celestial dream/vision: 'Into my dreame I thocht thair did appeir / Ane sicht maist sweit' (AGD, 90-91). According to Germaine Greer and her fellow editors, *Ane Godlie Dreame* was transmitted orally on special days of 'fasting, prayer, open-air preaching and feasting' when dissenting congregations were 'encouraged to interpret' biblical texts.¹⁵⁴ James in the *Basilicon Doron* seems to be attacking the oral public transmission of dream narratives by Presbyterians such as Melville.¹⁵⁵ Lanyer joins forces with Melville in portraying the prophetic power of the female dreamer:

Witnesse thy wife (O *Pilate*) speakes for all;
Who did but dreame, and yet a message sent,
That thou should'st have nothing to doe at all
With that just man [Christ] [.]
(SDRJ, 834-37)

Pilate's wife is a peripheral figure in the Gospel of St Matthew, but in Lanyer's poem she is a cardinal witness in Christ's defence, speaking 'for all' (SDRJ, 834) Christians from the margins.¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth Hodgson argues that Lanyer portrays Pilate's wife as the 'first Christian before the fact, a prophetic voice challenging Pilate because of her sympathy for Christ's likely suffering'.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, Pilate's wife (like Melville's speaker) has meditated on Christ through her 'dreame' (SDRJ, 835; AGD, 90) and is connected to Lanyer's own poetic-prophetic voice:

this Title, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, [...] was delivered unto me in sleepe [...] it came into my remembrance, what I had dreamed long before; and thinking it a significant token, that I was appointed to performe this Worke, I gave the very same words I received in sleepe as the fittest Title [.]¹⁵⁸

Lanyer, like Melville, allies her dream to godly providence ('I was appointed to performe this Worke') and both writers seem to recall and rework the Acts of the Apostles from *The Geneva Bible*: 'saith God, I wil powre out my Spirit vpon all flesh, your sonnes, and your daughters shal prophecie, [...] and your olde men shal dreame

¹⁵³ Jamie Reid Baxter, 'Ane Godlie Dream, Note to Lines 89-97', in *Elizabeth Melville: Poems and Letters*, ed. by Jamie Reid Baxter (forthcoming).

¹⁵⁴ *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse*, ed. by Greer and others, p. 32.

¹⁵⁵ James Stuart, *Basilicon Doron*, pp. 6, 7.

¹⁵⁶ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Matthew 27. 19.

¹⁵⁷ Elizabeth M. A. Hodgson, 'Prophecy and Gendered Mourning in Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 43 (2003), 101-16 (p. 109).

¹⁵⁸ Aemilia Lanyer, 'To the doubtfull Reader', in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, p. 139.

dreames'.¹⁵⁹ Although James Stuart brings about the regal union between 'two nations', Lanyer foregrounds a 'metaphysical' silent kinship with Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame*, one that will covertly question the condemnation of prophetic dreamers by the royal authorities.¹⁶⁰

A. A. MacDonald suggests that collections of Middle Scots verse 'continued to be consulted' during the seventeenth century and John Kerrigan has argued that post 1603, 'books travelled', so did printers and manuscripts were similarly 'mobile'.¹⁶¹ I have shown that one way of analysing this textual 'mobility' and 'consultation' is by unpacking what is meant by the female international *Respublica litterarum*. I have illustrated how the 'femininity' of the Maitland Quarto may have been read and silently understood by other women writers of the Renaissance. I have thus offered a methodology for reading textual 'femininity' historically. Reading the Maitland Quarto alongside Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame* and Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, forces us to rethink what is meant by the 'metaphysical meditative tradition'. I have shown how this tradition is not simply male and English, but female, Scottish and European.

¹⁵⁹ Lanyer, 'To the doubtfull Reader', p. 139; *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, The Actes 2. 17.

¹⁶⁰ James Stuart, *Basilicon Doron*, p. 59; Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, pp. ix, 73.

¹⁶¹ MacDonald, 'Sir Richard Maitland and William Dunbar', pp. 136-37; Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, p. 77.

Chapter 3

‘Compounded [...] Contrarieties’:¹ Alchemical Metaphysics in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611)

‘I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule; [...] this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice.’

(Aemilia Lanyer)²

In the Renaissance, the art of alchemy referred to the power of transmutation or extraction, both physical (the transmutation of metals, herbs, minerals and plants) and spiritual (the transformation of ‘base’ man/woman into a state of spiritual perfection).³ This dual definition of alchemy is vividly captured by the father of the Protestant movement, Martin Luther, who writes:

The science of alchymy I like very well, and indeed, ’tis the philosophy of the ancients. I like it not only for the profits it brings in melting metals, in decocting, preparing, extracting, and distilling herbs, roots; I like it also for the sake of the allegory and secret signification, which is exceedingly fine, touching the resurrection of the dead at the last day. For, as in a furnace the fire extracts and separates from a substance the other portions, and carries upward the spirit [...] so God, at the day of judgement, will separate all things through fire, the righteous from the ungodly.⁴

Luther here juxtaposes the exoteric and physical (‘melting metals, [...] decocting [...] and distilling herbs, roots’), with the esoteric and metaphysical (‘allegory [...] secret signification [...] the fire extracts [...] and carries upward the spirit’).⁵ This type of ‘metaphisycall reason[ing]’ is portrayed as threateningly dissident by the anti-Reformist, Thomas More, who declares: ‘THE HERETICS ARE THEOLOGICAL ALCHEMISTS [...] wherein thei describe eche of them their own fantastical church

¹ Lanyer, SDRJ, 1219.

² Lanyer, ‘To the Ladie *Margaret* Countesse Dowager of Cumberland’, p. 34, lines 9-13. From henceforth ‘To the Ladie *Margaret* Countesse Dowager of Cumberland’ is abbreviated as LM and is proceeded by the line reference.

³ This definition of alchemy stems from the work of Robert Schuler, Peter Forshaw, Margaret Healy and James Keller. Robert M. Schuler, ‘Some Spiritual Alchemies of Seventeenth-Century England’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 41 (1980), 293-318; Peter J. Forshaw, ‘Subliming Spirits: Physical-Chemistry and Theo-Alchemy in the Works of Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605)’, in *Mystical Metal of Gold: Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Stanton J. Linden (New York: AMS Press, 2007), pp. 255-75; Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, pp. 4, 5, 11, 43; James R. Keller, ‘The Science of Salvation: Spiritual Alchemy in Donne’s Final Sermon’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23 (1992), 486-93.

⁴ Martin Luther, *Table Talk* (1566), cited by Linden, ‘Introduction’, in *The Alchemy Reader*, ed. by Linden, p. 22.

⁵ Luther, *Table Talk*, cited by Linden, ‘Introduction’, p. 22.

vnknownen [...] he deuiseeth and imagineth markes, tokens & signes'.⁶ It is presumably Luther's notion of a 'secret signification' that More finds disturbing – an esoteric 'vnknownen' Church made up of subjective, unfamiliar 'tokens' and 'signes'.⁷

Yet Thomas More was largely in the minority in his condemnation of 'theological alchemy'. Both Renaissance Catholics and Protestants utilized the discourse of spiritual alchemy to delineate their transcendental relationship with God. For example, this is how the sixteenth-century Catholic mystic, St Teresa of Ávila, expresses her spiritual transformation through God:

the soul was purified, worked upon and refined like gold in the crucible, so that He [God] might the better set in it the enamel of His gifts: it was being cleansed now of the impurities of which it would need to be cleansed in purgatory.
[...]

My soul seemed to emerge from the crucible like gold, both brighter and purer, to find the Lord within it.⁸

According to St Teresa, God is the holy alchemist par excellence, as he cleanses her speaker's soul of its 'impurities' and fills it with an incandescent spiritual 'gold'.⁹ Moreover, this is how the seventeenth-century English Protestant philosopher-physician, Sir Thomas Browne, describes his knowledge of alchemy:

The smattering I have of the Philosopher's stone, (which is something more then the perfect exaltation of gold) hath taught me a great deal of Divinity, and instructed my beliefe, how that immortall spirit and incorruptible substance of my soule may lye obscure, and sleepe a while within this house of flesh.¹⁰

Margaret Healy posits that one reason why Renaissance men and women were turning to the lexicon of metaphysical alchemy was because it provided a route into the *prisca*

⁶ Thomas More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532), in *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, ed. by Louis A. Schuster and others (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), VIII, Part I, p. 102; VIII, Part II, p. 1003.

⁷ Luther, *Table Talk*, cited by Linden, 'Introduction', p. 22; More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, VIII, Part II, p. 1003.

⁸ St Teresa, *The Life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, ed. and trans. by E. Allison Peers, 3 vols (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), I, pp. 9-300 (pp. 125, 200). *The Life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus* was completed in 1565 and published in Salamanca in 1588. The first English translation of St Teresa's *The Life* was published in Antwerp in 1611. Another English translation (by Sir Tobias Mathew) was printed in London in 1623. See E. Allison Peers, 'General Introduction', in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, ed. and trans. by Peers, I, pp. xxxvii-xlvi (pp. xliii, xlv).

⁹ St Teresa, *The Life*, pp. 125, 200.

¹⁰ Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (1643, 1st pub. 1642), cited in Crawshaw, 'Hermetic Elements in Donne's Poetic Vision', p. 324.

theologia – the one true trans-cultural theology.¹¹ The sixteenth-century French Protestant philosopher, Philippe Du Plessis Mornay, writes: ‘Mercurius [Hermes] Trismegistus [the father of alchemy], who (if the bookes [the *Hermetica*] which are fathered uppon him bee his in deede, as in trueth they bee very auncient) [...] teacheth euerywhere, That there is but one GOD’.¹² Du Plessis Mornay’s above-quoted treatise, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion* (1587), was translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding. This treatise ran into four editions by 1617 (STC) and is echoed by the seventeenth-century philosopher, Thomas Tymme: ‘Do not all things flow from Vnity through the goodnes of One?’.¹³ Men and women could escape the violent religious disputes of the time through the unary of the One – the *auctoritas* of a unified God.

The dissemination of metaphysical alchemical ideologies during the Renaissance partly came about through Marsilio Ficino’s influential editions of the *Hermetica*, the *Asclepius* (1469) and the *Pimander* (1471). As Brian Copenhaver points out, in the mid-fifteenth century, Ficino laid aside his work on Plato to concentrate on the writings of the Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus, who, as indicated, was regarded as the father of physical and spiritual alchemy.¹⁴ The fourteenth-century physician, Bernard of Trier, for example, states: ‘The firste invente[r] of this arte [of alchemy] [...] was Hermes Trismegistus: for he made and composed the boocks of [...] naturall philosophie’.¹⁵ Ficino’s Hermetic *Pimander*, together with the *Asclepius*, went through more than twenty printed editions between 1471 and the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁶ It was translated into French, Spanish, Dutch and Italian.¹⁷ Hermetic-alchemical philosophy was disseminated on the British Isles by philosophers such as Thomas Tymme, who printed an English translation of Joseph Du Chesne’s Latin text, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke*, in 1605.

¹¹ Healy, ‘Protean Bodies’, pp. 164, 165, 169.

¹² Philippe Du Plessis Mornay, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding (London, 1587), pp. 27-28.

¹³ Thomas Tymme, *A Light in Darkness Which Illumineth for All the ‘Monas Hieroglyphica’ of the Famous and Profound Dr John Dee, Discovering Nature’s Closet and Revealing the True Christian Secrets of Alchimy* (c. 1602), ed. by S. K. Heninger (Oxford: New Bodleian Library, 1963), p. 17.

¹⁴ Copenhaver, ‘Introduction’, in *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. xlvii-xlviii.

¹⁵ Bernard of Trier, ‘The most excellent and true booke’ (1585/1591), cited in Lauren Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London. Simon Forman: Astrologer, Alchemist, and Physician* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 192.

¹⁶ Trapp, ‘Introduction’, in Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. xxii.

¹⁷ Trapp, ‘Introduction’, p. xxii.

According to Ficino, the 'Egyptian' Hermetic 'priests' practised 'medicine' and 'the mysteries' as 'one and the same study'.¹⁸ Ficino wishes to master this 'natural [...] Egyptian art' and wholeheartedly encourages others to 'apply' themselves 'to it'.¹⁹ The 'mysteries' of this 'art' can be found in the *Hermetica*. The *Hermetica* posits that 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices' have 'within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity'.²⁰ It is the human being, according to the *Hermetica*, who has the capacity to uncover this earthly natural divinity:

a human being is a great wonder [...] He looks up to heaven [...] He cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind [...] mingling and combining the two natures [mortal and eternal] into one in their just proportions.²¹

It is a passage such as this that appears to have led the seventeenth-century philosopher, physician and poet, Henry Vaughan, to remark that '*Hermetists* [...] observe nature in her workes [...] by the mediation of nature [...] they may produce and bring to light [...] rare effectual medicines'.²² For Vaughan and his fellow Hermeticists, 'rare effectual medicines' could be attained through the distillation, conservation and transmutation of telluric 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices'.²³

In 1580 the distiller, John Hester, proposed that '*Alchymie* [...] serueth to helpe those diseased both inwardly and outwardly [...] patients shall be holpen through the hidden mysteries and heauenly secrets of this science'.²⁴ Hester here recalls the influential theories of the sixteenth-century Swiss Hermeticist, Paracelsus (1493-1541). Paracelsus had argued that the physician's task is to see the 'inner and secret matter' of all things.²⁵ He posits that a physician must be a 'philosopher' and 'Alchemist'.²⁶ By combining the 'outwar[d]' and the 'inwar[d]', Hester and Paracelsus create a compounded physical-spiritual alchemical healing practice.²⁷ Paracelsus's ideologies were being translated into English by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers such as

¹⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

¹⁹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

²⁰ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

²¹ *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. 69, 70, 71.

²² Henry Nollus [Heinrich Nolle], *Hermetical Physick*, trans. by Henry Vaughan, p. 5.

²³ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

²⁴ John Hester, *The Key of Philosophy, The Second Part* (London, 1596, 1st pub. 1580), sig. G1r.

²⁵ Paracelsus, 'Opus Paramirum (1530-31)', in *Paracelsus: Essential Readings*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (Wellinborough: Crucible, 1990), pp. 76-100 (p. 78).

²⁶ Paracelsus, 'Siben Defensiones (1538)', in *Paracelsus: Essential Readings*, pp. 105-106 (p. 105);

Paracelsus, 'De Natura Rerum (1537)', in *Paracelsus: Essential Readings*, pp. 173-91 (p. 176).

²⁷ Hester, *The Key of Philosophy, The Second Part*, sig. G1r.

George Baker and Thomas Tymme.²⁸ Both the philosopher, John Dee, and the writer, John Donne, owned Paracelsian texts.²⁹ Indeed, when Donne describes the process of spiritual inner sublimation as ‘true religious alchemy’, he is arguably evoking the Hermetic-alchemical theories of Paracelsus and Hester.³⁰

This chapter argues that Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611) responds to a male metaphysical alchemical tradition set by Renaissance thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino, Paracelsus, John Hester, John Dee, Thomas Tymme and Michael Maier. I then demonstrate how Lanyer takes this male tradition further through her specific focus on the role of the female alchemist. I explore Lanyer’s feminization of alchemical discourse in three ways: her presentation of Margaret Clifford (1560-1616) as Lady Alchymia; her self-fashioning of herself as a female poet-alchemist; and finally her attempt to establish an esoteric linguistic code with other female alchemists of the time, in particular Anne Clifford (1590-1676), Mary Sidney (1561-1621) and Queen Anne (1574-1619). Alchemy as a ‘[c]ompounded’ (SDRJ, 1219) discourse is manipulated by Lanyer, as her poet-speaker seeks to compound the contrary class hierarchies that exist among women.

Alchemical practice was particularly appurtenant to women during the Renaissance as the processes of distillation and decoction of herbs and plants would often take place within the home where women administered medical and spiritual care. In 1600, the anatomist, Charles Estienne, stipulated that the ‘huswife’ should be ‘skilfull in naturall Physicke, for the benefite of her own folke and others’.³¹ Two such women involved in ‘naturall Physicke’ were Margaret Clifford and her daughter, Anne Clifford. The Clifford household library had a number of alchemical texts, including George Ripley’s *The Compound of Alchymy* (1591), Roger Bacon’s *The Mirror of Alchymy*

²⁸ Paul H. Kocher, ‘Paracelsan Medicine in England: The First Thirty Years (ca. 1570-1600)’, *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 2 (1947), 451-80 (pp. 458, 474).

²⁹ John Dee owned Paracelsus’s *Astronomia Magna* (Frankfort, 1571) and a ‘large number’ of Paracelsian manuscripts. See the catalogue of Dee’s library printed in E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography, 1485-1583* (London: Methuen, 1930), pp. 193-243 (p. 228). John Donne owned Paracelsus’s *Chirurgia Magna* (Strassburg, 1573), see Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, 1st pub. 1914), p. 273.

³⁰ John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary* (1611), in *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. by A. J. Smith (London: Penguin, 1996, 1st pub. 1971), p. 275, line 182.

³¹ Charles Estienne, *Maison Rustique*, trans. by Richard Surfleet (London, 1600), cited by Jayne Elisabeth Archer, ‘Women and Chymistry in Early Modern England: The Manuscript Receipt Book (c. 1616) of Sarah Wiggess’, in *Gender and Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Kathleen P. Long (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 191-216 (p. 199).

(1597), and a late Paracelsian work from 1606 in Latin.³² Moreover, in 1652, Anne Clifford describes her mother in the Great Book of Records of the Cliffords in the following way:

She [Margaret Clifford] was a lover of the study and practice of alchimy, by which she found out excellent medicines, that did much good to many. She delighted in distilling of waters, and other chymical extractions, for she had some knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants.

[...]

And certainly this noble Countess [Margaret Clifford] had in her the infusion from above of many excellent knowledges and virtues both Divine and humane; which did bridle and keep under that great spirit of hers, and caused her to have the sweet peace of a heavenly and quiet mind [.]³³

Anne here encapsulates the ‘infusion’ between the exoteric and esoteric: the physical ‘distilling of waters’ and its connections to the ‘Divine’ and ‘humane’.³⁴ Margaret, in the above-quoted extract, is presented as a Hermetic physician-chemist and both her and her daughter were probably drawing influence from translations of the *Hermetica*. Hermes famously declared: ‘that which is above is all one with that which is beneath’.³⁵ Margaret, like Hermes Trismegistus, conflates the divine with the human through her mixing together of ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’, which have ‘within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity’.³⁶ As indicated, John Hester proposed in 1580 that ‘*Alchymie* [...] serueth to helpe those diseased both inwardly and outwardly [...] pacients shall be holpen through the hidden mysteries and heauenly secrets of this science’.³⁷ It is presumably this type of spiritual-physical discourse that Anne and by implication, Margaret, were accessing. Anne’s description of her mother in her 1652 family memorial provides tangible evidence that women in the Renaissance were not somehow

³² Penny Bayer, ‘From Kitchen Hearth to Learned Paracelsianism: Women and Alchemy in the Renaissance’, in *Mystical Metal of Gold: Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Linden, pp. 365-86 (p. 379). Before 1920, George Williamson recovered ‘A Catalogue of the Books in the Closet in the Passage Room next the Pantry in Skipton Castle 28th August 1739’. This catalogue of books is printed in Richard T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford: Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), pp. 257-59.

³³ Anne Clifford, ‘A Summary of Records and also a memorial of that religious and blessed lady, Margaret Russell, Countess of Cumberland’, in *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke, and Montgomery (1590-1676) and of Her Parents Summarized by Herself*, ed. by J. P. Gilson (London: Roxburghe Club, 1916), pp. 18-32 (p. 20).

³⁴ Anne Clifford, ‘A Summary of Records’, p. 20.

³⁵ *Hermetica*, cited in *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke, for the preservation of health. Written in Latin by Iosephus Quersitanus, Doctor of Physicke*, trans. by Thomas Tymme (London, 1605), sig. P4v.

³⁶ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

³⁷ Hester, *The Key of Phllosophie, The Second Part*, sig. G1r.

isolated from the philosophical, medical and spiritual discourses of the time, but were participants in them.

Anne Clifford tells us that her mother knew ‘no language but her own [English]’.³⁸ Margaret Clifford therefore had to be active in commissioning translations of alchemical texts through her male associates, Thomas Tymme (*d.* 1620) and Christopher Taylour. Margaret’s connection with Tymme and Taylour is evinced in her collection of alchemical texts at Skipton Castle, Yorkshire. Penny Bayer argues that the extant sixteenth-century alchemical receipt book held in the Cumbria Record Office, the so-called ‘Margaret Manuscript’ (*c.* 1550-1598), most probably belonged to Margaret Clifford.³⁹ This manuscript is inscribed with ‘C.[hristopher] T.[aylour]’ on fol. 35r.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the 1590 manuscript translation of Dudley Fenner’s *Sacred Divinitie or the Truth which is according to Pietie* is likely to have been written for Margaret and is transcribed with ‘Your lovinge friend T[homas]. T[ymme].’⁴¹ Arguably Margaret Clifford forged connections with these men, so that they could translate alchemical works that Margaret would not otherwise have had access to.

Penny Bayer goes on to argue that the alchemical receipt book, ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, features in Anne Clifford’s commissioned portrait of her mother and family – *The Appleby Great Picture* (1646).⁴² This portrait places ‘a written hand Booke of Alkumiste Abstracions of Distillation & Excellent Medicines’ above Margaret Clifford’s head.⁴³ Jayne Archer contends that this commissioned portrait featuring the prominent alchemical receipt book points to a body of alchemical knowledge, ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’ that exists between mother and daughter.⁴⁴ Indeed, Margaret is likely to have passed on her knowledge of domestic medical alchemy to Anne, as in 1616, when Margaret is suffering from ‘cold chillness’ and ‘ague’, Anne sends Margaret ‘certain cordials and conserves’ to speed her recovery.⁴⁵ Furthermore, if we turn to the contents of ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, we find that alchemical practices

³⁸ Anne Clifford, ‘A Summary of Records’, p. 19.

³⁹ Bayer, ‘Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book and the John Dee Circle’, pp. 271-84. The alchemical receipt book held in the Cumbria Record Office is given the title, ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, by Penny Bayer in her above-cited article.

⁴⁰ Kendal, Cumbria Archive Centre, MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 35r.

⁴¹ This evidence is cited in Bayer, ‘Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book’, p. 283.

⁴² Bayer, ‘From Kitchen Hearth to Learned Paracelsianism’, p. 377.

⁴³ Bayer, ‘From Kitchen Hearth to Learned Paracelsianism’, p. 377.

⁴⁴ Jayne E. E. Archer, ‘Women and Alchemy in Early Modern England’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, Newnham College, 1999), Chapter 2, p. vi.

⁴⁵ Anne Clifford records this in her diary. Anne Clifford, *The Memoir of 1603 and the Diary of 1616-1619*, ed. by Katherine O. Acheson (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2007), pp. 76, 79.

did not take place in isolation, but in the presence of others. For example, in this manuscript there is a receipt for 'Fixacio Luna in Sol', which ends 'Proved as writeth my dughter'.⁴⁶ This suggests that daughters were working in collaboration with their mothers and fathers, learning the art of spiritual and physical healing for use in their own households after marriage.

But to whom did Margaret Clifford administer her 'excellent medicines'?⁴⁷ In *circa* 1593 it is reported that Margaret Clifford was saddened by the sight of so many poor women in the town of Beamsley near Skipton.⁴⁸ The sight of these impoverished women motivates Margaret (in 1593) into founding a hospital or almshouse in Beamsley for a mother and twelve sisters (all of whom were poor widows).⁴⁹ Margaret requests in her will that this hospital be completed by her daughter, Anne, which Anne does, as the hospital is fully completed in *circa* 1631.⁵⁰ The 1593 Beamsley Hospital is circular in shape with a chapel in the centre.⁵¹ Every woman in the hospital has her own room and garden.⁵² Having one's own garden is reminiscent of Ficino's advice to his patients to surround themselves with the 'spiritus' of plants, herbs and stones.⁵³ Of course, the circular shape is associated with the divine in this period and this may well be what Margaret planned to allude to in her all-female chapel-hospital.⁵⁴ Besides her own household, it is precisely to these women of Beamsley that Margaret might have been administering her spiritual and physical care. Indeed, Margaret Clifford's contemporary, Lady Margaret Hoby (*bap.* 1571, *d.* 1633), was another practitioner of medicine and distributed physical 'saulue[s]' (salves) to poor women in her community, as recorded in her diary.⁵⁵ Administering 'salves', whether physical or spiritual, was one way in which women of different classes encountered one another. The case of Margaret Clifford's 1593 Beamsley Hospital demonstrates the power that some Renaissance women had and used to transform other women's lives.

⁴⁶ MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 54r.

⁴⁷ Anne Clifford, 'A Summary of Records', p. 20.

⁴⁸ Letters patent 16 March 1593, cited in Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, pp. 10, 97-98.

⁵¹ Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 10.

⁵² Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 10.

⁵³ Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

⁵⁴ For further exposition on the circle's links to divine alchemy, see Margaret Healy, 'Making the quadrangle round': Alchemy's Protean Forms in Shakespeare's Sonnets and 'A Lover's Complaint', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Michael Schoenfeldt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 405-25 (pp. 410-12).

⁵⁵ Lady Margaret Hoby, 'The :18: day [September 1600]', *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, ed. by Joanna Moody (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001, 1st pub. 1998), p. 112.

The alchemical-transformative power of the patron is a key touchstone in Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, which provides further evidence of Margaret Clifford's role as spiritual and physical alchemist. According to Lanyer's speaker, Margaret '[h]ealeth all griefes' (SDRJ, 1383):

To heale the soules [...]
By thy faire virtues; [...]
[...]
If they be blind, thou giv'st to them their sight;
If deafe or lame, they heare, and goe upright.
(SDRJ, 1371-72, 1375-76)

The 'they' (SDRJ, 1375-76) cited here could well include the women of Beamsley whom Margaret aided through her salvific care and 'almes-deeds' (SDRJ, 1335). Lanyer here invokes both *The Geneva Bible* (Ecclesiasticus 38. 1; Luke 9. 1) and Ficino's *Three Books on Life* (1489), where Christ commanded his disciples to 'cure the sick [...] with herbs and stones [...] to cure with words'.⁵⁶ Margaret Clifford, for Lanyer's poet-speaker, is Christ's true disciple, as she possesses the physical and spiritual capacity to 'heale' (SDRJ, 1371).

In *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Christ is referred to as a pure, unspotted 'Jasper stone' and 'corner stone' (SDRJ, 1635, 1661) on which the 'worlds foundation first was laid' (SDRJ, 1643). This not only invokes *The Geneva Bible* – 'the stone [Christ] which ye buylders refused [...] is made the head of the corner' – but also evokes Renaissance alchemical writings, which depict Christ as the philosopher's stone.⁵⁷ The sixteenth-century alchemist, Heinrich Khunrath, for instance writes: 'the PHILOSOPHERS' STONE [...] is [...] IHSVH CHRIST [...], Saviour of the whole human race [...]. Know CHRIST naturally from the Stone; and learn to Theosophically know the Stone from CHRIST'.⁵⁸ For Lanyer's poet-speaker, it is Margaret Clifford who mirrors the steadfast and pure cornerstone, Christ:

your [Margaret Clifford's] heart remaineth firme and right;
Your love so strong, as nothing can remove,
Your thoughts beeing placed on him [Christ] both day
and night,
Your constant soule doth lodge betweene her brests,
This Sweet of sweets, in which all glory rests.
[...]

⁵⁶ Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 397.

⁵⁷ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Matthew 21. 42; The Actes 4. 11.

⁵⁸ Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (Hanoviae, 1609), cited by Forshaw, 'Subliming Spirits', p. 264.

You loving God, live in your selfe confind
 From unpure Love, your purest thoughts retires,
 [...]

Subduing all affections that are base,
 Unalterable by the change of times [.]
 (SDRJ, 1340-44, 1547-58, 1558-59)

False, 'base' (SDRJ, 1558) alchemists search for external 'riches' (SDRJ, 1385), but Lanyer's Margaret concentrates on inner 'wealth' (SDRJ, 1407), as she searches for the precious esoteric jewel which is Christ:

Thy
 [...]
 Respecting worldly wealth to be but drosse,
 [...]

your perfect heart
 [...]
 spend that pretious time that God hath sent,
 In all good exercises of the minde,
 Whereto your noble nature is inclin'd.
 (SDRJ, 1405-1407, 1562, 1566-68)

As Susanne Woods points out, 'drosse' (SDRJ, 1407) denotes the waste that results from melting metal or unrefinable material.⁵⁹ Margaret rejects the 'drosse' (SDRJ, 1407) in favour of a *philosophia meditativa*, reaching Christ and the divine through the transformative faculty of her 'minde' (SDRJ, 1567) and 'soule' (SDRJ, 1343).

Through Margaret Clifford's 'meditation' (SDRJ, 153) on Christ, she gains power to transform others:

To virtue, learning, and the powres divine,
 Thou [Margaret Clifford] mai'st convert, but never wilt incline

 To fowle disorder, or licentiousnesse
 But in thy modest vaile [phial?] do'st sweetly cover
 The staines of other sinnes, to make themselves,
 That by this meanes thou mai'st in time recover
 Those weake lost sheepe that did so long transgresse,
 Presenting them unto thy deerest Lover;
 That when he brings them backe unto his fold,
 In their conversion then he may behold

 Thy beauty shining brighter than the Sunne,

⁵⁹ Susanne Woods, 'Note to Line 1407', in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, p. 111.

[...]

To this great Lord [Christ], thou onely art affected [.]
(SDRJ, 1391-1401, 1705)

Through her alchemical vaile/phial (SDRJ, 1394), Margaret is able to initiate a regenerative ‘new berth’ (SDRJ, 200) for the poet-speaker, as the poet undergoes spiritual and literary transfiguration:

You [Margaret Clifford] are the Articke Starre that guides my
hand,
All what I am, I rest at your command.
(SDRJ, 1839-40)

I first obtain’d
Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d;
[...]
you (great Lady) [...],
From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace [.]
(TDC, 1-2, 11-12)

Repetition of ‘Grace’ (TDC, 2, 12) recalls Thomas Norton’s influential alchemical treatise, *The Ordinall of Alchimy* (1477): ‘holi *Alkimy* / [...] by Teaching, or Revelacion begann. / [...] given to an able Man by grace.’⁶⁰ Norton’s name appears on fol. 123r of ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, so his writings are likely to have been read by Margaret Clifford and her circle.⁶¹ Moreover, Lanyer’s repetition of ‘Grace’ (TDC, 2, 12) evokes Botticelli’s three female Graces in the *Primavera* (c. 1477-1490). Botticelli’s three female Graces may personify ‘intellectus’, ‘spiritus’ and ‘materia’, and for Lanyer’s poet-speaker these three divine components are embodied in Margaret Clifford herself: ‘I first obtain’d / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d’ (TDC, 1-2).⁶²

Indeed, it is Margaret Clifford who controls the ‘spiritus’ of Nature in Cookeham:

each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee [Margaret]:
The very Hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread upon them did intend.

⁶⁰ Thomas Norton, *The Ordinall of Alchimy*, in *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, ed. by Elias Ashmole (London, 1651), pp. 2-106 (p. 13). For the circulation of *The Ordinall of Alchimy* in the Renaissance, see Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, pp. 22-24.

⁶¹ MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fols 122v; 123r.

⁶² The terms ‘intellectus’, ‘spiritus’ and ‘materia’ stem from the twelfth-century Hermetic text, the *Picatrix*, cited by Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 55. For the circulation of the *Picatrix* in Renaissance Europe, see Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 52-53.

And as you set your feete, they still did rise,
 Glad that they could receive so rich a prise.
 The gentle Windes did take delight to bee
 Among those woods that were so grac'd by thee.
 [...]
 Each Arbor, Banke, each Seate, each stately Tree,
 Thought themselves honor'd in supporting thee.
 (TDC, 33-40, 45-46)

In *The New Pearl of Great Price* (1546), the alchemist is described as a 'minister and follower of Nature' and this is echoed by Michael Maier in 1618: 'Nature be your guide; follow her with your art [of alchemy] willingly, closely'.⁶³ For Lanyer's speaker, it is Margaret Clifford who embodies both Dame Nature and Lady Alchymia, as she transforms and commands the landscape that surrounds her: 'each plant, each floure, each tree / Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee [Margaret]' (TDC, 33-34). Lanyer's representation of Margaret Clifford as Dame Nature at Cooke-ham takes us back to Anne Clifford's portrayal of her mother in her 1652 family memorial: 'She [Margaret Clifford] delighted in distilling of waters, and other chymical extractions, for she had some knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants'.⁶⁴ For both Lanyer and Anne Clifford, it is Margaret who sets forth the powers of 'plant[s]', 'floure[s]' and 'tree[s]' (TDC, 33). One of the extant presentation copies of Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* contains the inscription 'Cumberland' on the recto of the page preceding the title-page (Figure 1).⁶⁵

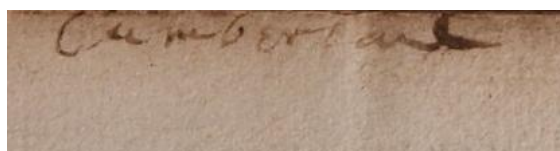


Figure 1, The inscription 'Cumberland' on the recto of the page preceding the title-page in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, London, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Dyce 5675. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. www.vam.ac.uk.

This inscription suggests that *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* may have been disseminated via Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland and her associates. Anne Clifford could have accessed *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* through her mother and drawn influence from

⁶³ *The New Pearl of Great Price*, cited in Lyndy Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), p. 60; Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens*, cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 60.

⁶⁴ Anne Clifford, 'A Summary of Records', p. 20.

⁶⁵ This presentation copy of Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (London, 1611) is held in the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Dyce 5675.

it for her own eulogy of Margaret Clifford in her 1652 family memorial. Indeed, in Lanyer's dedicatory poem to Anne Clifford, Lanyer writes:

This Monument of her [Margaret Clifford's] faire worth retaine
In your [Anne Clifford's] pure mind, and keep it from al staine.
[...]

He [Christ] is the stone the builders did refuse,
Which you, sweet Lady [Anne Clifford], are to build upon;
He is the rocke that holy Church did chuse,
Among which number, you must needs be one [.]
(LACD,⁶⁶ 71-72, 129-32)

Lanyer posits here that Anne Clifford will 'retaine' (LACD, 71) in her 'mind' (LACD, 72) the textual monument of Margaret Clifford that Lanyer has erected in her volume of poems. Moreover, Lanyer suggests that through *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Anne Clifford will access the spiritual-material 'stone' (LACD, 129), Christ. What I am arguing here is that it is the discourse of spiritual-physical alchemy that connects both Lanyer and Anne to Margaret.

Lanyer thus foregrounds the power of the transformative female patron who can change protégées' lives emotionally, physically, spiritually and ultimately financially. Lanyer has been accused by A. L. Rowse of being sycophantic in her expressions of love for her patrons, but Lanyer's portrayal of the transformative female patron is arguably part of a carefully engineered political agenda, as she seeks to rewrite the pejorative accounts of Lady Alchymia found in some male discourses of the time.⁶⁷

The sixteenth-century German astrologer, Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), described Lady Alchymia as a 'chaste prostitute, who has many lovers but disappoints all and grants her favors to none. She transforms the haughty into fools, the rich into paupers, the philosophers into dolts, and the deceived into loquacious deceivers'.⁶⁸ Trithemius, in this statement, seems to be satirizing the muse of exoteric alchemy. Gold seekers, according to Trithemius, will be disappointed by the 'chaste prostitute', Lady

⁶⁶ Aemilia Lanyer, 'To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet', in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 41-47. From henceforth 'To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet' has been abbreviated as LACD and is preceded by the line reference.

⁶⁷ A. L. Rowse, *The Poems of Shakespeare's Dark Lady: Salve Deus Rex Judæorum by Emilia Lanier* (London: Cape, 1978), p. 33.

⁶⁸ Johannes Trithemius, *Annalium Hirsaugensium* (1690), cited by Jayne Elisabeth Archer, "'Rudenesse it selfe she doth refine': Queen Elizabeth I as Lady Alchymia", in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 45-66 (p. 50).

Alchymia, because she is open to all, but grants satisfaction and fruition to none.⁶⁹ Trithemius's notion of the promiscuous 'chaste prostitute' is recalled and reworked by Donne in his depiction of the bride/church of Christ, who is 'most trew' when she is 'embrac'd and open to most men'.⁷⁰ Lanyer's poet-speaker is devoted to her patron, Margaret Clifford, for being the 'Deere Spouse of Christ' (SDRJ, 1170) – Margaret is the embodiment of the true church of Christ, celebrated for her constancy, generosity and genuine transformative power:

The gentle Windes did take delight to bee
Among those woods that were so grac'd by thee
[Margaret Clifford].
[...]
The swelling Bankes deliver'd all their pride,
When such a *Phænix* once they had espide.
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford]
walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see [.]
(TDC, 39-40, 43-44, 81-84)

A Chymicall Dictionary (1650) defines the phoenix as the 'quintessence of Fire; also the Philosopher's Stone'.⁷¹ For Lanyer's speaker in 'The Description of Cooke-ham', the philosopher's stone, the '*Phænix*' (TDC, 44), Christ, is resurrected through Lady Alchymia, Margaret Clifford. In this way, Lanyer deconstructs the dubious/profane invocations of Lady Alchymia found in the writings of Trithemius and Donne. Lanyer's Lady Alchymia, Margaret Clifford, restores to life the philosopher's stone, the '*Phænix*' (TDC, 44), Christ, and is cleansed from any taint of the profane.

Lanyer's *reinterpretatio* of male alchemical traditions is sustained in her presentation of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. In the sixteenth-century manuscript, *Splendor Solis, Alchemical Treatises of Solomon Trismosin* (1582), we find a pictorial depiction of alchemical knowledge emanating from the Queen of Sheba and Solomon: the mixing of male and female, Sol and Luna (Figure 2).⁷² This is taken up by

⁶⁹ Trithemius, *Annalium Hirsaugensium*, cited by Archer, "'Rudenesse it selfe she doth refine': Queen Elizabeth I as Lady Alchymia", p. 50.

⁷⁰ Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XVIII', in *The Divine Poems*, ed. by Gardner, p. 15, lines 13-14.

⁷¹ *A Chymicall Dictionary* (1650), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 152.

⁷² Salomon Trismosin, *Splendor Solis, Alchemical Treatises of Solomon Trismosin* (1582), cited in C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, in *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. by Herbert Read and others, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, 20 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), XII, p. 81.

Heinrich Khunrath in the *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom* (1595), which is a theosophical commentary on Solomonian texts, and is also recounted in Michael Maier's *Septimana Philosophica* (1620), which is a six-day dialogue between King Solomon, Hiram and the Queen of Sheba.⁷³



Figure 2, 'Coniunctio solis et lunae', from Salomon Trismosin, *Splendor Solis* (1582), London, British Library, MS Harley 3469, fol. 10r. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark MS Harley 3469.

It is this exchange of alchemical 'Wisdom' (SDRJ, 1586) that Lanyer evokes when she writes:

That Ethiopian Queene did gaine great fame,
Who from the Southerne world, did come to see
Great *Salomon*; the glory of whose name
Had spread it selfe ore all the earth,
[...]

 this faire Queene of Sheba came from farre,
 To reverence this new appearing starre.
[...]

 faire rich presents did she bring:
Yea many strange hard questions did shee frame,
All which were answer'd by this famous King:
 Nothing was hid that in her heart did rest,
 And all to proove this King so highly blest.

Here Majestie with Majestie did meete,
Wisdome to Wisdome yeelded true content,
One Beauty did another Beauty greet,
Bounty to Bountie never could repent;
[...]

⁷³ Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom*, cited in Forshaw, 'Subliming Spirits', p. 255; Michael Maier's *Septimana Philosophica*, cited in Joscelyn Godwin, 'Preface', in Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens: An Edition of the Fugues, Emblems and Epigrams*, trans. by Joscelyn Godwin (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1989), pp. 7-17 (p. 8).

In virtuous exercises of the minde,
In which this Queene did much contentment finde.
(SDRJ, 1569-72, 1575-76, 1580-88, 1591-92)

Textual chiasmus here (SDRJ, 1585-88) establishes an egalitarian equality between Solomon and Sheba, mirroring the balancing of Sol and Luna, male and female in Plate IV of the Trismosin illustration (Figure 2). Margaret Clifford, as a reader of alchemical texts, would not have missed this allusion. However, Lanyer goes a step further than her male contemporaries, as she intimates that Solomon and Sheba ‘com[e] short’ (SDRJ, 1690) of Margaret Clifford:

This great majesticke Queene comes short of thee [Margaret],
[...]
a greater thou hast sought and found
Than *Salomon* in all his royalite [.]
(SDRJ, 1690, 1697-98)

Solomon and Sheba are ‘[l]overs [...] base’ (SDRJ, 1551-52) in comparison to the ‘[p]ure thoughted Lady’ (SDRJ, 1673) Margaret. Margaret with her ‘golden via[l] [phial?]’ (SDRJ, 1678) reaches ‘heavenly light’ (SDRJ, 1611), as she ‘walke[s]’ with Christ and ‘meditate[s]’ with Moses, ‘mount[ing]’ his ‘holy Hill’ (TDC, 81, 84-85). Lanyer here echoes the notion of divine Hermetic ascent: ‘And thereupon’ the *Hermetica* tells us, ‘the man mounts upward through the structure of the heavens [...] he ascends to the substance of the eighth sphere, being now possessed of his own proper power’.⁷⁴ As Margaret ascends Moses’ ‘holy Hill’ (TDC, 85) in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, she becomes a personification of the Prophetess Maria, Moses’ sacred sister and said inventor of the bain-marie (the water bath used for alchemical separation).⁷⁵

According to Lanyer’s poet-speaker, Margaret Clifford’s alchemical healing stems from a rich female biblical tradition emanating from the daughters of Jerusalem, the Virgin Mary and the Mary Magdalene. The daughters of Jerusalem ‘cri’d’ at Christ’s crucifixion and thus obtain a Thomas-Norton-like ‘grace’ from God (SDRJ, 968-69).⁷⁶ Their fecund tears ‘powr’d forth apace / [...] like shewers of Aprils raine’ (SDRJ, 973-74), cleansing and ‘wash[ing]’ (SDRJ, 1017) the ‘stone’ (SDRJ, 1661) which is Christ. Similarly, the Virgin Mary with ‘[h]er teares did wash away his

⁷⁴ *Hermetica*, cited in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. by L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, 1st pub. 1914), Note 636, p. 758.

⁷⁵ Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, pp. 61, 74.

⁷⁶ Norton, *The Ordinall of Alchimy*, p. 13.

[Christ's] pretious blood' (SDRJ, 1017). This fluvial intermingling of blood and tears recalls the alchemical process of ablution: mixing blood with matter and dissolving the matter of the stone in order to reach the divine purity of 'finest gold' (SDRJ, 1311).⁷⁷ The sixteenth-century alchemist-physician, Gerhard Dorn, proposed that '[w]ithin the human body there is [...] a metaphysical substance [...] it is itself uncorrupted medicament'.⁷⁸ Lanyer implies that it is women's uncorrupted tears that are healing metaphysical substances, as it is women's tears that alleviate Christ's suffering during the Passion. According to Lanyer's speaker, it is through the alchemical intermixing of the tears of women and the blood of Christ that leads to the creation of the Gospels: 'In deepe Characters, writ with blood and teares, / Upon those blessed Everlasting scroules' (SDRJ, 1725-26).

The Virgin Mary is described by Lanyer as a 'Faire chosen vessell' (SDRJ, 1030). The Virgin Mary is thus evocative of a sacred bain-marie, created to '[n]urse / [...] Heavens bright King [Christ]' (SDRJ, 1087-88). Lanyer's Virgin Mary enters into the 'open street' to gather the 'Jessie floure and bud', Christ, when he smells 'most sweet' (SDRJ, 1020-22). This not only recounts the voice of the bride in the Song of Songs, who seeks Christ 'by the stretes & by the open places', but also refers to other Renaissance female wanderers, who walk in open places, gathering and conserving wild flowers as salves.⁷⁹ The domestic worker turned writer, Isabella Whitney, for example, writes:

For this I say the flowers are good,
which I on thee bestow:
[...]
*The Luce of all these Flowers take,
and make thee a conserue [.]*⁸⁰

Flowers for Whitney and Lanyer are a Gerhard-Dorn-like medicine of 'threefold nature: metaphysical, physical, and moral'.⁸¹ For Lanyer, this practise of conserving and decocting the medicament of flowers emanates from the Virgin Mary (SDRJ, 1020-22).

Paracelsus had argued that the physician's task is to see the 'inner and secret matter' of all things.⁸² He posits that a physician must be a 'philosopher' and

⁷⁷ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Gerhard Dorn, 'Speculativae philosophiae' (1602), cited in Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 256.

⁷⁹ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, The song of Salomón 3. 2.

⁸⁰ Isabella Whitney, *A Sweet Nosgay* (London, 1573), sigs A8r; C5r.

⁸¹ Dorn, 'Speculativae philosophiae', cited in Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 256.

⁸² Paracelsus, 'Opus Paramirum', in *Paracelsus: Essential Readings*, p. 78.

discourse'.⁸⁹ Historians of women's science have done much to counter this gender-biased ideology. Margaret Pelling, for instance, argues that the first port of call in times of illness in the early modern era was the family or household where women's knowledge and presence was prominent.⁹⁰ As outlined above, Lanyer uses the Gospels to create a complex physiological lexicon, which was designed to appeal to early modern female practitioners of medicine such as Margaret Clifford. *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* provides evidence that physiological discourses were inextricably intertwined with spiritual discourses in this period and it is through this conflation that women writers like Lanyer could enter into medical debates.

It is not only Margaret Clifford, however, who is portrayed as a spiritual alchemist in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, but the poet-speaker herself. As indicated, Margaret has the strength to undergo Hermetic ascent, but the poet too is capable of reaching such divine heights:

This Storie: that whole Worlds with Bookes would fill,
In these few Lines, will put me out of breath,
To run so swiftly up this mightie Hill,
I may behold it with the eye of Faith [.]
(SDRJ, 315-18)

Lanyer's poet-speaker combines Petrarch's sublime ascent of Mount Ventoux ('To run so swiftly up this mightie Hill' [SDRJ, 317]), with a Hermetic regenerative power ('poore Infant Verse must soare aloft, / [...] And in the Ayre above the Clowdes to hover' [SDRJ, 279, 283]).⁹¹ The poet-speaker's heavenly ascent will lead to the creation of her divine poem. By mirroring Margaret Clifford's ascent of Moses' 'holy Hill' (TDC, 85), the poet-speaker signals that she is on a potentially similar footing to her patron, as 'Poverty and Riches' meet 'together' (SDRJ, 1114) through the 'poore rich King' Christ.⁹² Erica Longfellow posits that discourses of 'egalitarianism' would have been 'alien' to Lanyer's original readers and potential patrons.⁹³ But just how accurate is this assumption? As illustrated, Margaret Clifford was not afraid of interacting with

⁸⁹ Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, pp. 37-38.

⁹⁰ Margaret Pelling, 'Thoroughly Resented: Older Women and the Medical Role in Early Modern London', in *Women and Science, 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society*, ed. by Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), pp. 63-88 (p. 70).

⁹¹ Petrarch's *Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV, I*, ed. and trans. by Lokaj, pp. 94-107;

Hermetica, cited in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. by Martin, Note 636, p. 758.

⁹² Aemilia Lanyer, 'To the Ladie Katherine Countesse of Suffolke', in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 36-40 (p. 38), line 54.

⁹³ Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 69.

‘all sorts of people’ (such as the impoverished widows of Beamsley).⁹⁴ Anne Clifford writes in her 1652 family memorial that Margaret Clifford was of ‘graceful behaviour, which she increased the more by her being civil and courteous to all sorts of people’.⁹⁵ According to Anne Clifford, Margaret’s God-given ‘graceful behaviour’ is augmented through her mixing with ‘all sorts of people’.⁹⁶ Margaret Clifford was also a public defender of women, declaring to the Court at Whitehall in 1606, ‘man in his sex be more excellent than woman, yet in quality wee see often women excell men’.⁹⁷ Margaret’s choice of the term ‘women’ here is arguably transcendent of class. Furthermore, as indicated, it is through the administering of ‘salves’ that women of various social backgrounds were able to interact with one another. Lady Margaret Hoby gives a ‘saulue’ (salve) to a ‘poore woman of Caton’ and receives ‘medeson’ made by Mrs Thornborow.⁹⁸ The medic-healer, Lady Grace Mildmay (c. 1552-1620), instructs her housekeeper and ‘assured friend’, Bess, in the following way:

My good Bess,

[...]

as you receive the robite wine, which I think will be tomorrow in the afternoon, put the herbs [...] in and on Monday next distil some part of, but not too near. Then strain it from the herbs and reserve the herbs to dry. Then put the water you draw off unto the same extracted liquor and reserve it by itself.

[...]

It may be that you must draw the herbs at twice, because they are many. Use your own discretion herein, but this is the form and matter. And take your time and leisure as you think good. [...] God give his blessing thereunto.

Your very loving mistress and assured friend,

[Lady Grace Mildmay.]⁹⁹

It is through the practises of domestic alchemy that class distinctions could be partially negotiated.

It is not accidental that ‘salve’ is the first word of Lanyer’s poem. Lanyer’s use of the word ‘salve’ has a threefold meaning. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, ‘Salve’ is

⁹⁴ Anne Clifford, ‘A Summary of Records’, p. 19.

⁹⁵ Anne Clifford, ‘A Summary of Records’, p. 19.

⁹⁶ Anne Clifford, ‘A Summary of Records’, p. 19.

⁹⁷ Margaret Clifford’s petition to Whitehall (23 November 1606), cited in Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 41.

⁹⁸ Hoby, ‘The :18: day [September 1600]’, ‘The: 19: day [December 1600]’, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady*, pp. 112, 130.

⁹⁹ ‘Lady Mildmay to her housekeeper’ (c. 1580?-1620?), in Linda Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London: Collins & Brown, 1993), pp. 140-41.

Latin for 'Hail', but in English it can mean both a healing bodily ointment and a remedy for spiritual disease (*OED*). Lanyer draws upon this inference and in so doing evokes the culture of healing medicinal mixtures exchanged between women of different classes. 'Salve' also invokes the 'Salve Regina', a Marian antiphon (*OED*). As illustrated, the Virgin Mary, for Lanyer, is a physical and spiritual healer par excellence, nursing Christ through his death and resurrection. In this way, Lanyer fashions herself as a spiritual healer and uses this lexicon to enter into Margaret Clifford's household, chamber and still-room: 'Saint *Peter* gave health to the body, so I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule [...] The sweet incense, balsums, odours, and gummess that flowes from the beautifull tree of Life' (LM, 9-10, 14-15). According to Susanne Woods, Lanyer certainly spoke French and Italian and probably had some knowledge of Latin.¹⁰⁰ Lanyer, through *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, may have been offering her services to Margaret Clifford as a translator of alchemical texts, similarly to the aforementioned male protégées, Thomas Tymme and Christopher Tylour.

By stressing the transformative power of the female 'friend', Lanyer transmutes the male homosocial discourse of alchemical *amicitia*, and applies it to women. In the seventeenth-century manuscript, *A Light in Darkness* (c. 1602), Thomas Tymme presents his patron, Thomas Baker, with '*a Scholler's guift, which I offer to you [Thomas Baker] (my worshipfull & most precious friend in the world) wishing to you [...] the true and most perfect Elixir [Christ], both in this lyfe and the life to come*'.¹⁰¹ Tymme here compounds the discourse of spiritual alchemy with Neoplatonism, echoing Ficino's love letters to his disciple/patron, Lorenzo de' Medici: 'I burn with the fire of love. [...] You [de' Medici] have converted [...] everyone's envy to admiration. [...] I love my own in you. [...] I reverence God through you'.¹⁰² Alchemical *amicitia* can dissolve class distinctions, as all are one through the '*precious friend*' Christ.¹⁰³ Lanyer draws upon the class transcendence of male alchemical *amicitia* in her address to Margaret Clifford, and broadens this male homosocial dynamic by foregrounding the transformative power of female patron-protégée love:

Therefore good Madame [Margaret Clifford], to the most perfect eyes of your understanding, I deliver the inestimable treasure [Christ] of all elected soules [...]; as also, the mirrour of your most worthy minde [...]

¹⁰⁰ Susanne Woods, *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 14.

¹⁰¹ Tymme, *A Light in Darkness*, p. 9.

¹⁰² Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, pp. 69, 70, 71.

¹⁰³ Tymme, *A Light in Darkness*, p. 9.

So wishing you in this world all increase of health and honour, and in the world to come life everlasting, I rest.

(LM, 27-31, 38-39)

Lanyer's construction of herself as poet-chemist is made explicit when she states: 'I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule; [...] this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice' (LM, 9-13). Jayne Archer reads this statement as referring to the 'philosophical gold hidden in the bowels' of a pre-lapsarian paradise.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Lanyer intimates that this pre-lapsarian 'gold' (LM, 12) can be regained through a Petrarchan Hermetic ascent (SDRJ, 315-18). Lanyer's 'gold' (LM, 12) is, of course, also a reference to Christ. *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* is imbued with a spiritual alchemical quest, where the poet's search for Christ mirrors what 'The Margaret Manuscript' describes as 'the threefolde preparation of Golde': *nigredo* or chaotic darkness ('He [Christ] in the waters laies his chamber beames, / And cloudes of darknesse compasse him about' [SDRJ, 97-98]); *albedo* or cleansing ('The Innocent [...] as a Dove shall flie / [...] Her [the Virgin Mary's] teares did wash away his [Christ's] pretious blood' [SDRJ, 119, 1017]); *rubedo* or dawning light ('Thou [Christ] as the Sunne shalt shine; or much more cleare' [SDRJ, 56]).¹⁰⁵ By presenting Christ through this vivid exoteric process, Lanyer echoes the lexicon of Margaret Clifford's alchemical receipt book ('the threefolde preparation of Golde') and thus establishes an esoteric code between herself and her patron.¹⁰⁶ Lanyer demonstrates that she can speak and understand the discourse of Margaret Clifford's alchemical coterie and subtly uses this lexicon to solicit Margaret's inner circle.

However, Lanyer's alchemical discourse does not simply allow her to appeal to an enclosed circle, but is part of a wider political agenda applicable to 'all vertuous Ladies' that questions the masculinist genealogy of knowledge.¹⁰⁷ At the time Lanyer was writing, alchemist-physicians such as Simon Forman (whom Lanyer visited in 1597) were avidly reading the 'Vita Adae et Evae' (the 'Life of Adam and Eve'), which was an ancient exegesis of Genesis recounting details of Adam and Eve's pre- and post-lapsarian life.¹⁰⁸ Alchemists turned to the 'Vita' because it contained evidence that

¹⁰⁴ Archer, 'Women and Alchemy in Early Modern England', Chapter 2, p. xxxiv.

¹⁰⁵ MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fols 59r, 121r.

¹⁰⁶ MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fols 59r, 121r.

¹⁰⁷ Lanyer, TAVL, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ The 'Vita Adae et Evae' dates from between the first and third centuries AD. The 'Vita' circulated throughout medieval and early modern Europe, in Latin and the vernacular. See Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 190. Lanyer's 1597 visits to Forman are recorded in Forman's

original alchemical knowledge was imparted to Adam from God.¹⁰⁹ In Simon Forman's late-sixteenth-century manuscript copy of the 'Vita', we are told that 'god did replenishe him [Adam] with all kinds of wisdom [and] Arte'.¹¹⁰ According to the 'Vita', it is Solomon who discovers the sacred books of Adam: 'in the Arke of the testament of god in [...] which he [Solomon] found all the boockes of Moyeses and Aron [...] therein alsoe he found the boock [...] which god gave unto Adam'.¹¹¹ The doctrine of the 'Vita' is echoed by the medieval alchemist, Aegidius de Vadis, who declared that God made the 'first mane Adam perfecte in all naturall things, and didest endue him with sufficient knowledge'.¹¹² Adam's 'perfecte [...] knowledge', as indicated in the 'Vita', was conveyed to the rest of mankind through the patriarchs, Solomon, Moses and Aaron. Indeed, according to Pico della Mirandola, Adam is at the very centre 'of the world' and post-lapsarian man can 'grow upward' to the 'higher natures' of the divine through Adam's pre-lapsarian perfection.¹¹³ This patriarchal lineage, stressing Adam's perfection, is queried by Lanyer, as her speaker expostulates: 'Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / From *Eves* faire hand, as from a learned Booke' (SDRJ, 807-808). For Lanyer's speaker, it is Eve who is blessed with the honour of knowledge and will grant this knowledge to others from the fruit of the Tree of Life:

this great Lady [Eve] I have here attired,
In all her richest ornaments of Honour,
[...]
she must entertaine you to this Feast [;]
(TQEM,¹¹⁴ 79-80, 83)

Our Mother *Eve*, who tasted of the Tree,
Giving to *Adam* what shee held most deare,
Was simply good [.]
(SDRJ, 763-65)

consultation diary, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 226, see A. L. Rowse, *Simon Forman: Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), pp. 99-110; Woods, *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet*, pp. 21-28, 96; David Lasocki with Roger Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531-1665* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 102-26.

¹⁰⁹ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, pp. 190-91

¹¹⁰ Simon Forman's manuscript copy of the 'Vita Adae et Evae' (c. 1599), cited by Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 191.

¹¹¹ Forman, 'Vita Adae et Evae', cited by Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 192.

¹¹² Simon Forman, 'A dialogue of Egidius de Vadius' (1592), cited by Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 192.

¹¹³ Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Aemilia Lanyer, 'To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie', in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 3-10 (p. 7). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as TQEM and is proceeded by the line reference.

Lanyer here dissents from Forman, who maintains that Eve and all women ‘ar alwaies proud in their conceighte [...] & for ever inconstante’.¹¹⁵ According to Forman, and other male medical practitioners of the time, because Eve ‘harkened the serpent’ women suffered more than seventy diseases specific to their sex.¹¹⁶ This is taken up by John Donne when he writes of the ‘poisonous tincture, [...] the stain of Eve’.¹¹⁷ Yet Lanyer cleanses this ‘staine’ laid ‘Upon our [women’s] Sexe’ (SDRJ, 811-12), by implying that it is Adam and his ‘poys’ned’ followers (SDRJ, 382) who are responsible for the spreading of disease: ‘the Scorpions bred in *Adams* mud’ (SDRJ, 381) are arguably the ‘Vipers’ that deface the ‘wombes’ of women.¹¹⁸

Adam’s ‘perfecte [...] knowledge’ of ‘naturall things’ prompted some alchemists to aspire to Adam’s original reading of Nature’s Mystic Book.¹¹⁹ The seventeenth-century alchemist, Elias Ashmole, for example, posits that before his Fall, Adam was so ‘absolute a *Philosopher*’ that he fully understood the true ‘knowledge of *Nature*’, without the need of intermediaries.¹²⁰ In turn, Mother Nature in the Renaissance was often gendered as androgynous, mirroring the original hermaphroditic state of Adam. Edmund Spenser, for instance, describes Nature thus: ‘Whether she [Nature] man or woman inly were, / That could not any creature well descry’.¹²¹ For Lanyer, however, Nature is an emphatic female force that grants the poet-speaker special access to Nature’s Mystic Book, with no interruptions from a male intermediary:

Nature yeelds my Soule [...]

since all Arts at first from Nature came,
That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection [.]
(TQEM, 150-52)

This takes us back to Michael Maier’s statement: ‘Nature be your guide; follow her with your art’.¹²² ‘Ar[t]’ (TQEM, 151), for Lanyer, is not only the poetic ‘art’ of her poem,

¹¹⁵ Simon Forman, ‘A discourse of the plague’ (1593), cited in Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 160.

¹¹⁶ Forman, ‘Vita Adae et Evae’, cited in Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 162.

¹¹⁷ John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary*, in *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. by Smith, p. 275, line 180.

¹¹⁸ Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To the Vertuous Reader’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 48-50 (p. 48), lines 22-23.

¹¹⁹ Forman, ‘A dialogue of Egidius de Vadius’, cited by Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 192.

¹²⁰ Elias Ashmole, *Theatrum chemicum Britannicum* (1651), cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 166.

¹²¹ Edmund Spenser, *The Mutabilitie Cantos* (1609), ed. by S. P. Zitner (London: Nelson, 1968), VII. v. 6-7, p. 99.

¹²² Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens* (1618), cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 60.

but the ‘art’ of alchemy which she learns from Dame Nature – Margaret Clifford herself. This not only provides further evidence that Lanyer may have been learning the art of alchemy from her patron, Dame Nature, Margaret Clifford, but demonstrates how the poet uses her feminocentric relationship with her dedicatees to question masculinist assumptions about the genealogy of knowledge.

It is partly through the discourse of alchemy that Lanyer is able to dissolve the anti-female interpretations of Genesis (foregrounded by men such as Forman). Lanyer writes to her ‘vertuous’ female readers:

Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone
Can leade you right that you can never fall;
[...]
God’s holy Angels will direct your Doves,
And bring your Serpents to the fields of rest [.]
(TAVL, 10-11, 57-58)

With heav’nly Manna, food of his [Christ’s] elected,
To feed their soules, of whom he is respected.

This wheate of Heaven the blessed Angells bread,
Wherewith he feedes his deere adopted Heires;
Sweet foode of life that doth revive the dead,
And from the living takes away all cares;
To taste this sweet Saint *Laurence* did not dread,
The broyling gridyorne cool’d with holy teares:
Yeelding his naked body to the fire,
To taste this sweetnesse, such was his desire.
(SDRJ, 1783-92)

The ‘Serpen[t]’ (TAVL, 58), in the above-quoted extract, does not resemble the ‘olde serpent’ of Genesis and Revelation that ‘deceiueth all the worlde’, but evokes the alchemical uroboros – a symbol of wisdom, regeneration and eternal life (Figure 3).¹²³

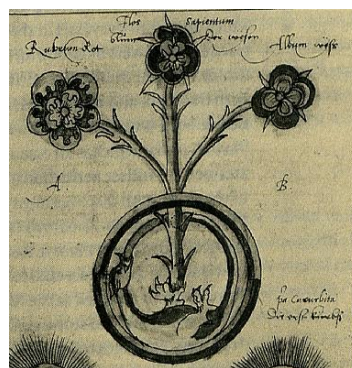


Figure 3, Uroboros with alchemical flowers. From ‘Alchemistisches Manuskript’ (1550), Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS L IV 1, p. 293. © Universitätsbibliothek, Basel.

¹²³ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Reuelation 12. 9.

Christ instructs his followers in *The Geneva Bible* to be as ‘wise as serpentes’, thus Lanyer’s ‘vertuous’ female readers through Eve and the uroboros shall gain access to Christ and a pre-lapsarian ‘rest’ (TAVL, 58): ‘Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone / Can leade you right that you can never fall / [...] And bring your Serpents to the fields of rest’ (TAVL, 10-11, 58).¹²⁴

Furthermore, the fruitful ‘heav’nly Manna’ (SDRJ, 1783) that Lanyer cites, recalls the original ‘food’ (SDRJ, 1783) before the Fall, which was regarded as the philosopher’s stone. As Lauren Kassell points out, in the Renaissance, ‘manna’ bespoke of the food that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 16. 1-32) and was cited in alchemical texts as spiritual food.¹²⁵ The sixteenth-century English manuscript, ‘The epitome of the treasure of all welth’ (1562), for example, professes that ‘this stone [...] shallbe endued with divine guiftes & foreknowledge [...] call itt the foode of Angell [...] a man may live a long time [with] [...] the [...] tast of this stone’.¹²⁶ This is perhaps what Ficino alludes to when he states: the ‘tree of knowledge [...] brings forth the sweetest possible fruit’.¹²⁷ It is to this alchemical tradition that Lanyer seems to appeal when she refers to the ‘heav’nly Manna [...] / Sweet foode of life’ (SDRJ, 1783, 1787). Through the patron saint of cooks, ‘sweet Saint *Laurence*’ (SDRJ, 1789), and his distilled ‘broyling [...] cool’d’ (SDRJ, 1790) body, Lanyer’s speaker preserves the ‘heav’nly Manna’ (SDRJ, 1783), the philosopher’s stone, in her text and hands this to her readers to grant them salvific transcendence: ‘Sweet foode of life that doth revive the dead, / And from the living takes away all cares’ (SDRJ, 1787-88).

It is though her conjuring of the alchemical uroboros (TAVL, 58) and the ‘heav’nly Manna’ (SDRJ, 1783) of Christ that Lanyer’s speaker is able to reach out to ‘all vertuous Ladies’.¹²⁸ Lanyer’s speaker seeks to establish esoteric links with other female practitioners of alchemy, alongside her dedication to Margaret Clifford. As Lyndy Abraham observes, the astrologer and alchemist, John Dee, was regularly visited by Mary Sidney’s brother, Philip Sidney.¹²⁹ At Wilton, Mary Sidney had her own alchemical laboratory and employed Sir Adrian Gilbert (a pupil of Dee) to help with her

¹²⁴ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Matthewe 10. 16.

¹²⁵ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 205.

¹²⁶ Edwardus Generosus Anglicus Innominatus, ‘The epitome of the treasure of all welth’, cited in Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London*, p. 205.

¹²⁷ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 60.

¹²⁸ TAVL, p. 12.

¹²⁹ Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 4.

experiments.¹³⁰ Lanyer's dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney contains a subtle alchemical lexicon:

Me thought a Chariot
 [...]
 Drawne by foure fierie Dragons, which did bend
 Their course where this most noble Lady [Mary Sidney] sate [.]
 (ADLM, 26, 28-29)

The fifteenth-century French alchemist, Nicolas Flamel, instructs us to 'Looke well upon these [...] *Dragons*, for they are the true principles or beginnings of [...] *Phylosophy* [...]. These are the *Sunne* and *Moone* of the Mercurial source'.¹³¹ In the sixteenth-century manuscript, 'De alchimia', a mystical woman, Lady Alchymia, stands cradling a dragon as her child (Figure 4). Lanyer affiliates Mary Sidney with this sacred signification of the 'Drago[n]' (ADLM, 28) in a bid to establish alchemical female *amicitia*.



Figure 4, Thomas Aquinas (pseudonym), 'De alchimia' (c. 1500?), Leiden, Leiden University Library, Codex Vossianus 29, fol. 95r. © Leiden University Library, Leiden.

It is in Mary Sidney's presence that the alchemical hermaphrodite, the 'manly mayd' Bellona (ADLM, 35), makes her appearance. The alchemical process of conjunction (the union of two metallic seeds), was often depicted as a chemical wedding of Sol and Luna, sun and moon, which gave birth to the hermaphrodite. George Ripley spoke of the joining of the '*Red Man* and the *Whyte Woman*' and according to Nicolas

¹³⁰ Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 4.

¹³¹ Nicolas Flamel, *His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures* (1624), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 59.

Flamel, this union resulted in the creation of the ‘Androgyne [...] of the Ancients’.¹³² Lanyer’s androgynous Bellona appears in the liminal twilight of morning, where Sol, *Apolloe*, graces ‘his eie’ (ADLM, 68) and Luna, *Phoebe*, mixes with *Aurora* (ADLM, 61-62). Bellona’s helmet is laden with ‘myrtle bayes’ and ‘olive branches’ (ADLM, 39). Myrtle plants blossom with white-scented flowers, which were distilled in the later Middle Ages and used in perfumery and from olive branches precious oil could be obtained (*OED*).¹³³ In Lanyer’s poem, nine ‘faire Virgins’ (ADLM, 9) surround Bellona with their ‘Harps and Vialls [phials?]’ (ADLM, 10), waiting to decoct Bellona’s herbal gifts. According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine, music and the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’, and Lanyer places this syncretic theory within a gender-fluid femino-centric context in her dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney.¹³⁴

Lanyer’s poet-speaker appears to be ‘Fast ti’d’ unto Mary Sidney, Bellona and the nine ‘faire Virgins’ by a ‘golden Chaine’ (ADLM, 7), and this image resurfaces at the close of the volume in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’: ‘Tying my heart to her [Margaret Clifford] by those rich chaines’ (TDC, 210). In ‘The Golden Treatise of Hermes’, the Egyptian sage states: ‘Know, my son, that the philosopher’s bind up their matter with a strong chain’.¹³⁵ The Hermetic *Asclepius* and *Pimander* are ultimately concerned with the male genealogy of knowledge (masculine ‘gnosis’) and the circulation of this sacred knowledge amongst men. The Hermetic *Asclepius* and *Pimander* (like Plato’s *Symposium* and Cicero’s *De Amicitia*) are structured by a series of male dialogues between Hermes Trismegistus, his son, Tat, and his friend, Aesculapius. This male homosociality is celebrated by Ficino, who declares: ‘Hermes Trismegistus chose Aesculapius [...] wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey’.¹³⁶ Lanyer, however, transforms Hermes’ ‘chain’ to include female lineage: her ‘golden Chaine’ (ADLM, 7) includes mothers and daughters (Margaret and Anne Clifford, Queen Anne and Princess Elizabeth) and other female alchemists such as Mary Sidney and of course, the poet-speaker herself.¹³⁷ In this way, Lanyer instils the female

¹³² George Ripley, *The Compound of Alchymy* and Nicolas Flamel, *His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures*, cited by Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 98.

¹³³ For further exposition on the domestic usefulness of myrtle and the ‘Oyle’ of ‘Oliue’, see Thomas Newton, *An Herbal for the Bible* (London, 1587), pp. 37, 201.

¹³⁴ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

¹³⁵ ‘The Golden Treatise of Hermes’ (1600), cited by Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 193.

¹³⁶ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 97.

¹³⁷ Lanyer, LM, pp. 34-35; LACD, pp. 41-47; TQEM, pp. 3-10; ‘To the Lady Elizabeths Grace’, pp. 11-16; ADLM, pp. 21-31. Page citations here refer to *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*.

principle into the *Asclepius* and *Pimander* and offers a pro-woman hermeneutic of the Hermetic.

Mary Sidney's glorious entrance in a magnificent 'Chariot' (ADLM, 26) in Lanyer's dedicatory poem, recalls the dramatic roles that Queen Anne and other women of the court (such as Anne Clifford) played in the royal court masques.¹³⁸ As David Lasocki and Roger Prior point out, Ben Jonson collaborated with several royal musicians in the production of his masques for Queen Anne's court and they included Lanyer's cousin, Thomas Lupo, who arranged dance music for violins.¹³⁹ Lanyer thus may have heard about, or even seen, Queen Anne's performances in masques through her familial musical connections. These masques often contained magical alchemical symbolism. In Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), for example, Queen Anne appears carrying a 'golden tree' laden with 'fruit', which is the '*hieroglyphic*' doctrine of the '*Egyptians*'.¹⁴⁰ Queen Anne, like Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto, appears as a Hermetic Sibyl:

Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir
mait land and gold scho gave aboūdantlie
Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir
q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie [...]
(MQ, LXIX, 41-44)

Queen Anne had her own patronage system and could transform the lives of others through her financial control.¹⁴¹ Indeed, it is to Queen Anne's alchemizing fiscal power that Jonson alludes to when he writes of her 'refine[d]' touch of 'perfection', which will literally transmute Jonson's 'mystic lines' into gold.¹⁴²

According to Barbara Lewalski, Jonson's masques that were performed by Queen Anne subverted the representation of King James as an exclusive 'locus of power'.¹⁴³ Indeed, as indicated, Jonson undoubtedly foregrounds the commanding

¹³⁸ Anne Clifford performed in *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) and *The Masque of Queens* (1609). See Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 20.

¹³⁹ Lasocki with Prior, *The Bassanos*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁰ Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, in *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. by Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 47-60 (pp. 56-57), lines 238-45.

¹⁴¹ Leeds Barroll, 'The Court of the First Stuart Queen', in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. by Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 191-208 (p. 205); Maureen M. Meikle, 'Holde her at the Oeconomick rule of the House': Anna of Denmark and Scottish Court Finances, 1589-1603', in *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, ed. by Ewan and Meikle, pp. 105-11.

¹⁴² Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, pp. 56, 59, 55, lines, 234, 321, 206.

¹⁴³ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 29.

‘authority and grace’ of Queen Anne.¹⁴⁴ Yet Jonson also stresses the supreme *auctoritas* of King James:

Britannia, whose new name makes all tongues sing,
Might be a diamond worthy to enchase it,
Ruled by a sun that to this height doth grace it,
[...]
His light sciential is, and, past mere nature,
Can salve the rude defects of every creature.¹⁴⁵

The male ‘sun’ conjured here is the Sun God, Apollo, a personification of King James, who basks in the light of the other divine ‘sun’, Christ.¹⁴⁶ In Lanyer’s opening dedication to Queen Anne in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, she offers an alternative adumbration of ‘salvific’ Britannia. It is Queen Anne, for Lanyer’s speaker, who is ‘Renowned Empresse, [...] great Britaines Queene’ (TQEM, 1). Anne, not James, according to Lanyer’s speaker, gives new meaning to the name of ‘Britannia’. Moreover, the ‘salve’ of Lanyer’s title may be an invocation of Queen Anne’s medicinal ladies of the bedchamber, Elizabeth Grey (1582-1651) and Aletheia Talbot (*d.* 1654), who were offering salvific care to both the Queen and other women and men of the court.¹⁴⁷

The ‘base’ earthly ‘Crowne’ (TQEM, 46, 49) of King James in Lanyer’s dedicatory poem to Queen Anne, is eclipsed by the coronation of King Christ: ‘That mightie Monarch both of heav’n and earth’ (TQEM, 44). Within Christ’s ‘royall Court’ (TQEM, 52) Anne creates her own ‘bright spheare’ (TQEM, 25). Lanyer’s speaker here covertly alludes to Queen Anne’s separatist, possibly pro-Catholic court, which harboured a certain spiritual transformative influence, converting the internal blackness of men and women into a state of esoteric perfection.¹⁴⁸ It is Queen Anne’s gynarchic proselytizing court that partly leads to James’s public proclamations of disgust: ‘Papists are waxed as proud at this time [...] And [...] dayly increase, especially among the

¹⁴⁴ Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, p. 47, line 9.

¹⁴⁵ Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, p. 56, lines 221-27.

¹⁴⁶ Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, p. 56, line 223.

¹⁴⁷ Grey’s and Talbot’s medical-alchemical receipt books were published in the mid seventeenth century, but were composed during Queen Anne’s reign. Elizabeth Grey, *A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets* (London, 1653) and Alethea Talbot, *Natura Exenterata* (London, 1655). See Lynette Hunter, ‘Women and Domestic Medicine: Lady Experimenters, 1570-1620’, in *Women and Science, 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society*, ed. by Hunter and Hutton, pp. 89-107 (p. 95).

¹⁴⁸ Queen Anne reputedly converted to Catholicism in 1600, see Peter McCullough, ‘Preaching to a Court Papist? Donne’s Sermon Before Queen Anne, December 1617’, *John Donne Journal*, 14 (1995), 59-81.

foeminine Sexe'.¹⁴⁹ Within Queen Anne's separatist spiritual court, Lanyer fashions herself as an alchemical lady-in-waiting, holding up a metaphysical mirror for the Queen's internal reflection:

Looke in this Mirroure of a worthy Mind,
Where some of your faire Virtues will appeare;
Though all it is impossible to find,
Unlesse my Glasse were chrystall, or more cleare:
Which is dym steele, yet full of spotlesse truth,
And for one looke from your faire eyes it su'th.
[...]
Let your faire Virtues in my Glasse be seene.
(TQEM, 37-42, 90)

As Lyndy Abraham observes, the reception of an image upon a glass was a creation trope used by Hermetic alchemists such as John Dee, who referred to the 'Glas of Creation' in *The Mathematicall Praeface to Euclid* (1570).¹⁵⁰ The alchemical mirror/glass is visually depicted in 'The Margaret Manuscript' (Figure 5) and is taken up in the seventeenth century by Thomas Vaughan who describes alchemical creation thus: 'No sooner had the Divine *Light* pierced the *Bosom* of Matter [...] the *Idea* [...] of the whole Material World appeared in those *primitive waters*, like *Image* in a *Glasse*'.¹⁵¹



Figure 5, The alchemical mirror in 'The Margaret Manuscript', Kendal, Cumbria Archive Centre, MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 95r. © Kendal, Cumbria Archive Centre. Reproduced by permission of Lord Hothfield and the Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal.

¹⁴⁹ James Stuart, 'A Speach to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at White-Hall, on Wednesday the XXI. of March. Anno, 1609', in *King James VI and I: Selected Writings*, ed. by Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards and Joseph Marshall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 325-47 (p. 343).

¹⁵⁰ Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 125.

¹⁵¹ Thomas Vaughan, *Anthropsophia Theomagica* (1650) cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 125.

Lanyer takes this Hermetic tradition further through her focus on woman's creation and woman's divine 'Virtues' (TQEM, 38):

Behold, great Queene, faire *Eves* Apologie,
Which I have writ in honour of your sexe,
[...]

this great Lady [Eve] I have attired,
In all her richest ornaments of Honour [.]
(TQEM, 73-74, 79-80)

Lanyer channels this pro-woman ideology through the arguably anti-patriarchal Queen Anne: 'O Queene, / Let your faire Virtues in my Glasse be seene' (TQEM, 89-90).

But just how successful was Lanyer in her bid for female alchemical *amicitia*? Critics such as Leeds Barroll and Lorna Hutson have implied that Lanyer's poem does not seem to have been 'received' and 'circulated' by the influential women whom Lanyer addresses.¹⁵² Barbara Lewalski and Theresa Kemp, on the other hand, have argued that *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* was probably read and disseminated by Lanyer's principal dedicatee, Margaret Clifford.¹⁵³ As outlined, in one of the surviving presentation copies of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, we find the inscription of 'Cumberland' on the recto of the page preceding the title-page (Figure 1).¹⁵⁴ This presentation copy is bound in vellum with the 'encircled ostrich-feather emblem' of Prince Henry in gilt in the centre of the front and back bindings.¹⁵⁵ This suggests that Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland (and her alchemical coterie) regarded Lanyer's poem highly enough to circulate it amongst the royal courts. I have shown that one reason for the likely intimacy between Margaret Clifford and Lanyer is the art of metaphysical alchemy. By fashioning herself as a poet-chemist, Lanyer's speaker compounds the roles of kitchen physic and spiritual healer. Lanyer may well have entered into Margaret Clifford's household at Cooke-ham as an alchemist with specific herbal and spiritual remedies.¹⁵⁶ Certainly the practice of alchemy was one way in which women of different social backgrounds could forge connections with one

¹⁵² Leeds Barroll, 'Looking for Patrons', in *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*, ed. by Grossman, pp. 29-48; Hutson, 'Why the Lady's Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun', p. 35. See also Woods, *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet*, p. 161.

¹⁵³ Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, p. 321; Kemp, 'Women's Patronage-Seeking', p. 390.

¹⁵⁴ National Art Library, London, Dyce 5675.

¹⁵⁵ Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, p. 321.

¹⁵⁶ Lanyer apparently spent time at Cooke-ham in Berkshire with Margaret and Anne Clifford, sometime before 1609. Woods, 'Introduction', p. xxv.

another. Lanyer's interest in alchemy would also partly explain her visits to the alchemist-astrologer, Simon Forman, during the late 1590s.¹⁵⁷ I have illustrated how a 'partial' and 'strange' intertextuality exists between Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Margaret Clifford's alchemical receipt book, and Anne Clifford's 1652 family memorial.¹⁵⁸ It is the discourse of spiritual and physical alchemy that 'Ty[es]' (TDC, 210) these women esoterically to one another.

¹⁵⁷ Woods, 'Introduction', pp. xix-xxiv.

¹⁵⁸ Rosalind Smith argues that there are 'partial' and 'strange' feminine literary traditions in the Renaissance and my use of these adjectives here is indebted to her. Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer*, p. 11.

Chapter 4

‘Makes her soule and body one’:¹ The Metaphysics of ‘Making’ in the Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler (c. 1635-1638)

‘Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.’
(*The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version*, Luke 1. 38)²

Sir Philip Sidney proposed in 1595 that the word ‘poet’ emanates from the Greek word ‘poiein’, which is ‘to make’.³ For Sidney, the poet can mirror his ‘heavenly Maker’, God, who made ‘man to His own likeness’.⁴ Mortal poets, according to Sidney, can attain the ‘metaphysic [...] supernatural’ through their potentially divine *poesis*.⁵ This chapter argues that Sidney and his followers, George Puttenham and John Donne, foreground a male ‘making’ tradition of the ‘most ancient and [...] fatherly antiquity’.⁶ The male poet for these thinkers is a wordsmith and craftsman who can traverse both earthly and supernatural realms. I illustrate how this male tradition is manipulated by women ‘makers’ such as Mary Sidney (1561-1621) and Esther Inglis (1570/71-1624), who fashion themselves as the ‘handmaidens’ of God. The chapter suggests that Renaissance women writers consciously exploit the connections between ‘text’ and ‘textile’ to establish a female ‘making’ tradition.⁷ I test this theory by examining the writings and compilations of the seventeenth-century Catholic poet, Constance Aston Fowler (1621?-1664). The Catholic context of Mariology, I suggest, allows a woman writer like Fowler to fully exploit her role as a divine handmaiden engaging in handmade acts. The chapter explores Fowler’s role as ‘maker’ in two ways: first, her role as social ‘maker’, as she establishes and influences the connections between women and men in her coterie; secondly, her role as metaphysical ‘maker’, as she writes a feminized form of sensual-spiritual meditative poetry. I argue that Fowler draws upon the meditative writings of Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), St Teresa of Ávila (1515-

¹ Anon., in Constance Aston Fowler’s hand, ‘An Eglogne betweene Melibeus and Amyntas’, in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler: A Diplomatic Edition*, ed. by Deborah Aldrich-Watson (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, in conjunction with Renaissance English Text Society, 2000), pp. 55-59 (p. 59), line 96. This edition has been used throughout this study and has been abbreviated as *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*. Aldrich-Watson has based her diplomatic edition on the original extant manuscript, San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 904.

² *The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version* (London: Baronius Press, 2008), Luke 1. 38.

³ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 84.

⁴ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 86.

⁵ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 85.

⁶ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 100.

⁷ For a literal exploration of the links between ‘text’ and ‘textile’, see Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

1582) and Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645), and in so doing responds to a polyglottal female metaphysical culture.

In his *Theologia Platonica* (1482), Marsilio Ficino characterizes God as a ‘craftsman’, who fuses ‘external matter’ with divine love: ‘God [...] certainly [...] loves His images and His works. A craftsman loves the works which he makes from external matter’.⁸ Ficino here seems to invoke Psalm 19, which praises God’s ‘handywork’: ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork’.⁹ According to Ficino’s friend and disciple, Pico della Mirandola, man too can emulate his divine maker: ‘Thou [Man] [...] art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. [...] Thou canst [...] grow upward from thy soul’s reason into the higher natures which are divine’.¹⁰ It is presumably this Neoplatonic lexicon that Philip Sidney evokes when he purports that the earthly poet-maker ‘build[s] upon the depth of Nature’ to reach the ‘metaphysic [...] supernatural’ domain.¹¹ As S. K. Heninger points out, Sidney infers that the poet can turn abstract divine thoughts into concrete material forms.¹²

Sidney’s building metaphor is utilised by George Puttenham, who likens the poet to a stonemason: ‘ye see in buildings of stone or brick the mason giveth a band [...] to hold [...] the work [...]. So, in [...] verses, the coupling of [...] meters by rhyme or concord is the [...] band’.¹³ Puttenham implies that the stonemason-poet uses ‘natural causes and effects’ to attain ‘divine essences and substances’ – the architect of earth can mirror the metaphysical architect of heaven.¹⁴ This spiritual-material melding reaches a climax in John Donne’s sermons, who declares that the biblical Psalms are ‘all Metricall compositions [...] the whole frame of the Poem is a beating out of a piece of gold’.¹⁵ This again evokes Psalm 19 – the divine transformative power of the ‘handywork’ of

⁸ Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I, p. 193.

⁹ Psalms 19. 1, cited by Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 27.

¹⁰ Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, p. 5.

¹¹ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 85.

¹² Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, p. 294.

¹³ Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 178.

¹⁴ Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 99.

¹⁵ John Donne, ‘Sermon Number 1: Preached upon the Penitentiall Psalmes [April, May, or June, 1623]’, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, 10 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-1962), VI, pp. 39-61 (p. 41).

God.¹⁶ As Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy observe, here Donne fashions God (and by implication the earthly poet) as an alchemical manufacturer of language.¹⁷

Yet this spiritual-material making tradition is a masculine tradition. Sidney's motto, 'man's wit [...] make[th] Poesy', pervades the *Apology for Poetry*, which foregrounds a heroic genealogy of male makers: 'Hercules, Achilles, [...] Aeneas [...] hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice'.¹⁸ The original patriarchs of poetry for Sidney are Orpheus and Linus who 'made pens deliverers of their knowledge'.¹⁹ Sidney's implicit gender-biased lineage finds its way into Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesy*, which warns that 'gentlewomen makers' should not become 'too precise poets' lest they become 'fantastical wives'.²⁰

However, many Renaissance women writers demonstrate that divine poetic inspiration is not simply a male prerogative, but can enter the bodies and souls of women. The scribe and poet, Esther Inglis, for instance proclaims in 1602:

Ton Sainct Esprit toujours
[...]
illumine, conduise,
Mon cœur, mon œuil, mon pied,
mon esprit et ma main.

[Your [God's] Holy Spirit always
[...]
illumine, lead,
My heart, my eye, my foot,
my spirit and my hand [.]]²¹

Inglis posits that the sacrosanct spark of the Holy Spirit permeates her own handiwork.

The verb 'to make' crops up in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century account books in relation to women's embroidery. The accounts of Lady Shuttleworth's household in 1619, for example, contain an entry for 'coventrie blue thred to make letters in needlework on the bed sheets'.²² It is arguably this female 'making' tradition

¹⁶ Psalms 19. 1, cited by Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, p. 27.

¹⁷ Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, 'Introduction', in *Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing (1500-1650)*, ed. by Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, pp. 1-11 (p. 4).

¹⁸ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, pp. 104, 95.

¹⁹ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 82.

²⁰ Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, p. 336.

²¹ Esther Inglis, 'Priere a Dieu [Prayer to God]', in *Early Modern Women Poets (1520-1700)*, *An Anthology*, ed. by Stevenson and Davidson, p. 125, lines 7, 10-12.

²² Lady Shuttleworth's household accounts cited in Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Women's Press, 1996, 1st pub. 1983), p. 85.

that Mary Sidney invokes in her dedicatory poem to Elizabeth I in the Sidney Psalter (1599):

I weav'd this webb to end;
the stuffe not ours, our worke no curious thing,
Wherein yet well wee thought the Psalmist King
Now English denizend, though Hebrue borne,
[...]

And I the Cloth in both our names present,
A liverie robe to bee bestowed by thee [Elizabeth I]:
[...]

Thy brest the Cabinet, thy seat the shrine,
[...]
where Wit, where Art, where all that is divine
conceived best, and best defended lies.

[...]

Theise holy garmnets each good soule assaies,
some sorting all, all sort to none but thee.

[...]

Thus hand in hand with him [David] thy glories walke:
[...]

Thy utmost can but offer to hir sight
Her handmaids taske, which most her will endeeres [.]
(ENTC,²³ 27-30, 33-34, 45, 47-48, 63-64, 73, 89-90)

Mary Sidney uses her 'handmaids taske' (ENTC, 90) to enter into Elizabeth I's 'Cabinet' and 'brest' (ENTC, 45). Moreover, Mary Sidney utilizes her 'handmaids taske' (ENTC, 90) to interweave her own voice with that of her brother, Philip Sidney, and the biblical Psalmist-poet, David: 'And I the Cloth in both our names present' (ENTC, 33). As Danielle Clarke points out, Mary Sidney here picks up on the connection between 'text' and 'textile', referring to the texts, translations and intertexts for the Psalter.²⁴ Mary Sidney provides a powerful metaphor for collaborative authorship, which implies her own role as that of 'finisher'.²⁵ I would like to extend

²³ Mary Sidney, 'Even now that Care' from the Sidney Psalter, in *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets*, ed. by Clarke, pp. 47-50 (pp. 47-49). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as ENTC and is preceded by the line reference.

²⁴ Danielle Clarke, 'Note 27', in *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets*, p. 304.

²⁵ Clarke, 'Note 27', p. 304.

Clarke's analysis here by suggesting that Mary Sidney is also appealing to a sixteenth-century female making tradition to which Elizabeth I belonged.

In 1544 Elizabeth Tudor presented Katherine Parr with a translation of Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* ('The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul'). This text had a handmade book cover, embroidered by Elizabeth Tudor herself. The cover contained Katherine Parr's initials in the centre with four pansies on each corner.²⁶ As Lisa Klein observes, the pansies on this book cover are a pun on the French word 'pensee', meaning thought or idea.²⁷ This pun on pansy/pensee draws attention to Elizabeth Tudor's prayerful act of 'medytacyon'.²⁸ Elizabeth Tudor composes a meditative text of the highest gynocentric order – a text written by a woman, translated by a woman and presented to a woman. The translation itself resonates with a feminocentric linguistic order: 'thou [God] dost handle my sowle [...] as a mother, daughter, syster and wyfe'.²⁹ The reference to 'handle' here is not accidental. Elizabeth Tudor formulates a handmaid/handmade rhetoric to appeal to the maternal instinct of her stepmother, Katherine Parr. It is arguably to this making tradition that Mary Sidney alludes to in her extended conceit of the 'handmaids taske' (ENTC, 90).

Within the context of Catholicism, the handmaid often referred to the Virgin Mary, who describes herself as the 'handmaid of the Lord' in the Gospel of St Luke (1. 38). The Virgin Mary's handmaiden makings are portrayed in a surviving thirteenth-century cope of St Maximin in Provence as the workings on a cloth in a temple with other women (Figure 1). The divine hand-makings of Mary are a key motif in *The Psalter of the B[lessed] Virgin Mary* (1624, affiliated with St Bonaventura):

I haue seene the great miracles which your [Mary's] hands haue done
[...]
make warme my soule, for you are the light and guide
[...]
you made your selfe [...] the Humble Hand-maid of our Lord
[...]
Make me to imploy my selfe in holy works
[...]

²⁶ Elizabeth Tudor, 'The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Cherry 36, cited in Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid', p. 487.

²⁷ Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid', pp. 477-78.

²⁸ Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid', p. 478. Elizabeth Tudor's 'The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul' was printed in 1548 as *A Godly Medytacyon of the christen sowle* (STC).

²⁹ Elizabeth Tudor, *A Godly Medytacyon of the christen sowle*, in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Series I. Printed Writings, 1500-1640: Part 2, Vol. 5. Elizabeth and Mary Tudor*, selected by Anne Lake Prescott, general eds. Travitsky and Cullen, fol. 14r.

Your are the [...] fruitfull Palme
 [...]
 It is your hand which hath touched me, and [...] hath laboured in my
 cause
 [...]
 Signe my Forehead with the Seale of your holy grace [.]³⁰

The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary sets up a connection between hands, making and miracle working. The Virgin Mary is depicted as a divine handmaiden because she is instrumental in the ‘making’ of Christ. The seventeenth-century Neoplatonist, Francis de Sales, evokes the Virgin Mary’s makings, when he advises his followers to engage in ‘spiritual embroidery’.³¹



Figure 1, Detail from *The Cope of St Maximin*, church of St Maximin, Provence. Late thirteenth century. The embroidery could be either French or English. Cited in Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, Illustration 31. © Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Of course, worship of the Virgin Mary was officially banned in Britain during the seventeenth century, as George Herbert reminds us: ‘But now (alas!) I dare not; for our King, / Whom we do all jointly adore and praise, / Bids no such thing’.³² Indeed, Mariolatry was regarded as dangerously dissident by some seventeenth-century Puritan thinkers. William Prynne, for example, expostulates in disgust: ‘popish Doctors have

³⁰ *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary*, trans. from a French version, probably that of Antoine Sucquet, of the *Psalterium Parvum Mariae* formerly attributed to St Bonaventura, trans. into English by R. F. (St Omer, 1624), pp. 73, 142, 182, 184, 236-37, 260, 265.

³¹ St Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. by Michael Day (London: Dent, 1961), p. 92. *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* was first published in 1609. An English translation of the *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* was printed in 1617, which ran into three editions by 1648 (STC). See Michael Day, ‘Translator’s Note’, in St Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. by Day, pp. v-vi (p. v).

³² George Herbert, ‘To All Angles and Saints’ (1633), ll. 16-18, cited by Danielle Clarke, ‘The Iconography of the Blush: Marian Literature of the 1630s’, in *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, ed. by Kate Chedgzoy and others (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 111-28 (p. 113).

most blasphemously written of the Virgin Mary [...] *That She is the [...] greatest Authority in the Kingdome of Heaven*'.³³ Prynne is perhaps critiquing *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary* here, which exalts Mary as a 'greater, and more excellent authority then any other creature'.³⁴ It is arguably the Virgin Mary's female *auctoritas* that Prynne finds threatening. This female *auctoritas* was visually and politically rendered in the Caroline period by Queen Henrietta Maria, who often appeared in public with her ladies-in-waiting singing the Hours of the Virgin.³⁵ As Frances Dolan points out, for some seventeenth-century Englishmen, such as Prynne, the Virgin Mary became the embodiment of 'a usurped, arbitrary power', the symbol of Catholics' misplaced 'obedience and reverence'.³⁶ This ongoing controversy over Mariolatry during the Renaissance was one reason why Protestant writers such as Mary Sidney and Esther Inglis avoid any explicit mention of the Virgin Mary as the divine handmaiden of God.

One coterie that is likely to have come across both the Sidney Psalter and *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary* is the seventeenth-century Catholic poetic coterie of Tixall in Staffordshire.³⁷ Tixall was the family seat of Sir Walter Aston (1584-1639), the ambassador to Spain under James I and later Charles I.³⁸ Sir Walter wrote verse and passed on his love for poetry to at least three of his ten children: Herbert Aston (*bap.* 1614, *d.* 1688/89), Gertrude Aston Thimelby (1617-1668) and Constance Aston Fowler. Constance Aston Fowler's surviving verse miscellany contains poems by numerous writers including Sir Walter, Robert Southwell (1561-1595), William Habington (1605-1654), Herbert Aston, and Constance's close female friends, Katherine Thimelby (1617/18-1658) and Lady Dorothy Shirley (*d.* 1636/7). The miscellany also contains a

³³ William Prynne, *The Popish Royall Favourite* (1643), cited by Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 108.

³⁴ *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary*, p. 116.

³⁵ Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion*, p. 35.

³⁶ Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, p. 119.

³⁷ The 1899 sale catalogue of the Tixall library contains Mary Sidney's translation of the Psalms. *The Tixall Library. Catalogue of Valuable Books & Manuscripts, Late the Property of Sir F. A. T. C. Constable, Bart.* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1899), p. 49, Lot 598. I am grateful to Helen Hackett for providing me with a copy of this catalogue. Members of the Tixall coterie had connections with St Omer in France, where the *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary* was printed. Richard Thimelby (1614-1680), for instance, became rector of St Omer's in 1672. William Habington (1605-1654) was educated in St Omer. See Deborah Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. xix-lxii (p. xxvii).

³⁸ A. J. Loomie, 'Aston, Walter, Baron Aston of Forfar (1584-1639), diplomat', *ODNB* [accessed 24 October 2010].

number of anonymous meditative poems that have been attributed to Fowler herself.³⁹ Fowler's verse miscellany was composed from *circa* 1635 to 1638.⁴⁰

The Fowler miscellany is dominated by two hands: an italic hand and an old-fashioned secretary hand. The italic hand has been identified as Fowler's, verified by her surviving letters.⁴¹ The older secretary hand, however, has prompted much debate amongst scholars. Deborah Aldrich-Watson and Jenijoy La Belle argue that this secretary hand belongs to Fowler's sister, Gertrude Aston Thimelby.⁴² Indeed, a poem in the miscellany entitled 'To My Honer'd sister G A' (probably by Herbert Aston), portrays Gertrude as a transformative maker and muse par excellence:

you [Gertrude Aston] guide your high poetique quills
[...]

inspire,

Vs, with the heate of your poetique fire;
For as the sun by uertue of his great
Masculin luster and his quieckning heate;
Of slime; and Mud, produceth liuing creatures;
Diffing in nature; and of seuerall features;
According to the mould from which they'r made,
so your lines heate; and splendour; doth inuade
Our dul, dead, muddy, minds; and doth create
New Creatures; [...]
And euen these lines though creatures of my minde,
By your poetique fire they are refin'd;
From there dull mould, you on them life bestow [.]
(TMHS,⁴³ 98, 113-25)

The poet here recalls Donne's construction of God and the Psalmist-poet as the alchemical wordsmith.⁴⁴ It is Gertrude in this poem who has the power to transform and refine 'dul' (TMHS, 121) matter through her resplendent 'poetique fire' (TMHS, 124). However, Victoria Van Hynning has recently uncovered Gertrude's italic hand from the extant seventeenth-century records of vows of St Monica's convent in Louvain, where

³⁹ Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', pp. xxxv-xxxvii.

⁴⁰ For the dating of Fowler's miscellany, see Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', pp. ix, xxviii, xxxix.

⁴¹ London, British Library, MS Additional 36452, fols 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 48.

⁴² Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', pp. xix-lxii; Jenijoy La Belle, 'The Huntington Aston Manuscript', *The Book Collector*, 29 (1980), 542-67 (p. 544).

⁴³ Herbert Aston (?), in Fowler's hand, 'To My Honer'd sister G[ertrude] A[ston]', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 128-31 (p. 131). From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as TMHS and is preceded by the line reference.

⁴⁴ Donne, 'Sermon Number 1: Preached upon the Penitentiall Psalmes [1623]', p. 41. For the Astons' connections to Donne, see Deborah Aldrich Larson, 'John Donne and the Astons', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 55 (1992), 635-41.

Gertrude professed in 1658.⁴⁵ Van Hyning argues that the secretary hand in Fowler's miscellany does not match Gertrude's hand.⁴⁶

Victoria Burke and Helen Hackett have suggested that the older secretary hand in the Fowler miscellany may belong to a travelling Catholic priest.⁴⁷ Burke's and Hackett's supposition is convincing because the miscellany's older secretary hand records the poetry of the Jesuit priest, Robert Southwell, and other Catholic ballads which appear in another mid-seventeenth-century Catholic manuscript associated with the Fairfax family of Wooton Wawen in Warwickshire.⁴⁸ Victoria Burke argues that the secretary hands in the Fowler miscellany and the Fairfax manuscript match.⁴⁹ The identity of this travelling Catholic priest, however, is yet to be uncovered.

Despite this controversy over the hands in the Fowler miscellany, scholars agree that members of the Tixall coterie were avid readers of contemporary literature. The 1899 sale catalogue of the Tixall library contains Mary Sidney's translation of the Psalms, Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, Shakespeare's Second Folio, a first edition of Donne's poems, and the essays of Montaigne.⁵⁰ As outlined in this study, it is precisely these writers who engage with the metaphysics of making, and I would like to suggest here that it is to these writers that Fowler and her circle respond.

If we turn to Fowler's miscellany we find a poem in Fowler's hand entitled 'A true loues knott that was giuen As a fancy for a newyears gift':

make mee thy fancy and if I proue not
A true loues knott
That neuer faides, then cast mee of a gaine
[...]
As in your breast
There I'le discouer all that thinke to knitt
A counterfitt

⁴⁵ Reading, Douai Abbey Library, Box WMLK1, Docs: Vows, Folder K2, Vows under Mother Throgmorton, 1633-1666 (?), 2nd Prioreess, item unnumbered. I am grateful to Victoria Van Hying for sharing this archival find with me.

⁴⁶ Unpublished personal correspondence with Victoria Van Hyning, 5 May 2012.

⁴⁷ Victoria Burke, 'Women and Early Seventeenth-Century Manuscript Culture: Four Miscellanies', *The Seventeenth Century*, 12 (1997), 135-50 (p. 138); Helen Hackett, 'Catholic Women as Participants in Manuscript Networks: The Case of Constance Aston Fowler's Verse Miscellany', paper delivered at the 'Early Modern Women Colloquium', Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, 19 June 2010.

⁴⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. b. 5. Deborah Aldrich-Watson has outlined which poems appear in both Fowler's miscellany and the Fairfax manuscript, see Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', pp. xxxii-xxxiii. For further analysis of the Fairfax manuscript, see Cedric C. Brown, 'Recusant Community and Jesuit Mission in Parliament Days: Bodleian MS Eng. poet. b. 5', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 290-315.

⁴⁹ Burke, 'Women and Early Seventeenth-Century Manuscript Culture', pp. 137, 138.

⁵⁰ *The Tixall Library. Catalogue of Valuable Books & Manuscripts*, pp. 49, 50, 49, 18, 37, Lots 598, 599, 592, 206, 435.

Thus then it must bee drawne by hand deuine
to be like mine
[...]
And what are drawne together by a force
Breake or doe worse
They only hold that in a golden meane
A uoy'd extreame
Last it must haue no endes, for such a Tye
is pollicy
True loue could neuer tell how't came to passe
But so it was
ore if compell'd to answeare to a why
T'was I am I
Thus much for forme, the matters not forgott,
The hart stringes only tye a true loues knott [.]
(ATLK,⁵¹ 1-3, 10-14, 23-34)

Jenijoy La Belle describes the above-quoted poem in the following literal way:

The poet begins by asking his lady to accept him, and by implication his poem, as a 'true loves [sic] knott' and place him near her heart. The poet then compliments both the sweetness of the lady's breast and his own true love's knot in contrast to any counterfeit knots that the lady may have accepted earlier. The perfect love knot is finally defined as one that avoids the extremes of looseness (and thus can slip) and fastness (which can break when pulled).⁵²

I would like to suggest here that this poem, 'A true loues knott that was giuen As a fancy for a newyears gift', also indirectly delineates the intricacies of 'mak[ing]' (ATLK, 1) by setting up a connection between knotting (a method of producing a decorative thread by hand-tying knots), fancy (an 'inventive design', an 'inclination or liking', something that 'pleases or entertains' [*OED*]), and the 'deuine' (ATLK, 13) handicraft of the scribe/compiler who facilitates intellectual and emotional unity.⁵³ This poem is attributed to Katherine Thimelby's brother, Henry Thimelby (*d.* 1655), by Fowler, who ends the poem with the initials 'H T'.⁵⁴ The poem may have been presented to Fowler as a New Year's gift. Of course, this process of gift-giving was in

⁵¹ Henry Thimelby (?), in Fowler's hand, 'A true loues knott that was giuen As a fancy for a newyears gift', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 142-43. From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as ATLK and is proceeded by the line reference.

⁵² Jenijoy La Belle, 'A True Love's Knot: The Letters of Constance Fowler and the Poems of Herbert Aston', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 79 (1980), 13-31 (p. 26).

⁵³ This definition of 'knotting' is outlined by Donald King and Santina Levey, *The Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Collection: Embroidery in Britain from 1200 to 1750* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1993), p. 110.

⁵⁴ ATLK, in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, p. 143. Jenijoy La Belle attributes 'A true loues knott' to Herbert Aston. La Belle, 'A True Love's Knot', p. 26.

itself a mirroring of the ‘deuine’ (ATLK, 13) giver, God. As the fourteenth-century Catholic mystic, Catherine of Siena, posits: the earthly giver ‘join[s]’ the ‘divine nature with the human’ because when one receives a gift ‘[t]he receiver does not look just at the gift, but at the heart and the love of the giver, and accepts and treasures the gift [...] because of the friend’s affectionate love’.⁵⁵ Catherine of Siena’s writings were being recommended as essential reading by English Catholic priests such as John Fenn (1535-1615), and it is her definition of human/divine giving that Henry Thimelby may be invoking.⁵⁶ If this poem is addressed to, and given to Fowler, then it is arguably she who is also responsible for making a ‘true loues knott’ (ATLK, 2). It is Fowler who engages in the act of spiritual-physical knotting, drawing together the ‘hart stringes’ (ATLK, 34) of her coterie.

Indeed, Fowler’s handiwork in facilitating a courtship between her brother, Herbert Aston, and her close friend, Katherine Thimelby, is captured in her letters. Fowler writes to her brother when he accompanies Sir Walter on a diplomatic mission to Spain between 1635 and 1638:

her [Katherine Thimelby’s] owne hart must needes bee unighted to yours [Herbert Aston’s] [...] and then mine, which has bin the keeper of yours [...] I [Fowler] have taken such a subject for my invencion to worke on, that I can not for my life unfasen my selfe from it.⁵⁷

Fowler literally fashions herself as a maker of a ‘true loues knott’ (ATLK, 2) – she creates a cyclical knot of desire that moves in and around her brother, her best friend and herself. She describes this process as an ‘invencion’ and ‘worke’ which she ‘fasen[s]’, recalling both the ‘worke’ of embroidery and the ‘worke’ of literary creativity.⁵⁸

Furthermore, Fowler has an acute awareness of her own performativity. She declares:

⁵⁵ Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, trans. by Suzanne Noffke (London: SPCK, 1980), pp. 134-35. *The Dialogue (Il Dialogo)* was written in circa 1378 and translated into English and printed in 1519. See Suzanne Noffke, ‘Introduction’, in Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, trans. by Noffke, pp. 1-22 (pp. 13, 20).

⁵⁶ Raymond of Capua, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin, Sainct Catharine of Siena*, trans. by John Fenn (Douai, 1609), p. 349. Caroline Bowden has pointed out that Fowler’s niece, Gertrude Aston (1637-1682), owned the 1609 printed English edition of *The Life of the Blessed Virgin, Sainct Catharine of Siena*, Caroline Bowden, ‘Islands of Englishness? The English Convents as Centres of Cultural Production in Seventeenth-Century Flanders’, seminar paper delivered at ‘English Catholics, European Contexts’, UCL Centre for Early Modern Exchanges, University College, London, 9 February 2011.

⁵⁷ Constance Aston Fowler, ‘Letter XIX’ (11 August 1636), in *Tixall Letters; Or the Correspondence of the Aston Family and Their Friends During the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Arthur Clifford, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1815), I, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁸ Fowler, ‘Letter XIX’, in *Tixall Letters*, I, pp. 88-89.

Oh if you [Herbert Aston] knew what paines I [Fowler] have taken, and what difficulty I had to wright all this I have sent, you would love me mightily for my care in performing it.
[...]

Oh, if you knew the sweetnesse of those expressions she [Katherine Thimelby] filles letters continually with to me, you could not but dye in love with them, or her; [...] I would not for a world inpart each particuler of them to you, for they would overcome a stronger hart [.]
[...]

Tis con and none but con that is [.]⁵⁹

Fowler creates an expressive sense of drama here, withholding information from her brother to heighten his sense of expectancy. By punning on her own name, ‘*continually* [...] Tis con’, she fashions herself as the principle maker, tying her brother to her best friend with ‘constancy’.⁶⁰

But what are Fowler’s true intentions in arranging this courtship between her best friend and her brother? In 1636 Fowler warns Herbert Aston:

Sir John Thimelby dos intend to match his sister [Katherine Thimelby] to a gentleman harde by him, in the countterey [...] so infinitely much I love her [Katherine Thimelby], that I shall be afflicted to the soule, if it prove so indeed; for I vow to you [Herbert Aston], with my eyes drownd in teares, I am most certayne, ther is none in England worthy of her; and, oh, how grived shall I be to here she is mach to one unworthy of her. Oh, she is more deare to me then all the women in the world; and this will separat us much, if it shuld hapen.⁶¹

Fowler here anticipates Katherine Philips’s famous lament of 1662:

I find [...] there are few Friendships in the World Marriage-proof; especially when the Person our Friend marries has not a Soul particularly capable of the Tenderness of that Endearment, and solicitous of advancing the noble Instances of it, as a Pleasure of their own, in others as well as themselves: And such a Temper is so rarely found, that we may generally conclude the Marriage of a Friend to be the Funeral of a Friendship [...]⁶²

⁵⁹ Constance Aston Fowler, ‘Letter XXIII’ (1638?), ‘Letter XXIV’ (31 July 1639), ‘Letter XXV’ (28 April 163-), in *Tixall Letters*, I, pp. 126-27, 129, 135.

⁶⁰ Fowler, ‘Letter XXIV’, ‘Letter XXV’, in *Tixall Letters*, I, pp. 129, 135, my italics.

⁶¹ Constance Aston Fowler, ‘Letter XXI’ (11 February 1636), in *Tixall Letters*, I, pp. 102-103.

⁶² Katherine Philips, ‘Letter XIII’ (30 July 1662), in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips, The Matchless Orinda, Volume II: The Letters*, ed. by Patrick Thomas (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1992), pp. 42-43.

Women of the Renaissance, according to James Daybell, often played a significant role in acting as intermediaries between suitors in marriage negotiations.⁶³ The context of Fowler and Philips shows that women were also proactive in arranging these marriages, so that same-sex friendships could be maintained. Since marriage was a must for many women during this period, women were compelled to work the system to their advantage. Hence Fowler hopes her brother ‘will not prove unconstant’ to Katherine Thimelby and will marry her, so that her own intimacy with Katherine can continue.⁶⁴ This indeed proves to be the case. Herbert Aston marries Katherine Thimelby on his return to England in 1638, partly perhaps due to Fowler’s constant handwritten promptings.⁶⁵ A melancholic Katherine Thimelby writes some time after her marriage: ‘My sweet sister Fowler, I here, comes to morow [...] Oh the hapines of talking to her, who so well will fele my mesery in your [Herbert Aston’s] absence’ – Thimelby is comforted by the continued closeness of her sister-in-law that her marriage makes possible.⁶⁶

Fowler states that Katherine Thimelby has ‘made me [Fowler] misteres of her hart’ and it is Katherine Thimelby’s role as a maker of letters that Fowler (in part) falls in love with.⁶⁷ This is evinced in Fowler’s effusive pronouncement:

ther was never any more passionat affectionat lovers then she [Katherine Thimelby] and I, [...] you [Herbert Aston] never knew two cretures more truely and deadly in love with one another than we are. [...] For after I had made knowne to her by letters how infinitely I honerd her, and how I had dun soe sence I first saw her [...], she writt me the sweetest ansars, that from that very howre I confesse I have bin most deadly in love with her as ever lover was; and so much she did increase my admirasson of her by many of these letters, that I could never sence thinke any one worth the honering but she [...]⁶⁸

Unfortunately, the correspondence between Katherine Thimelby and Fowler has not survived. However, if we turn to Fowler’s verse miscellany, we find that Katherine Thimelby emerges as an ardent defender of female constancy. This is exhibited in the

⁶³ James Daybell, ‘Women’s Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Friendship in Sixteenth-Century England’, in *Rhetoric, Women, and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. by Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 172-90 (p. 187).

⁶⁴ Constance Aston Fowler, ‘Letter XXII’ (11 January 1638), in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 104.

⁶⁵ Victoria E. Burke, ‘Aston, Herbert (*bap.* 1614, *d.* 1688/9), *poet*’, *ODNB* [accessed 24 October 2010].

⁶⁶ Katherine Thimelby, ‘Letter XXX’ (undated), in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 152. Arthur Clifford posits that this letter ‘appears to have been written many years after’ Katherine Thimelby’s marriage, *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 150.

⁶⁷ Fowler, ‘Letter XXIII’, in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 119.

⁶⁸ Fowler, ‘Letter XXIII’, in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 109.

dialogue that takes place between two poems that appear in succession in Fowler's hand: 'To the honorable G[eorge] T[albot]' by William Habington and 'The ansure to these uerses Made by M^{rs} K[atherine] T[himelby]'. Habington's poem is a consolatory poem, designed to soothe his friend, George Talbot (*d.* 1634), who has been scorned by his female beloved, Astroodoro:

Though Astroodoro, like a sullen starre
 Eclipse her selfe, ith' sky of beauty are
 Ten thousand other fires, some bright as she.
 And who with milder beames, may shine on thee;
 [...]
 And we two [Habington and Talbot], who like two bright stars
haue shin'd
 Ith heauen of friendship, are as firmly joyn'd
 As bloud and loue first fram'd us, and to be
 Lou'd and thought worthy to be lou'd by thee [Talbot]
 is to be glorious.

(THGT,⁶⁹ 11-14, 21-25)

The love that Habington's speaker has for his male beloved, George Talbot, eclipses the love of the female Astroodoro, who is a 'sullen starre' (THGT, 11). Astroodoro is surpassed by the heavenly fire of male-male friendship. Here Habington recalls the Neoplatonic ideologies of Ficino, who argues that 'wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey'.⁷⁰ Habington's and Ficino's divine 'heauen of friendship' (THGT, 22) appears to be a male homosocial domain.

It is this gender-biased representation of the 'heauen of friendship' (THGT, 22) that Katherine Thimelby seems to take issue with:

s^r since you [Habington] are profest to dwell
 I'th Heauen of frindship, you shuld tell
 what tis to loue and ualew well [.]
(MKT,⁷¹ 1-3)

Thimelby's speaker disrupts Habington's male homosocial 'heauen' (THGT, 22). She implies that Habington has failed to provide an accurate exposition on what true 'loue' and 'ualew' (MKT, 3) means. She intimates that these terms are subjective and

⁶⁹ William Habington, in Fowler's hand, 'To the honourable G[eorge] T[albot]', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 124-25 (p. 124). From henceforth, 'To the honourable G[eorge] T[albot]' has been abbreviated as THGT and is preceded by the line reference.

⁷⁰ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 97.

⁷¹ Katherine Thimelby, in Fowler's hand, 'The ansure to these uerses Made by M^{rs} K[atherine] T[himelby]', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 126-27 (p. 126). From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as MKT and is preceded by the line reference.

Habington has merely foregrounded a male 'ualew' (MKT, 3) system. Thimelby's speaker goes on to argue that female inconstancy is a male construct: 'unconstancy [...] / you may call't hers from your owne thought / though neuer in her nature wrought' (MKT, 16, 23-24). In 1599 John Davies had described Nature as '*Gods handmayde*', and in Thimelby's poem the speaker insinuates that God's handmaid ('nature') has not made woman inconstant, but men themselves through their 'owne thought[s]' (MKT, 24, 23).⁷² Thimelby's meditation on 'constancy' may be an indirect invocation of Constance Aston Fowler, the female handmaid of constant love, who imbues Thimelby's speaker with her spirit and ties Thimelby's speaker to her male beloved:

For if I lou'd who am now free
shuld he [Herbert Aston?] retorne no loue to me
I must loue ther eternally.
(MKT, 40-42)

This triangulated textual/conceptual/emotional connection between Katherine Thimelby and Constance Aston Fowler is further evinced in the inside back cover of Fowler's miscellany. In the lower right-hand corner of the inside back cover of Fowler's book is written in Fowler's hand the initials 'C T'.⁷³ Deborah Aldrich-Watson argues that this initialling indicates either 'Catherine Thimelby', whose poems in the miscellany are consistently marked 'K T', or, more probably, 'Constance Fowler', Fowler's 'T' differing from her 'F' only in the absence of a cross-bar.⁷⁴ But 'C T' could also stand for 'Constance Thimelby', as Fowler desires to merge her identity with her female beloved:

I [Fowler] continually perswade her [Thimelby] not to give her selfe
frome me, for I shall never perswade my hart to bruke so great a lose,
and I cannot be contente to have part, but holey must I enjoy her, or elce
paynes worse then death will continually afflict me.⁷⁵

Yet Fowler is not simply an icon for earthly constancy, but a maker of divine constancy, nurturing the celestial friendship of the Virgin Mary. This is exhibited in the opening poem of Fowler's book, which aligns Constance with the mysterious figure of *Celestinae*:

verses presented with
a beautious picture to

⁷² Sir John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum* (London, 1599), p. 27.

⁷³ San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 904 (this section of the manuscript is unfoliated).

⁷⁴ Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', p. lviii.

⁷⁵ Fowler, 'Letter XXIV', in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 130.

celesinae

image shee
 Except earth's saint this beautious
 whose glorious eyes Angells reloyce to se
 to you [Fowler] belongs the honore of her sight
 for you deserue to be her fauerite
 nor ist a derogacion to her life
 To say you'ar yet as she a uirgin wife
 [...] may for you and you to her for me [.]
 (TC,⁷⁶ 1-6, 14)

This lyric is written in Sir Walter's hand and is probably by him.⁷⁷ The name 'Celestinae' evokes the adjective 'celestial', meaning that which pertains to the sky or material heavens – the divine abode of God (*OED*). Indeed, the poet here recalls *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary*, where the 'Glorious Lady' Mary is seated 'aboue the starry light'.⁷⁸ It is Mary in *The Psalter* who is 'knowne to have all authority both in Heauen and Earth', as she is the 'Soueraigne Queene' in 'his [Christ's] Celestiall Court and Kingdome'.⁷⁹ At a time when Mariolatry was officially forbidden, 'Celestinae' may well be a code name in Fowler's coterie for the Virgin Mary and the Marian devotion that she sanctions.

The above-cited Aston lyric hovers between the earthly and the sacred, the physical and metaphysical, as Constance/Celestinae is both a 'uirgin wife' (TC, 6) and the 'earth's saint' (TC, 1). Constance/Celestinae is an intercessor for the divine, encapsulated in the chiasmic phrase: 'may for you and you to her for me' (TC, 14). The poet-speaker can see the Virgin Mary mirrored within Constance's physical-spiritual 'sight' (TC, 3).

In Fowler's miscellany, the figure of Celestinae is aligned to the process of poetic/divine 'making':

to say what Cælestina is: must make
 An Angells quill the penne [.]
 (William Pershall, 'The first Alter', 24-25)⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Sir Walter Aston (?), in Sir Walter's hand, 'verses presented with a beauteous picture to celesinae', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 1-2. From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as TC and is preceded by the line reference.

⁷⁷ Sir Walter's hand can be verified because of his surviving handwritten commonplace book, Stafford, Staffordshire Record Office, MS Aston D988 (c. 1635).

⁷⁸ *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary*, p. 199

⁷⁹ *The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary*, p. 214-15.

⁸⁰ William Pershall, in Fowler's hand, 'The first Alter', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, p. 46.

Th' Relicks of her [Celestinæ's] presence made
 Faire weather; and the Tempest stayde:
 As pleas'd to shew the Raynbows Fame
 In the first letter of her Name:

[...]

The Violet and primrose stole
 A secret meetinge to condole:
 But they were grac't aboue the rest
 For her fayre hands had toucht and blest
 Them;

[...]

Blest Mayde retorn: (or if that Mayde)
 To nature bee prophanely sayde
 Take any Ayde that bears the sence
 Of saints or naturs Excellence [.]

(Anon., 'On Celestinæs goinge a Iorney in wett-
 weather', 13-16, 27-31, 41-44)⁸¹

This punning on the making 'Mayde' reaches a climax in the anonymous pastoral poem,
 'An Eglogne betweene Melibeus and Amyntas', written in Fowler's hand:

Fair Cælestina, farr a boue
 The thoughts that commen louers moue:
 [...]

Her Motions such a gesture beare's
 As Cynthia (when she full Appears)
 Danct to the Musick of the sphæres:

Her speech Like Orpheus doth Intice
 Her accents breathing balme and spice
 with all the sweets of paradise:

Her forms and graces may compare
 with naturs skill: nay more I dare
 say, They Incorporeall are;

For as the soule's in euery part
 As in the whole; and doth Impart
 Her residence with equall Art:

soe her perfections beinge knowne
 In euery place: Assign'd to none:
 Makes her soule and body one [.]

⁸¹ Anon., in Fowler's hand, 'On Celestinæs goinge a Iorney in wett-weather', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 47-49. Aldrich-Watson attributes this poem to Gertrude Aston Thimelby. Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', pp. lii-liii.

(AE,⁸² 8-9, 82-96)

Cælestina's speech is instilled with an Orphic power, as she becomes a female Orpheus, the mother of poetry: 'Her speech Like Orpheus doth Intice / Her accents breathing balme and spice' (AE, 85-86). Philip Sidney had referred to the 'Planet-like Musicke of *Poetrie*', alluding to the Pythagorean doctrine of the music of the spheres.⁸³ The speakers of the Fowler 'Eglogne' intimate that this 'Musick of the speæres' (AE, 84) is driven by a female force – Cælestina, the Virgin Mary, a female maker par excellence. Moreover, the speakers in the Fowler 'Eglogne' evoke the tradition of *musica mundana*, whereby dance constituted an act of worship: Cælestina's 'Danc[ing]' (AE, 84) echoes the movements of the liberated Miriam (the prophetess sister of Aaron) who dances the first dance with the Ark of the Covenant after crossing the Red Sea.⁸⁴

The tie between Cælestina and Constance Aston Fowler resurfaces in this 'Eglogne' in the lines:

A *constant* Faith all Feare Expells
And hope subdues Impossible:
Loue often worketh Miracles [.]
(TE, 31-33, my italics)

This recounts the linguistic and conceptual punning on Fowler's name that we have seen in her letters and the verse of Katherine Thimelby and thus further links Constance to the process of spiritual-material miracle 'making'.

The soul-body conflation that Constance/Cælestina initiates ('Makes her soule and body one' [AE, 96]) deconstructs a number of male Renaissance discourses, which portrayed women either as the sanitised untouchable or the purely corporeal. Philip Sidney's unattainable Stella, for instance, is aligned to 'Nature's chiefest furniture', there to be admired from afar by the 'heavenly guest', the poet himself.⁸⁵ Donne's infamous mistress going to bed, on the other hand, is un-colonised territory, 'Oh my America, my new found lande', there to be 'Unpin[ned]', 'Unlace[d]' and ultimately

⁸² Anon., in Fowler's hand, 'An Eglogne betweene Melibeus and Amyntas', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 55-59 (pp. 55, 58, 59). From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as AE and is preceded by the line reference.

⁸³ Philip Sidney, *The defense of poesie* (London, 1595), sig. K2, cited by Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, p. 387; *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Exodus 15. 20; Catherine Clément and Julia Kristeva, *The Feminine and the Sacred*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 85.

⁸⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, 'Sonnet 9', from *Astrophil and Stella*, in *The Oxford Authors: Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Duncan-Jones, p. 44, lines 2, 9.

Fowler's miscellany ends with a pictorial border – an intricate thatch-work of crucifixes drawn in Fowler's hand (Figure 2).

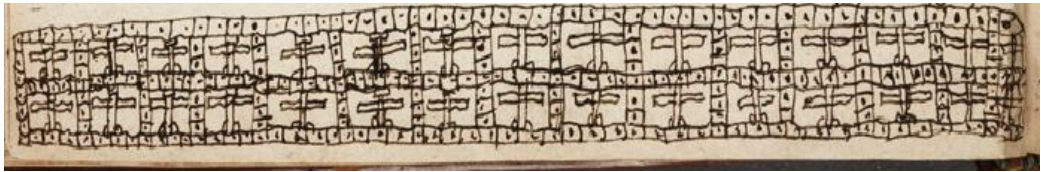


Figure 2, Constance Aston Fowler's textual orphrey, Huntington Library, MS HM 904, fol. 15v (detail). Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

This border is reminiscent of an orphrey (a decorative band or border embroidered onto chasubles, copes and other vestments).⁹¹ Indeed, the elongated rectangular shape of Fowler's border is evocative of Catholic altar pieces, which sometimes bore the signatures of the women who embroidered them.⁹² Fowler's thatching of multiple crucifixes brings to mind St Teresa of Ávila's statement: 'I need [...] crosses [...] I seem to be like one working with a pattern before her and copying it with her needle [...] He [Christ] is our Pattern'.⁹³ Fowler's textual orphrey of crucifixes draws further attention to her intricate handiwork, which is influenced by 'th' Allmightys hand' (P7/8, 49).

Julie Sanders posits that the women in the Tixall coterie do not 'subvert their chosen genres'.⁹⁴ But there is evidence in Fowler's miscellany that points to Constance Aston Fowler's role as an innovative female meditative maker. I wish to argue here that Fowler works within a male meditative tradition set by St Ignatius of Loyola (*d.* 1556), Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), Sir Walter Aston, John Donne and Robert Southwell. I then demonstrate how Fowler takes this tradition further through her specific focus on what it means to meditate on Christ as a woman.

The aforementioned meditative poem in Fowler's miscellany, 'O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule', is written in two hands: the first twenty-one lines are written in Sir Walter's hand (and are likely to be by him), while the remaining eighty-three lines are written in Fowler's hand (and are likely to be by her).⁹⁵ Femke Molekamp has

⁹¹ This definition of 'orphrey' is taken from King and Levey, *The Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Collection*, p. 110.

⁹² Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, Illustration 14. Parker here cites a fourteenth-century altar frontal detail embroidered by Domina Johanna Beverley.

⁹³ St Teresa, *The Life*, pp. 76, 86, 95.

⁹⁴ Julie Sanders, 'Tixall Revisited: The Coterie Writings of the Astons and the Thimelbys in Seventeenth-Century Staffordshire', *Staffordshire Studies*, 12 (2000), 75-93 (p. 92).

⁹⁵ Aldrich-Watson, 'Note 1', *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, p. 17

argued that this poem records two contrasting modes of meditation.⁹⁶ The opening of the poem (written in Sir Walter's hand), reads as follows:

O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule
O Lor'd controle
my weaker fancy [.]
(P7/8, 1-3)

Sir Walter's speaker here (according to Molekamp) solicits a form of divine 'self-regulation'.⁹⁷ Indeed, Sir Walter here seems to recall Justus Lipsius's renowned veneration of divine stoicism found in the *Two Bookes of Constancie* (1595), which ran into four editions by 1654 (*STC*). Stoical meditators, for Lipsius, reach the heavenly sphere through the 'controle' (P7/8, 2) of the 'mind of the soule':

in the body Reason hath her offspring from heauen, yea from God: and *Seneca* gaue it a singular commendation, saying, [...] *That there was hidden in man parte of the diuine spirit*. This reason is an excellent power or faculty of vnderstanding and iudgement, which is the perfection of the soule, euen as the soule is of man. The Grecians cal it [...] *Noun*, the Latines *mentem*, and as we may say ioyntly, *The mind of the soule*. [...]

I doe in good earnest giue this commendation to the Stoickes, that no other sect of Philosophers auowed more the maiesty and prouidence of God, nor drewe men neerer to heauenlie and eternall thinges.⁹⁸

In the section of the poem, ‘O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule’, written in Fowler’s hand, the speaker disrupts the stoical regulation of the ‘mind of the soule’ by foregrounding an uncontrollable torrent of tears that mirrors Christ’s tears on the mount of Olives:⁹⁹

I trauell'd up the mount; where Iesus wept
 All others slept,
 His weeping not as ours, t'was a huge flood,
 And all his pord's were eyes, where gusht out blood.
 Lord can I write
 And shed no teare, uiewing this gastly sight?
 (P7/8, 25-30)

⁹⁶ Femke Molekamp, 'Early Modern Women and Affective Devotional Reading', *European Review of History*, 17 (2010), 53-74 (p. 66).

⁹⁷ Molekamp, 'Early Modern Women', p. 66.

⁹⁸ Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constance*, trans. by John Stradling (London, 1595), pp. 10-11, 46.

⁹⁹ Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, p. 11; *The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version*, Luke 22. 39-44.

This deluge of tears is explicitly female in the anonymous meditative poem, 'On the Passion of our Lord and sauior Iesus', which is written entirely in Fowler's hand and is likely to be by her:

The tender hearted weomen did relent
 And for his [Christ's] sake their bitter teares present
 These did Injoy when coward mann did faile
 courage to follow; Pitty to bewaile [.]
 (OTP,¹⁰⁰ 197-200)

The Fowler poet here recalls Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611), where the daughters of Jerusalem meditate on Christ's body during the Passion:

The Serjeants watching, while the women cri'd.

 Thrice happy women that obtaind such grace
 [...] whose teares powr'd forth apace
 On *Flora's* bankes, like shewers of Aprils raine:
 [...]

 these poore women, by their pitious cries
 Did moove their Lord, their Lover, and their King [Christ],
 To take compassion, turne about, and speake
 To them whose hearts were ready now to breake.

 Most blessed daughters of Jerusalem,
 Who found such favour in your Saviors sight,
 To turne his face when you did pitie him;
 Your tearefull eyes, beheld his eies more bright;
 Your Faith and Love unto such grace did clime,
 To have reflection from this Heav'nly Light:
 [...]

 When spightfull men with torments did oppresse
 Th'afflicted body of this innocent Dove,
 Poore women seeing how much they did transgresse,
 By teares, by sighes, by cries intreat, may prove,
 What may be done among the thickest presse [.]
 (SDRJ, 968-69, 973-74, 981-90, 993-97)

The Fowler poet, like Lanyer, implies that the first meditators on Christ's body are women: Serjeants 'watc[h]' (SDRJ, 968) and 'coward' (OTP, 199) men cower, while the women disciples actively immerse themselves in an all-female threnody.

¹⁰⁰ Anon., in Fowler's hand, 'On the Passion of our Lord and sauior Iesus', in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 6-14. Aldrich-Watson attributes this poem to Fowler, see Aldrich-Watson, 'Introduction', pp. xxxv-xxxvii. From henceforth, 'On the Passion of our Lord and sauior Iesus' has been abbreviated as OTP and is proceeded by the line reference.

By foregrounding the valiant power of the tearful ‘tender hearted weomen’ (OTP, 197) at Christ’s Crucifixion, Lanyer and the poet of ‘On the Passion’ challenge the masculinist critique of weeping that is found in Justus Lipsius’s influential treatise, *Two Bookes of Constancie*. In this treatise, Lipsius’s friend and mentor, Charles Langius, declares that

This [exhortation[n] vnto *Constancie*] is the propertie of wise and valiant hearted men, as *Achilles* was warned in *Homer*.
Though cause of grieve be great, yet let vs keepe
*All to our selues: it booteth not to weepe.*¹⁰¹

Lanyer and the poet of ‘On the Passion’ posit that ‘tender hearted weomen’ (OTP, 197) surpass ‘coward mann’ (OTP, 199) at the Crucifixion through their constant courageous tears and fearless piety: ‘these poore women, by their pitious cries / Did moove their Lord, their Lover, and their King [Christ]’ (SDRJ, 981-82). The poet-speaker of ‘On the Passion’ becomes one of Christ’s valiant mourning women when she states: ‘For his [Christ’s] loue contrition shall force roome / within my soule, and make my heart his tombe’ (OTP, 273-74). This recalls the ‘tombe’ (OTP, 274) of Christ where the angel informs the female disciples of Christ’s resurrection.¹⁰² As Catherine of Siena reminds us: ‘The dear Magdalen [...] with true heart clothed herself in Christ crucified [...] she [...] stayed alone at the tomb [...] she has been made our teacher’.¹⁰³ Thus Christ and the Mary Magdalen, through the power of contrition, will ‘make’ a ‘tombe’ in the Fowler poet-speaker’s ‘heart’ (OTP, 274). The poet of ‘On the Passion’ posits that constancy is not merely the ‘propertie of wise and valiant hearted men’ (as Lipsius would have us believe), but is open to ‘tender hearted weomen’ (OTP, 197) such as the poet-speaker herself: ‘These constant uows religiously I’le pay’ (OTP, 168).¹⁰⁴

The conjuring of corporeal tears to access the destitution of Christ at the Passion was not simply a female preserve during the Renaissance. The sixteenth-century founder of the Society of Jesus, St Ignatius of Loyola, for instance, had advised Jesuits and their followers to

¹⁰¹ Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, p. 57.

¹⁰² *The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version*, Mark 16. 1-11.

¹⁰³ Catherine of Siena, ‘Letter 59: To Monna Bartolomea di Salvatico of Lucca’ (c. 1376), in *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. by Suzanne Noffke (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1988), pp. 183-86 (p. 186). Various editions of Catherine of Siena’s *Epistole* were printed in Renaissance Italy from 1492 onwards. See Suzanne Noffke, ‘Introduction’, in Catherine of Siena, *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. by Noffke, pp. 1-34 (pp. 14-15).

¹⁰⁴ Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, p. 57.

Gather [...] a desire to giue thy selfe wholly vnto our Lord, imploring all thy members and senses in his diuine seruice, that thou mayst wholly be a perfect representation of him.
[...]

Ponder the deuotion & inward feeling, the teares and sorrow of thy Lord, how solitary, destitute & comfortles he [Christ] is in this his so great affliction [.]¹⁰⁵

It is a deluge of male penitential corporeal-spiritual tears that St Peter invokes in Robert Southwell's *Saint Peters Complaint* (1595):

Launche foorth my Soul into a maine of teares,
[...]

Give vent unto the vapours of thy brest,
That thicken in the brimmes of cloudy eies:
Where sinne was hatchd, let teares now wash the nest:
Where life was lost, recover life with cries.
Thy trespassse foule: let not thy teares be few:
Baptize thy spotted soule in weeping dewe.¹⁰⁶

However, St Ignatius had also critiqued the life of the fluid earthly body:

co[n]sider what thy body is whilst it liueth, and thou shalt find, that it is a sack of earth, a continuall flowing water of all filth and stench, and there is not any part therof from the sole of the foot, to the crowne of the head, without impurity and vncleanesse.¹⁰⁷

This assailment against the life of the earthly senses is taken up by the Jesuit priest, Southwell, who writes (in the voice of the Mary Magdalen):

O heaven, lament: sense robbeth thee of Saints:
Lament O soules, sense spoyleth you of grace.
Yet sense doth scarce deserve these hard complaints,
Love is the theife, sense but the entring place.
Yet graunt I must, sense is not free from sinne,
For theefe he is that theefe admitteth in.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ St Ignatius of Loyola, *A Manvall of Devout Meditations and Exercises*, trans. by Henry More (St Omer, 1618), pp. 338, 343.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Southwell, *Saint Peters Complaint*, in *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S. J.*, ed. by James H. McDonald and Nancy Pollard Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 75-100 (p. 76), lines 1, 13-18. *Saint Peters Complaint* ran through thirteen mainstream editions between 1595 and 1640. See Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ St Ignatius, *A Manvall of Devout Meditations and Exercises*, pp. 71-72.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Southwell, 'Marie Magdalens blush' (1595), in *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S. J.*, ed. by McDonald and Brown, pp. 32-33 (p. 33), lines 31-36.

For John Donne, on the other hand, it is the sensual ‘embrac[e]’ of the ‘spouse’ of Christ that leads to divine truth:

Betray kind husband [Christ] thy spouse to our sights,
And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
When she’s embrac’d and open to most men.¹⁰⁹

Although the ‘spouse’ of Christ is corporeally present in Donne’s above-quoted sonnet, she is vocally absent. The poet of ‘On the Passion’ reclaims the female sensual-spiritual voice to create a penitential feminized meditative practice:

O say (deere Iesus) was it for my sake
For me vile sinner thou didst undertake
such pains, such cruell torments, what am I
That thou for me shouldst suffer misery
But O my soule I feele my conscience say
I was an Actor in this bloody play
gaue thee some wounds, my guilty soule describes
Too, where they were, t’was neere those sacred Eyes
O tell me where I hit, and frome this Day
These constant uows religiously I’le pay [.]
(OTP, 159-68)

Here we find the characteristic paronomasia (rhetorical word play) on Constance Aston Fowler’s name that is evident in her letters: ‘O my soule I feele my *conscience* say / [...] These *constant* uows religiously I’le pay’ (OTP, 163, 168, my emphasis). ‘Conscience’ and ‘constancy’ in this poem is tied to the personal pronoun ‘I’ (OTP, 163, 168), which points to the poet’s consciousness and identity – her ‘metaphysics of presence’.¹¹⁰ Here the poet seems to allude to the sacredness of her name by evoking the narrative of Constantina in *The Lives of Saints* (1609) by Alfonso Villegas (which was held in the Tixall library):

Constantina daughter to the Emperor Cōstātinus [...] was not a Christian, yet she went to the sepulchre of S. Agnes [...]. While she remained there in praier, [...] she heard a voice which said: Constantina be constant, beleeue in Iesus Christ [...] and thou shalt be whole. Whereupon she was not only made a Christian [...] but also built a sumptuous Church in the [...] honor of S. Agnes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XVIII’, in *The Divine Poems*, ed. Gardner, p. 15, lines 11-14.

¹¹⁰ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 22. See Chapter 1 of this study for an analysis of the Derridean notion of the ‘metaphysics of presence’.

¹¹¹ *The Tixall Library. Catalogue of Valuable Books & Manuscripts*, p. 53, Lot 643; Alfonso Villegas, *The Lives of Saints*, trans. by Edward Kinsman and William Kinsman (St Omer, 1630, 1st pub. 1609), p. 112.

Christ, through St Agnes, makes Constantina a Christian, and the speaker of the Fowler poem, 'On the Passion', is also pervaded with this making, transformative principle, tied to Christ through the *auctoritas* of the 'constant uo[w]' (OTP, 168).

The poet's fashioning of herself as an 'Actor' (OTP, 164) in 'On the Passion' recalls Fowler's statement in her letters ('you would love me mightily for my care in performing [...]') and substantiates the evidence that Constance Aston Fowler is indeed the poetic voice and maker here.¹¹² By describing herself as an 'Actor' (OTP, 164), the poet of 'On the Passion' recalls and questions Southwell's *Saint Peters Complaint*:

O women, woe to men: traps for their falls,
Still actors in all tragicall mischaunces:
Earthes necessarie evils, captiving thrallles,
Now murdring with your tongs, now with your glances,
Parents of life, and love, spoylers of both,
The theefes of Harts: false do you love or loth.¹¹³

The above-quoted venting of spleen against 'women [...] / [...] actors' is motivated by the servant maids who accuse Peter and prompt his denial before Christ's Crucifixion.¹¹⁴ As Kari Boyd McBride observes, the 'number and gender' of Peter's accusers varies according to gospel, but the 'femaleness of the accusers' is central to Southwell's argument.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Peter's female accusers become signifiers for *all* women: 'O women, woe to men'.¹¹⁶ Southwell's speaker chastises all women for fake 'act[ing]' and 'false' emotion.¹¹⁷ The seventeenth-century Puritan, William Prynne, goes a step further than Southwell by expostulating that 'women-Actors' are '*prostituted Strumpets*'.¹¹⁸ The poet of 'On the Passion', however, turns this derogatory demarcation of the female performer on its head. The Fowler poet's female speaker is an 'Actor in this bloody play' (OTP, 164), yet this penitential performativity leads to a heightened sense of seeing: 'Now I behold, and see my selfe most cleere' (OTP, 179). The prominent adverb, 'Now' (OTP, 179), pulls us into the present moment of meditation, as the Fowler poet creates an acute sense of dramatic self-involved

¹¹² Fowler, 'Letter XXIII', in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 127

¹¹³ Southwell, *Saint Peters Complaint*, in *The Poems of Robert Southwell*, S. J., ed. by McDonald and Brown, p. 85, lines 319-24.

¹¹⁴ Southwell, *Saint Peters Complaint*, p. 85, lines 319-20; *The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version*, Matthew 26. 69-75; Mark 14. 66-72; Luke 22. 54-62; John 18. 15-27.

¹¹⁵ Kari Boyd McBride, 'Gender and Judaism in Meditations on the Passion: Middleton, Southwell, Lanyer, and Fletcher', in *Discovering and (Re)covering the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, ed. by Eugene R. Cunnar and Jeffrey Johnson (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000), pp. 17-40 (p. 28).

¹¹⁶ Southwell, *Saint Peters Complaint*, p. 85, line 319.

¹¹⁷ Southwell, *Saint Peters Complaint*, p. 85, lines 320, 324.

¹¹⁸ Prynne, *Histrio-mastix* (1633), p. 214.

immediacy. The Fowler poet demonstrates that the performative can become a cathartic form of release – it is a vital method for reaching the divine that conflates the human with the sacred.

But this sacrosanct performativity is not necessarily unique to the poem, ‘On the Passion’. Many male metaphysical writers utilized a corporeal poetic dramaturgy in their devotional practice. Donne, for example, uses a dramatic monologue to address his poet-speaker’s soul in Holy Sonnet XIII:

Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Teares in his eyes quench the amasing light,
Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc’d head fell,
[...]
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pittie, foulnesse onely is
A signe of rigour: so I say to thee [Christ?],
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign’d,
This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde.¹¹⁹

‘[P]rofane mistresses’ are spoken to in the above-quoted sonnet-monologue, but we are never allowed to hear their voices or viewpoints.¹²⁰ It is a sonnet such as this that arguably leads to Colin Burrow’s following contention: ‘Such writing [metaphysical poetry] depended on a training in rhetoric which few women in this period had, and dramatizes a desire to display and to persuade in ways which were not associated with the feminine in this period’.¹²¹ What I am arguing here is that the poet-speaker of ‘On the Passion’ appropriates and adapts male metaphysical discourse to delineate an authentically female sensual-spiritual meditative inner life. Take, for instance, the following lines from ‘On the Passion’:

Now I behold, and see my selfe most cleere
Agent in all that happened to him [Jesus] heere
My costly clothinge made him naked goe
My easy lodginge forst his scourginge soe
My curious Diett Hungar to him brought
My foolish Ioyes presented him sad thoughts
My pleasurs in vaine glory breed his scorns
My often curlinge weau’d his crown of Thorns [.]
(OTP, 179-86)

¹¹⁹ John Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XIII: What if this present were the worlds last night?’, in *The Divine Poems*, ed. Gardner, p. 10, lines 2-6, 10-14.

¹²⁰ Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XIII’, line 10.

¹²¹ Burrow, ‘Introduction’, p. xlv.

‘My often curlinge weau’d his crown of Thorns’ (OTP, 186) recalls Donne’s first sonnet from *La Corona* (c. 1608?):

*Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,
Weav’d in my low devout melancholie,
[...]
But what thy thorny crowne gain’d, that give mee,
A crowne of Glory, which doth flower alwayes [.]*¹²²

The poet-speaker of the ‘On the Passion’ places Donne’s spiritual-meditative ‘Weav[ing]’ within a feminized context – the ‘curlinge’ (OTP, 186) of hair – which, according to Helen Hackett, was practised more often by women than by men in the seventeenth century.¹²³ The speaker of ‘On the Passion’ weaves Christ’s body with her own in an act of spiritual-physical embroidery: ‘My often curlinge weau’d his crown of Thorns’ (OTP, 186). By drawing attention to her hair, the Fowler poet recalls the admirable abjection of Catholic nuns who cut off their hair when they became brides of Christ.¹²⁴ This would have special resonance for the women in the Tixall coterie, as Katherine Thimelby’s sister, Winifred Thimelby (c. 1618/19-1690), was professed at St Monica’s convent in Louvain in 1635 and was joined by Fowler’s sister, Gertrude Aston Thimelby, in 1655.¹²⁵ The above-cited evidence from the poem, ‘On the Passion’, demonstrates how a woman could re-appropriate the Donnean meditative metaphysic to articulate a contemplative female subject-position.

Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy have urged scholars to recover the Renaissance ‘senses’ of ‘making’.¹²⁶ They argue that this recovery will facilitate a more accurate and nuanced understanding of early modern conceptions of writing.¹²⁷ Danielle Clarke has argued that the writings of Renaissance women are essential to this recovery.¹²⁸ I have shown how the Catholic contexts of Mariology and female

¹²² John Donne, ‘*La Carona*: I’, in *The Divine Poems*, ed. Gardner, pp. 1-2, lines 1-2, 7-8.

¹²³ Donne, ‘*La Carona*: I’, p. 1, line 2; Helen Hackett, ‘“Thinkinge my selfe most highly freended”: Friendship and Faith in the Manuscript Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler’, conference paper delivered at ‘Women’s Literary Networks: 1580 to the Present Day’, Institute of English Studies, University of London, London, 8 March 2008.

¹²⁴ Clément and Kristeva, *The Feminine and the Sacred*, p. 68; Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), p. 272.

¹²⁵ Donna J. Long, ‘Thimelby [*née* Aston], Gertrude (1617-1668), *poet*’, *ODNB* [accessed 6 October 2010].

¹²⁶ Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

¹²⁷ Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

¹²⁸ Danielle Clarke, ‘Gender, Material Culture and the Hybridity of Renaissance Writing’, in *Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing (1500-1650)*, ed. by Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, pp. 112-27.

hagiography are vital in recovering the ‘senses’ of ‘making’: both textual senses (pertaining to meaning) and physical senses (pertaining to the body). I have shown how a Catholic woman writer like Constance Aston Fowler constructs herself as a ‘maker’ by compounding her spiritual-material *poesis* with her sensual-spiritual *vita contemplativa*. The confluence of Marian devotion and Catholic female hagiography enables Fowler and her circle to fruitfully conflate the metaphysical senses of ‘making’ with the feminine.

Chapter 5

‘All oppositions are contiguous’:¹ Hermetic Metaphysics in the Poetry of Katherine Philips (1632-1664)

‘For the friendship, and commixture of contraries and unlike, became Light shining from the Act or Operation of God [...]’

(John Everard, *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*)²

‘Hermes Trismegistus chose Aesculapius [...] wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey.’

(Marsilio Ficino)³

‘[D]iscords harmony compound. / [...] This made that Antique Sage in rapture Cry / That sure the world had full Eternity.’

(Katherine Philips)⁴

The historian, Frances Yates, argues that during the Renaissance, the ancient mythical Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus, was regarded as a real physician, king, philosopher and priest, who lived at the time of Moses and had himself conceived (through divine revelation) the works of the Greek wisdom texts, the *Corpus Hermeticum* or *Hermetica*.⁵ In the mid-fifteenth century, the influential Florentine statesman and patron, Cosimo de’ Medici, asked Marsilio Ficino to make a new Latin translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Ficino eagerly consented.⁶ Ficino’s Hermetic *Pimander*, together with the *Asclepius*, went through more than twenty printed editions between 1471 and the mid-sixteenth century.⁷ It was translated into French, Spanish, Dutch and Italian.⁸ The first printed English translation of the *Hermetica* was John Everard’s *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (1649).⁹

¹ Katherine Philips, ‘Friendship’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 150-51 (p. 151), line 34.

² *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*, trans. by John Everard (London, 1649), pp. 123-24.

³ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 97.

⁴ Katherine Philips, ‘Submission’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 178-81 (p. 179), lines 30, 35-36.

⁵ Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 1-20.

⁶ Copenhaver, ‘Introduction’, in *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, pp. xlvii-xlviii.

⁷ Trapp, ‘Introduction’, in Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. xxii.

⁸ Trapp, ‘Introduction’, p. xxii.

⁹ The title-page gives the date as 1650, but the copy preserved in the British Library, London shows a contemporary correction, in ink, to 1649. See Røstvig, ‘Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Hermetic Poem’, Note 4, p. 67.

Ficino describes Hermes Trismegistus in the following terms in his preface to the *Pimander*:

Among philosophers he [Hermes] first turned from physical and mathematical topics to contemplation of things divine, and he was the first to discuss with great wisdom the majesty of God [...]. Thus, he was called the first author of theology, and Orpheus followed him, taking second place in the ancient theology. After Aglaophemus, Pythagoras came next in theological succession, having been initiated into [the] rites of Orpheus, and he was followed by Philolaus, teacher of our divine Plato. In this way, from a wondrous line of six theologians emerged a single system of ancient theology [*prisca theologia*], harmonious in every part, which traced its origins to Mercurius [Hermes] and reached absolute perfection with the divine Plato. Mercurius [Hermes] wrote many books pertaining to the knowledge of divinity, [...] often speaking not only as philosopher but as prophet [...] He foresaw [...] the rise of the new faith, the coming of Christ [...]¹⁰

As Stanton Linden points out, the *Hermetica* was, in fact, penned in the post-Christian era (in the third or fourth century AD), but this was unbeknown to Ficino and his followers, who believed that the *Hermetica* presaged and predicted the ‘coming of Christ’.¹¹ What Ficino is suggesting in his preface to the *Pimander* is that the *Hermetica* is one of the first ancient texts to conflate the ‘physical’ and natural with a ‘divine’ spiritual monism. Moreover, Ficino in his preface to the *Pimander* does not define Hermeticism and Platonism as two separate traditions, but emphatically unites them into one trans-cultural syncretic philosophy – a *prisca theologia*.

According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine’ and ‘the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’.¹² Ficino wishes to master this ‘natural [...] Egyptian art’ and wholeheartedly encourages others to ‘apply’ themselves ‘to it’.¹³ Critics such as Frances Yates, Elizabeth Holmes, Maren-Sofie Røstvig, Lyndy Abraham, Robert Schuler and Margaret Healy have shown that many men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries enthusiastically heeded Ficino’s advice and practised the art of physical and metaphysical Hermeticism.¹⁴ These men included John

¹⁰ Ficino’s preface to the *Pimander* cited in Copenhagen, ‘Introduction’, p. xlviii.

¹¹ Linden, ‘Introduction’, in *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, pp. 10–11. For the dating of the *Hermetica*, see also Røstvig, ‘Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Hermetic Poem’, p. 67 and Healy, ‘Protean Bodies’, p. 165.

¹² Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

¹³ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

¹⁴ Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*; Elizabeth Holmes, *Henry Vaughan and the Hermetic Philosophy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967, 1st pub. 1932); Røstvig, ‘Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Hermetic Poem’; Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*; Schuler, ‘Some Spiritual Alchemies of Seventeenth-Century England’; Healy, ‘Protean Bodies’ and *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*. See also *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early*

Dee, Francis Bacon, Robert Fludd, Elias Ashmole, Henry Vaughan and Andrew Marvell. Building on this scholarship, this chapter proposes that the *Hermetica*'s influential blending of the 'physical' and the 'divine' had particular relevance for Renaissance women, as it was women who often administered physical and spiritual care within their own households and local areas. I argue that women such as Rebecca Vaughan (d. 1658) and Lady Grace Mildmay (c. 1552-1620) obtained access to Hermetic texts and practices through their male contemporaries, Thomas Vaughan, Thomas Tymme and Reginald Paters. I then examine how Hermetic practices could infiltrate Renaissance women's poetry and elucidate this supposition by analysing the poems of the seventeenth-century writer, Katherine Philips (1632-1664). I argue that Philips gained access to the *Hermetica* through her male contemporaries, John Everard, Henry More, Henry Vaughan and Andrew Marvell. I then demonstrate how Philips used this accessibility to create a female Hermetic-poetic language of her own. I explore Philips's feminization of Hermeticism on four levels: spiritual, political, erotic and linguistic. The chapter proposes that there is a Hermetic intertextuality between Philips's poetry and Aemilia Lanyer's pro-woman alchemical volume of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611). By reading Philips and Lanyer alongside one another, I aim to re-configure what is meant by the 'Hermetic metaphysical tradition'. The chapter ends by considering how Philips's Hermeticism was understood by two contrasting seventeenth-century readers of her verse: Sir Francis Finch and Aphra Behn (1640?-1689).

The *Hermetica* posits that 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices' have 'within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity'.¹⁵ It is the human being, according to the *Hermetica*, who has the capacity to uncover this earthly natural divinity:

a human being is a great wonder [...] He looks up to heaven [...] He cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind [...] mingling and combining the two natures [mortal and eternal] into one in their just proportions.¹⁶

It is a passage such as this that arguably led to the seventeenth-century philosopher, physician and poet, Henry Vaughan, to remark that '*Hermetists* [...] observe nature in her workes [...] by the mediation of nature [...] they may produce and bring to light [...]

Modern Europe, ed. by Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library and Associated University Presses, 1988).

¹⁵ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

¹⁶ *Hermetica*, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. 69, 70, 71.

rare effectual medicines'.¹⁷ For Vaughan and his fellow Hermeticists, 'rare effectual medicines' could be attained through the distillation, conservation and transmutation of earthly 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices'.¹⁸ Hermes was thus regarded as the father of physical and spiritual alchemy. The seventeenth-century German alchemist, Martinus Rulandus, for instance, argued that 'to obtain a knowledge of the mysteries of the art [of alchemy], it is necessary to be acquainted with all the works of Hermes'.¹⁹ Rulandus's use of the Ficinian term 'mysteries' suggests that this 'art' of alchemy is physical, exoteric, spiritual and esoteric.²⁰

Indeed, Rulandus goes on to propose that

hermetic philosophers lend themselves readily to interpretations which have no connection with physical chemistry. Under this treatment the Philosopher's Stone assumes a purely moral or spiritual significance. [...] He who can dive into the depths of his own soul and penetrate to its centre [...] will find at that centre the jewel of priceless value, the Philosopher's Stone [...] for he will be one with Christ.²¹

For Rulandus, Hermetic philosophy does not simply involve 'physical chemistry', but spiritual chemistry – the alchemy of the soul. Rulandus's theory is echoed by the seventeenth-century English philosopher, Sir Thomas Browne, who wrote in 1642:

The smattering I have of the Philosopher's stone, (which is something more than the perfect exaltation of gold) hath taught me a great deal of Divinity, and instructed my beliefe, how that immortall spirit and incorruptible substance of my soule may lye obscure, and sleepe a while within this house of flesh.²²

Both Rulandus and Browne seem to invoke the *Hermetica*'s transmutative mingling of the physical and human with the divine.

In 1614, the philologist, Isaac Casaubon, proposed that the *Hermetica* derived from the first century AD rather than from ancient times, but this evidence was largely ignored throughout the seventeenth century and philosophers such as Ralph Cudworth continued to insist that Hermes Trismegistus initiated the prophet, Moses, into 'Hieroglyphick Learning and Metaphysical Theology'.²³

¹⁷ Nollus [Thomas Vaughan?], *Hermetical Physick*, trans. by Henry Vaughan, p. 5.

¹⁸ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

¹⁹ Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary* (1612), p. 339.

²⁰ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

²¹ Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary*, p. 393.

²² Browne, *Religio Medici*, cited in Crawshaw, 'Hermetic Elements in Donne's Poetic Vision', p. 324.

²³ Casaubon, *De Rebus Sacris et Ecclesiasticis* (1614), cited in Røstvig, 'Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden': A Hermetic Poem', p. 67; Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), cited in Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*, p. 93.

For Cudworth, spiritual monism stems from the ‘*Hermaical or Egyptian Doctrines* (in all which *One Supreme Deity* is every where asserted)’.²⁴ Cudworth here refutes Casaubon by harking back to the sixteenth-century French Protestant philosopher, Philippe Du Plessis Mornay. Du Plessis Mornay’s treatise, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion* (1587), was translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding. This treatise ran into four editions by 1617 (STC). Du Plessis Mornay writes:

Mercurius [Hermes] Trismegistus, who (if the bookes which are fathered uppon him bee his in deede, as in trueth they bee very auncient) [...] teacheth euerywhere, That there is but one GOD [.]
[...]

Mercurius Trismegistus with Moyses, shall reape thereby most singular contentation. In Genesis Moyses describeth the Creation of the World; and so doth Mercurie likewise in his Pœmander. [...] Moyses parteth the nature of moysture into twayne, the one mounting aloft which he calleth heauen, and the other remayning beneath which he calleth Sea; And Mercurie seeth a light fire which he calleth Aether mounting up as it were out of the bowelles of the moyst nature [...] this maner of Mercuries writing, is not a bare borrowing or translating out of Moyses; but rather a tradition conueyed to the AEgyptians from the Father to the Sonne.²⁵

For Du Plessis Mornay, Moses’s account of the Creation in Genesis parallels the divine alchemy found in the *Hermetica*. It is, presumably, this physical-spiritual blending through the *prisca theologia* (one God, one theology), that Cudworth defines as a ‘Metaphysical Theology’.²⁶

Aligning Hermes Trismegistus with Moses can be traced back to at least the fifteenth century, where we find a mosaic of Hermes in Siena Cathedral (c. 1488) that declares: ‘HERMES MERCURIUS TRIMEGISTUS CONTEMPORANEUS MOYSE’.²⁷ On close examination of this mosaic of Hermes, we find that the male prophet, Hermes, is flanked by two female sibylline figures.²⁸ These sibylline figures imply that Hermetic knowledge will be disseminated by women. Indeed, according to the renowned seventeenth-century alchemist, Michael Maier, the Hermetic

succession passed to Maria the Hebrew, who was closest to Hermes [...] the whole secret, she [Maria] says, is in the knowledge of the Vessel of

²⁴ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (Cambridge, 1678), p. 333.

²⁵ Du Plessis Mornay, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, pp. 27-28, 130-31.

²⁶ Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, cited in Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus*, p. 93.

²⁷ Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, p. 22.

²⁸ Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, pp. 19, 20.

Hermes, because it is divine [...] He who understands this properly grasps the truest mind of Maria, and she will open up to him those secrets of chemistry which [...] all have wrapped in dark silence.²⁹

Maier indicates that the Hermetic art is not exclusively passed from ‘the Father to the Sonne’, but is initiated by women such as Maria.³⁰ Maier depicts Maria as Hermes’s *soror mystica* – a Hermetic sister-prophetess who carries and circulates the knowledge of Hermes’s sacred alchemical ‘Vessel’.³¹

Taking on the role of the *soror mystica* was one way in which women of the Renaissance could gain Hermetic agency. This is exhibited through the seventeenth-century married couple, Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan. The philosopher and physician, Thomas Vaughan (brother of Henry Vaughan), kept an alchemical notebook during the 1650s where he recorded a communal physical and metaphysical Hermetic practice:

Take one part crude or melted sal ammoniac, also one part of the best scarab. Crush very gently, and dissolve in distilled vinegar, or in our burning spirit. Then distill, and you will have a noble menstruum for resolving and subliming metallic calxes into a volatile spirit: [...] It was proved in reduction and sublimation of metallic calxes into viscous, volatile, fiery, and exceedingly acidic water.

Praise indeed be to God, our merciful Lord and most high; in thee, o most just Jesus, redeemer of sinful souls, most clement God and Man, uniting and reconciling God to man and man to God. Great Love, new and eternal bond, true life, the way and light of the way. Draw me after Thee, We shall run! T. [homas] R. [ebecca] V. [aughan]³²

Thomas Vaughan here immediately follows his exoteric alchemical practice with a regenerative devotional meditation that reconciles ‘man to God’.³³ This exoteric-esoteric juxtapositioning recalls the *Hermetica*’s stress on the ‘two natures’ of man, mortal and eternal.³⁴ Thomas Vaughan’s use of the plural ‘our burning spirit’ and signing of the meditation as ‘T. [homas] R. [ebecca] V.[aughan]’ indicates that his

²⁹ Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum* (1617), cited in Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, pp. 76, 77, 78.

³⁰ Du Plessis Mornay, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, p. 131.

³¹ Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum*, cited in Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, p. 77. According to Raphael Patai, the chief source for Maria is the ancient Greek alchemical author, Zosimos, who lived in Hellenistic Egypt at about 300 CE. Patai argues that Maria must have lived at least two generations before Zosimos himself. See Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, p. 60.

³² *Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis (British Library MS, Sloane 1741)*, ed. and trans. by Donald R. Dickson (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), p. 33. This alchemical notebook was written soon after 1658 and records alchemical practices that were taking place throughout the 1650s. See Donald R. Dickson, ‘The Alchemical Wife: The Identity of Thomas Vaughan’s ‘Rebecca’’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 13 (1998), 36-49 (p. 41).

³³ *Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis*, p. 33.

³⁴ *Hermetica*, trans. by Copenhaver, p. 71.

alchemical-spiritual practice is not taking place in isolation, but in the company of his wife, Rebecca.³⁵

Later on in the notebook, Thomas Vaughan writes of an ‘Aqua Rebecca: Which I call thus, since my dearest wife showed me this from holy Scripture. She showed me (I say) nor would I have ever found it by another way’.³⁶ As we have seen, philosophers such as Ralph Cudworth and Philippe Du Plessis Mornay were reading the Bible through the lens of the *Hermetica* and here Rebecca Vaughan offers a Hermetic-alchemical interpretation of the ‘holy Scripture’ that her husband uses exoterically.³⁷ In this way, Rebecca Vaughan becomes a *soror mystica* (like the Prophetess Maria) who guides Thomas Vaughan to the Hermetic divine through the ‘holy Scripture’.³⁸

But women did not necessarily need their husbands to gain access to the Hermetic arts and this is seen through the writings and practices of the early-seventeenth-century medic-healer, Lady Grace Mildmay. According to Linda Pollock, Lady Mildmay may have been part of an ‘élite circle of alchemists’ that included the physician, Reginald Paters.³⁹ Indeed, in her writings, Lady Mildmay cites both the medieval Hermeticist, Arnaldus de Villanova, and the sixteenth-century Hermeticist, Paracelsus.⁴⁰ Although Lady Mildmay does not mention reading foreign languages and Latin in her surviving autobiography, she certainly would have been able to read John Harvey’s printed edition of *An Astologicall Addition [...] the learned worke, of Hermes Trismegistus, intituled, Iatromathematica* (1583) and Thomas Tymme’s published English translation of Joseph Du Chesne’s *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke* (1605).⁴¹ Lady Mildmay (like her contemporary, Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland) may have acquired access to the *Hermetica* through her male alchemical associates. As we will see, Lady Mildmay’s spiritual meditations abound in allusions to the *Hermetica*.

The *Hermetica* delineates the alchemical divine omnipotence of God:

He [God] filled a great basin with mind, and sent it down to earth; and he appointed a herald, and bade him make proclamation to the hearts of men: ‘Hearken, each human heart; dip yourself in this basin [...]

³⁵ Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s *Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis*, p. 33.

³⁶ Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s *Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis*, p. 231.

³⁷ Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s *Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis*, p. 231.

³⁸ Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s *Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis*, p. 231.

³⁹ Linda Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620*, p. 99.

⁴⁰ Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, p. 99; Lady Grace Mildmay, ‘Extracts from Medical Papers’ (c. 1580-1620), in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, pp. 110-40 (p. 134).

⁴¹ Lady Grace Mildmay, ‘Autobiography’ (c. 1617-1620), in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, pp. 23-40.

believing that you shall ascend to Him who sent the basin down' [...] those who [...] dipped themselves in the bath of mind, these men got a share of gnosis.⁴²

It is this transformative basin of gnosis that Lady Mildmay seems to evoke in her spiritual meditations:

He [God] is the spirit of sanctification and regeneration, making that holy which was unholy [...] regeneration [...] begetteth us to God and maketh us new creatures in mind, will, and life [...] Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, should walk in newness of life.
[...]

God hath ordained fire to refine gold and as wines poured from vessel to vessel are purified, so hath he ordained means to refine and purge this heart from all her dross [...] to make it a clean vessel, more pure than the gold and to retain the holy spirit of God [.]⁴³

Lady Mildmay's invocation of spiritual 'washing' and 'regeneration' not only stems from the biblical doctrine of baptism (Matthew 3. 13-17; John 1. 29-34), but recalls the *Hermetica*'s holy alchemical 'basin'.⁴⁴

As we have seen, the *Hermetica* posits that 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices' have 'within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity' and it is up to the human being to 'cultivat[e] the earth' and uncover its healing potential.⁴⁵ It is this Hermetic theory that Lady Mildmay appears to explicate when she writes:

plants, trees, fruits, spices, precious balms natural, natural baths which boil like a furnace, ordained for health. All sorts of precious gums for medicine, sweet odours, gold, silver, pearl, precious stones [...] All which do declare unto us, the mighty power of God [...] God hath given man wisdom and knowledge to use them and to avoid the abuse of them[.]⁴⁶

These divine 'plants' and 'spices' are used by Lady Mildmay to concoct 'precious and excellent balm[s]' that are distributed in her household and local vicinity.⁴⁷ In her

⁴² *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, trans. by Scott, p. 61.

⁴³ Lady Grace Mildmay, 'Extracts from Spiritual Meditations' (c. 1617-1620), in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, pp. 70-91 (pp. 76-77).

⁴⁴ *Hermetica*, trans. by Scott, p. 61.

⁴⁵ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389; *Hermetica*, trans. by Copenhaver, p. 70.

⁴⁶ Mildmay, 'Extracts from Spiritual Meditations', in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, p. 84.

⁴⁷ Mildmay, 'Extracts from Spiritual Meditations', in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, p. 84; Mildmay, 'Extracts from Medical Papers', in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, p. 128.

medical papers, Lady Mildmay notes that she prepares her healing balms ‘according to art’ and I would argue that this ‘art’ is a likely reference to the *Ars Hermetica*.⁴⁸

Lady Mildmay dedicates her spiritual meditations to her daughter and grandchildren, as she writes at the beginning of her meditations:

To my daughter, Mary, the Lady Fane, wife of the Honourable Knight,
Sir Francis Fane.

For as much as by the goodness of God, such abundance of the fatness of the earth shall descend upon you (my daughter) from your father and myself, I present this above all other gifts unto you and your children, even the dew of heaven, contained in these books following.⁴⁹

Lady Mildmay’s allusion to the ‘fatness of the earth [...] the dew of heaven’ is clearly an invocation of Genesis: ‘God giue thee [...] of the dewe of heauen, and the fatnes of the earth’.⁵⁰ This quotation from Genesis also appears on the title-page of John Dee’s alchemical-Hermetic text, *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564).⁵¹ As Lyndy Abraham points out, for some Renaissance Hermetic thinkers, the alchemists’ cleansing water was seen as a ‘dew of grace’.⁵² It is presumably this cleansing alchemical potential that Lady Mildmay bestows on her meditations, as she implies that they will continue to purify and heal her daughter and grandchildren after her death. Lady Mildmay’s dedicatory epistle to her daughter evinces that Hermetic gnosis was being passed on to daughters through their mothers.

In the mid seventeenth century, Hermeticism’s foregrounding of the *prisca theologia* took on a resurgent political resonance as men and women sought to transcend the severe earthly factionalism of their times and reach the divine through the ascendancy of the *Deus unus*. Everard’s 1649 translation of the *Hermetica* declares that the

friendship, and commixture of contraries and unlike, became Light shining from the Act or Operation of God [...] For there is one Soul, one Life, and one Matter. [...] There is therefore one God. [...] He therefore being One, doth all things in many things.⁵³

According to Margaret Healy, the *Hermetica*’s rendering of the syncretic ‘friendship [...] of contraries’ enabled ‘people to envision alternative golden worlds beyond the

⁴⁸ Mildmay, ‘Extracts from Medical Papers’, in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, p. 130.

⁴⁹ Mildmay, ‘Extracts from Spiritual Meditations’, in Pollock, *With Faith and Physic*, p. 70.

⁵⁰ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Genesis 27. 28.

⁵¹ John Dee, *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 54.

⁵² Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 54.

⁵³ *The Divine Pyramander*, trans. by Everard, pp. 123-24, 127.

cataclysmic events' of the mid seventeenth century.⁵⁴ Indeed, during the mid seventeenth century, there was a demand for English translations of Hermetic texts, as they poured off the printing presses.⁵⁵ These English printed texts included Everard's *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (1649) and *Hermes Trismegistus His Second Book, Called Asclepius* (1657), Henry Vaughan's translation of Henry Nollus's (Thomas Vaughan's?) *Hermetical Physick* (1655), and Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1651) which contained 'Severall Poetical Pieces of our Famous English Philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries'.⁵⁶

One mid-seventeenth-century writer who was caught in the midst of political and religious factionalism was Katherine Philips. Philips was born into a Presbyterian background. Her father, John Fowler, was a cloth merchant.⁵⁷ Her maternal grandfather, Daniel Oxenbridge, was a Presbyterian physician who was practising in London from *circa* 1620 onwards.⁵⁸ Her maternal uncle, John Oxenbridge, was a puritan minister and a friend of Andrew Marvell and John Milton.⁵⁹ Her maternal aunt, Elizabeth Oxenbridge, was married to Oliver St John, a prominent Parliamentary lawyer.⁶⁰ In 1647 it was documented that Philips's mother, Katherine Oxenbridge, visited the Independent preacher, Sarah Wight.⁶¹

Between 1640 and 1646, Philips attended Mrs Salmons's Presbyterian boarding-school in Hackney.⁶² It was probably at Mrs Salmon's school that Philips learnt about the processes of domestic alchemy. The seventeenth-century conduct-book writer, Hannah Woolley, directed female teachers as follows: 'Having qualified them [female students] for reading, you should practice them in their pen, [...] and in due time let them know how to Preserve, Conserve, Distill; with all those laudible Sciences which

⁵⁴ Healy, 'Protean Bodies', p. 172.

⁵⁵ Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 24; Healy, 'Protean Bodies', p. 170.

⁵⁶ Ashmole, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1651), sig. A2r, title-page.

⁵⁷ Warren Chernaik, 'Philips [*née* Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), *poet*', *ODNB* [accessed 7 July 2009].

⁵⁸ William Birken, 'Oxenbridge, Daniel (1571-1642), *physician*', *ODNB* [accessed 9 November 2011].

⁵⁹ Chernaik, 'Philips [*née* Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), *poet*', *ODNB*.

⁶⁰ Chernaik, 'Philips [*née* Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), *poet*', *ODNB*.

⁶¹ This was recorded by Henry Jessey's 1647 account of the Independent Sarah Wight's prophecies. Henry Jessey and Sarah Wight, *The Exceeding of God's Grace* (1647), p. 9, cited by Catharine Gray, 'Katherine Philips and the Post-Courtly Coterie', *English Literary Renaissance*, 32 (2002), 426-51 (Note 61, pp. 445-46).

⁶² Chernaik, 'Philips [*née* Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), *poet*', *ODNB*.

adorn a compleat Gentlewoman'.⁶³ Indeed, it is domestic alchemical receipt-book culture that Philips playfully captures in her 1640s juvenilia:

A receipt to cure a Love sick Person who cant
obtain the Party desired

Take two oz: of the spirits of reason three oz:
of the Powder of experiance five drams of the Juce
of Discretion three oz: of the Powder of good advise
& a spoonful of the Cooling watter of consideration
make these all up into Pills & besure to drink a
little content affter y^m & then the head will be
clear of maggotts & whimsies & you restored to y^r
right sences [.]⁶⁴

As we will see, it is this early interest in emotional alchemy that Philips transmutes in her later verse into an intricate form of Hermeticism.

Kate Lilley suggests that it was at Mrs Salmon's school that Philips formed intimacies with girls of a 'higher social standing'.⁶⁵ Here, for instance, Philips befriended Mary Aubrey, daughter of the Royalist, Sir John Aubrey. Here, she also met Mary Harvey, niece of the Royalist sympathiser and physician, Dr William Harvey.⁶⁶ Mary Harvey went on to marry the Royalist, Sir Edward Dering, and it was through the Derings in London that Philips made the acquaintance of the Royalist and Hermeticist, Henry Vaughan.⁶⁷ It was also through the Derings that Philips was introduced to the Royalist society of the music composer, Henry Lawes.⁶⁸

In *circa* 1646-1647, Philips's widowed mother married Sir Richard Phillipps and Katherine Philips moved with her mother and stepfather to Picton Castle in Wales.⁶⁹ In 1648, Katherine (*née* Fowler) Philips married the prominent Welsh Cromwellian, Colonel James Philips (*c.* 1624-1674).⁷⁰ It is in Wales that Katherine Philips makes the acquaintance of Anne Owen (1633-1692), the 'Lucasia' of her verse, to whom she

⁶³ *The Gentlewomans Companion* (1673), attributed to Hannah Woolley, cited in Wendy Wall, 'Women in the Household', in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 97-109 (p. 97).

⁶⁴ Katherine Philips, 'A receipt to cure a Love sick Person who cant obtain the Party desired', cited in Claudia Limbert, 'Two Poems and a Prose Receipt: The Unpublished Juvenalia of Katherine Philips (text)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986), 383-90 (p. 390).

⁶⁵ Kate Lilley, '“Dear Object”: Katherine Philips's Love Elegies and Their Readers', in *Women Writing, 1550-1750*, ed. by Jo Wallwork and Paul Salzman (Bundoora, Victoria: Meridian, 2001), pp. 163-78 (p. 163).

⁶⁶ Lilley, 'Dear Object', p. 163.

⁶⁷ Patrick Thomas, 'Introduction', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Henry Lawes tutored Mary Harvey in singing and musical composition. See Ian Spink, 'Lawes, Henry (*bap.* 1596, *d.* 1662), singer and composer', *ODNB* [accessed 29 November 2011].

⁶⁹ Thomas, 'Introduction', p. 4.

⁷⁰ Chernaik, 'Philips [*née* Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet', *ODNB*.

addresses several poems. Anne Owen was the daughter and heiress of John Lewis of Presaddfed.⁷¹ As Carol Barash observes, Anne Owen's family connections had strategically shifting political allegiances.⁷² Anne Owen's stepfather and later father-in-law, Sir Hugh Owen, for instance, sided with Parliament on the outbreak of the Civil War. He then transferred his sympathies to the Royalist cause, but eventually went on to hold important public appointments under the Commonwealth throughout the 1650s.⁷³ Philips thus had strong Royalist and Parliamentary connections, and Mark Llewellyn has argued that it was for this reason that she had to 'strike a balance between the often conflicting political and religious imperatives of two very different visions of worldly existence'.⁷⁴

It is for this reason, I would suggest, that Philips turned to the *Hermetica*. The *Hermetica*'s stress on the 'friendship [...] of contraries' – its *discordia concors* – allows a writer like Philips to negotiate the factionalism and conflict of her times:⁷⁵

Order, by which all things were made,
And this great world's foundation laid,
Is nothing else but Harmony,
Where different parts are brought t' agree.
(LADB,⁷⁶ 1-4)

Philips partly uses her verse as a tool to find a common-ground between the Royalist and the Parliamentarian:

We hunt extreames, and run so fast,
We can no steady Judgement cast:
He best surveys the circuit round,
Who stands i' th' middle of the Ground.
(LADB, 61-64)

For Philips, it is the *Hermetica*'s emphasis on the *prisca theologia* that has the capacity to redeem all earthly factions: 'One God would save, one Christ redeem them all'.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Francis Jones, 'Owen of Orielton', *Pembrokeshire Historian*, 5 (1974), 11-32 (p. 21).

⁷² Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 76.

⁷³ Jones, 'Owen of Orielton', pp. 19-20.

⁷⁴ Mark Llewellyn, 'Katherine Philips: Friendship, Poetry and Neo-Platonic Thought in Seventeenth-Century England', *Philological Quarterly*, 81 (2002), 441-68 (p. 445).

⁷⁵ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 123.

⁷⁶ Katherine Philips, 'L'accord du bien', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 169-73 (p. 169). From henceforth 'L'accord du bien' is abbreviated as LADB and is preceded by the line reference.

⁷⁷ Katherine Philips, '2. Corinth. 5. 19. v. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. 8^{to} Aprilis 1653', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 181-82 (p. 182), line 34.

There are a number of ways in which Philips could have accessed the *Hermetica*. She was fluent in French and proficient in Italian – languages in which published editions of the *Hermetica* were circulating throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷⁸ Philips wrote the majority of her poems between *circa* 1650 and 1664, after John Everard's publication of *The Divine Pyramander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (1649).⁷⁹ Furthermore, Philips read the writings of the seventeenth-century Hermetic disciple, Henry More, whom she quotes explicitly in her epitaph to her poem, 'God'.⁸⁰ Henry More cites the *Hermetica* on the title-page of *Psychathanasia* (1647): 'man is immortal; for he can receive God, and hold intercourse with God'.⁸¹

As indicated, Philips also knew the Hermetic philosopher, Henry Vaughan. In *circa* 1651, Philips chooses to address Henry Vaughan in Hermetic terms:

To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist,
on his Poems

[...]

Thou [...]

Descend'st from thence like Moses from the Mount,

And with a candid and unquestion'd aw,

Restor'st the golden age when verse was law.

Instructing us, thou so secur'st thy fame,

That nothing can disturb it but my name;

Nay I have hopes that standing so near thine

'Twill loose its drosse, and by degrees refine.

(TMHV,⁸² 25-32)

The alchemical treatise, *The All-wise Doorkeeper*, described alchemy as the 'Mosaico-Hermetic science of all things above and things below'.⁸³ It is this Mosaico-Hermetic

⁷⁸ Philips translated numerous French works in her lifetime. For instance, she published an English translation of Pierre Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée. Tragédie* (1644) in 1663. See *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda: Volume III: The Translations*, ed. by G. Greer and R. Little (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1993). We know that Philips read Italian, as she consulted an Italian edition of Baldesar Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*, 1528), see *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda: Volume II: The Letters*, ed. by Thomas, p. 81. A French edition of Ficino's *Hermetica* was printed in 1549. An Italian translation was printed in Florence in 1548. See Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 18, 192.

⁷⁹ For the dating of Philips's poems, see Thomas, 'Introduction', pp. 65-68.

⁸⁰ Katherine Philips, 'God', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 138-41 (p. 138). From henceforth 'God' is abbreviated as G and is preceded by the line reference.

⁸¹ Henry More, *A Platonick Song of the Soul*, ed. by Alexander Jacob (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), pp. 255-56. More's citation of the *Hermetica* is in Greek.

⁸² Katherine Philips, 'To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist, on his Poems', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 96-97 (p. 97). From henceforth 'To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist, on his Poems' is abbreviated as TMHV and is preceded by the line reference.

⁸³ *The All-wise Doorkeeper*, in *The Hermetic Museum* (1678), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 130.

auctoritas that Philips grants to Henry Vaughan's verse, which has the power to restore the 'golden age' and refine Philips's poetry and name from all its 'drosse' (TMHV, 28, 32). As Andrea Brady points out, the 'golden age' that Philips evokes is an invocation of Plato's *Republic* when 'Poets were Judges, Kings Philosophers' (L, 18).⁸⁴ However, as Ficino argues, Platonic theory descends from Hermes Trismegistus, who is

the first author of theology: he [Hermes Trismegistus] was succeeded by Orpheus [...] succeeded in theology by Pythagoras, whose disciple was Philolaus, the teacher of our Divine Plato. Hence there is one ancient theology (*prisca theologia*) [...] taking its origin in Mercurius [Hermes Trismegistus] and culminating in the Divine Plato.⁸⁵

Read within this context, Philips's invocation of the 'golden age' (TMHV, 28) does not just venerate Plato, but the pristine *prisca theologia*, originating from the 'Golden Work of Hermes Trismegistus'.⁸⁶ Henry Vaughan, as an alchemical philosopher, would not have missed this Hermetic hermeneutic.

But it is not simply Henry Vaughan who has the ability to separate 'drosse' from 'gold', but Katherine Philips's poet-speaker herself. This is exhibited in the poem 'God', where Philips's poet-speaker undergoes a quest for Hermetic ascent:

When shall those cloggs of sence and fancy break,
That I may heare the God within me speak?
When with a Silent and retired art,
Shall I with all this empty hurry part?
To the still voice above, my Soule advance;
My light and Joy fix'd in God's Countenance;
[...]
With such distinctions all things here behold,
And so to separate each drosse from Gold [.]
(G, 49-54, 57-58)

John Dryden had notoriously proposed in 1693 that the 'metaphysics [...] perplexes the minds of the fair sex'.⁸⁷ But as we shall see, Philips's above-cited poem, 'God', actively engages with Hermetic metaphysics.

The *Hermetica* posits that '[a]t the dissolution of your material body [...] man mounts upward through the structure of the heavens [...] he ascends to the substance of

⁸⁴ Andrea Brady, 'The Platonic Poems of Katherine Philips', *The Seventeenth Century*, 25 (2010), 300-22 (p. 303); Katherine Philips, 'Lucasia', *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 103-105 (p. 104). From henceforth, 'Lucasia' is abbreviated as L and is proceeded by the line reference.

⁸⁵ Marsilio Ficino, preface to the *Pimander*, cited in Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ 'The Golden Work of Hermes Trismegistus', collected in William Salmon, *Medicina practica with the Clavis alchymiae* (1691), cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Dryden, 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire', p. 19.

the eighth sphere, being now possessed of his own proper power'.⁸⁸ This upwards movement is described as 'metaphysical' by the influential sixteenth-century Italian Hermetic philosopher, Giordano Bruno, in his *De gli eroici furori* (*The Heroic Frenzies*, 1585):

the kingdom of God is within us [...] divinity lives within us by virtue of the regenerated intellect and will
[...]
[this] mode of pursuit [...] is not physical movement, but a certain metaphysical movement [...] circling through the degrees of perfection to reach that infinite center [...]⁸⁹

It is this 'metaphysical movement', I would argue, that Philips's poet-speaker seeks in the poem 'God' through the dissolution of the 'cloggs of sence' (G, 49).⁹⁰ Bruno's Hermetic writings were circulating in Queen Henrietta Maria's court via the masque composers, Thomas Carew and Aurelian Townshend.⁹¹ As a reader of Italian, Philips certainly would have had access to Bruno's *The Heroic Frenzies*, which was published in London in 1585 and dedicated to the renowned poet, Sir Philip Sidney.⁹²

The 'Gold' (G, 58) that Philips's poet-speaker discovers in the poem 'God' is not an exoteric, physical gold, but an inner esoteric gold. According to Michael Maier, 'gold' is the 'shadow' of the eternal spirit: 'Gold, which is in it self incorruptible, is on earth accounted the symbol, the marke and shadow of that eternity, which we shall enjoy above'.⁹³ Moreover, Ralph Cudworth declared in his sermon to the House of Commons in 1647: 'We must be reformed within, with a spirit of fire and a spirit of burning, to purge us from the dross [...] of our hearts and refine us as gold and silver;

⁸⁸ *Hermetica*, ed. and trans. by Scott, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁹ Giordano Bruno, *The Heroic Frenzies*, ed. and trans. by Paul Eugene Memmo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), pp. 125, 129.

⁹⁰ Bruno, *The Heroic Frenzies*, p. 129.

⁹¹ As Margaret Healy points out, Bruno's *The Heroic Frenzies* influenced sixteenth-century French court entertainments such as the *Ballet Comique de la Reine* (1581) and these were revived in England in the seventeenth century via Queen Henrietta Maria, who learnt the arts of ballet, acting and singing in the French court and practised these in her performed masques in England. See Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, p. 38; Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 3, 5. Queen Henrietta Maria performed in the masque, *Tempe Restored* (1632), which was written by Aurelian Townshend and had as its main source the *Ballet Comique de la Reine* (see Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*, p. 91). Thomas Carew's masque, *Coelum Britannicum* (1634) was based in part on Bruno's *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* (London, 1584). Carew's source is outlined on the *STC*.

⁹² See Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, p. 50.

⁹³ Michael Maier, *Lusus Serius* (1654), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 87.

and then we shall be reformed truly'.⁹⁴ It seems to be this sacred 'Gold' (G, 58) that Philips's poet-speaker attains through a metaphysical meditation that leads to the 'still' (distilled) 'voice' of God (G, 53).

Philips's 'Silent and retired art' (G, 51) recalls Everard's 1649 translation of the *Hermetica*, which induces 'a Divine Silence, and [...] rest of all the Senses'.⁹⁵ In his manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica*, the Parliamentarian, Thomas, Lord Fairfax, interprets this 'Divine Silence' as a pre-lapsarian silence, when God 'was knowne, prayed, and revered' by silence alone.⁹⁶

This pre-lapsarian state of Hermetic perfection was implicitly denied to women by the seventeenth-century poet, Andrew Marvell, whose poetry Philips may have read in manuscript through her uncle, John Oxenbridge.⁹⁷ Marvell writes:

When we have run our passion's heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
[...]

My soul into the boughs does glide:
[...]

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walked without a mate:
After a place so pure, and sweet,
[...]
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one
To live in paradise alone.

(*'The Garden'*,⁹⁸ 25-26, 52, 57-59, 62-64)

Maren-Sofie Røstvig argues that Marvell's lines, 'Two paradises 'twere in one / To live in paradise alone' (TG, 63-64), recount the *Hermetica*'s delineation of the androgynous character of the Creation: 'Man [...] being hermaphrodite, or Male and Female [...] he is

⁹⁴ Ralph Cudworth, 'Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons at Westminster, March 31, 1647', in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. by Gerald R. Cragg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 369-407 (p. 407).

⁹⁵ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 44.

⁹⁶ 'Mercurius Trismegistus Pimander' (written after 1650), trans. by Thomas Lord Fairfax, cited in Røstvig, 'Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden': A Hermetic Poem', p. 69. Lord Fairfax's manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica* is held in the British Library, London, MS Additional 25447.

⁹⁷ Andrew Marvell had lived in John Oxenbridge's household at Eton in the 1650s. See Allan Pritchard, 'Marvell's 'The Garden': A Restoration Poem?', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23 (1983), 371-88 (p. 371).

⁹⁸ Andrew Marvell, 'The Garden', in *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Penguin, 1996, 1st pub. 1972), pp. 100-102. This poem may have been written in the early 1650s. See Elizabeth Story Donno, 'Notes: The Garden', in Andrew Marvell, *The Complete Poems*, p. 255. From henceforth 'The Garden' has been abbreviated as TG and is preceded by the line reference.

governed by, and subjected to a Father, that is both Male and Female'.⁹⁹ But for Marvell's poet-speaker, androgynous Adam does not need a female 'mate' (TG, 58) to gain access to a divine retreat. Androgyny, for Marvell's poet-speaker, does not appear to be applicable to Eve (and women). Marvell's contention here is similar to Milton's proposition: 'He [Adam] for God only, she [Eve] for God in him'.¹⁰⁰

For Philips's poet-speaker in 'God', however, the 'Silent and retired art' (G, 51) is tacitly left open to all sexes and genders. At no point in the poem 'God' does the poet-speaker explicitly refer to her/his sex or gender. 'God' elucidates Philips's contention that 'soules no sexes have'.¹⁰¹ In this way, Philips harks back to, and authentically celebrates, the original androgynous state of Creation in the *Hermetica*: 'souls [...] come from one place [...] and they are neither male nor female'.¹⁰² Philips insinuates in the poem 'God' that sublime Hermetic ascent is not just a male androgynous Adamic privilege, but open to all sexless souls.

As suggested earlier in this chapter, the *Hermetica* intimates that human beings have the ability to 'cultivat[e] the earth' and unveil divine, natural 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices'.¹⁰³ Marvell's poet-speaker in 'The Garden' portrays his 'cultivation' of Nature as a seduction:

What wondrous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
[...]
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.
[...]

My soul into the boughs does glide:
[...]

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk'd without a mate [.]
(TG, 33-36, 40, 52, 57-58)

⁹⁹ Røstvig, 'Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden': A Hermetic Poem', pp. 70-71 and Note 30, p. 74; *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰⁰ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by John Leonard (London: Penguin, 2000), Book IV, line 299, p. 81.

¹⁰¹ Katherine Philips, 'A Friend', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 165-68 (p. 166), line 19.

¹⁰² *Hermetica*, ed. and trans. by Scott, p. 194.

¹⁰³ *Hermetica*, trans. by Copenhaver, p. 70; Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389;

The beauty of Nature in 'The Garden' exceeds the beauty of the earthly human 'mistress' (TG, 20): 'How far these [Nature's] beauties hers [the human mistress's] exceed!' (TG, 22). Marvell's poet-speaker gives the impression that, before the creation of Eve, androgynous Adam could procure passionate gratification through Nature:

Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.
[...]

My soul into the boughs does glide:
[...]

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk'd without a mate [.]
(TG, 40, 52, 57-58)

Marvell's speaker's 'wondrous' (TG, 33) seduction by Dame Nature, the 'am'rous [...] lovely green' (TG, 18), is transformed by Henry Vaughan into an anxious rape of virginal Nature:

I summon'd nature: peirc'd through all her store,
Broke up some seales, which none had touch'd before,
Her wombe, her bosome, and her head
Where all her secrets lay a bed
I rifled quite [.]
(*'Vanity of Spirit'*, 9-13)¹⁰⁴

Philips boldly rejects this male seduction/rape of Dame Nature, as she asserts:

Let dull Philosophers enquire no more
In nature's womb,
[...]
These are but low experiments; but he
That nature's harmony entire would see,
Must search agreeing soules, sit down and view
How sweet the mixture is! how full! how true!
By what soft touches spirits greet and kiss,
And in each other can compleat their bliss [.]
(TML,¹⁰⁵ 1-2, 7-12)

Philips's speaker here is not pursuing external, exoteric nature, but an inner, esoteric nature – the nature of the soul. The alchemical 'mixture' of 'soules' (TML, 10, 9) that Philips's speaker cites, entices the bodily senses of sight, taste and touch:

sit down and view

¹⁰⁴ Henry Vaughan, 'Vanity of Spirit' (1650), in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. by Martin, pp. 418-19 (p. 418).

¹⁰⁵ Katherine Philips, 'To my Lucasia', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 128-29. From henceforth 'To my Lucasia' is abbreviated as TML and is proceeded by the line reference.

How *sweet* the mixture is! [...]
 By what *soft touches* spirits greet and *kiss*,
 And in each other can compleat their bliss [.]
 (TML, 9-12 my italics)

Philips here evokes the philosophy of *tactus* (touch) and *beatitudo* (bliss) found in the writings of the reputed alchemical enthusiast, St Thomas Aquinas.¹⁰⁶ Aquinas had argued the following:

the sense-power that takes in all [...] objects of sense is called touch [*tactus*].

(*Quaestio Disputata de Anima*)

Our sense-powers, because they are activities of bodily organs, can be incidentally subject to the activity of heavenly bodies [.]

(*In Aristotelis Librum Peri Hermeneias*)

human bliss [*beatitudo*] lies in becoming as like God as possible. But actually acting makes us most like God, actualizing our potentialities to the utmost. So human bliss consists in human activity.

(‘Commentary on Book 4 of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*’)

intellect and reason can be hindered or helped by interior sense-powers. So then there can be virtues in those powers just as in our powers of sensual desire.

(*Summa Theologiae*)¹⁰⁷

Philips (following Aquinas) posits that it is through the realm of affect and ‘soft touches’ (TML, 10) that the soul can be moved: ‘By what soft touches spirits greet and kiss, / And in each other can compleat their bliss’ (TML, 10-11). Both Aquinas and Philips are arguably influenced by the *Hermetica*’s discourse of spiritual *solve et coagula* (a lexicon that spiritualizes the body and materializes the spirit): ‘the Soul of a made Body, hath its Soul full of the Body’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ For Aquinas’s supposed interest in alchemy, see Marie-Louise von Franz, ‘Introduction’, in *Aurora Consurgens*, ed. by Franz, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio Disputata de Anima* (1269); *In Aristotelis Librum Peri Hermeneias* (1269-1272); ‘Commentary on Book 4 of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*’ (1253-1255); *Summa Theologiae* (1269-1270), in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. by Timothy McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 1st pub. 1993), pp. 134, 279-80, 327, 406.

¹⁰⁸ This definition of *solve et coagula* stems from Eugene R. Cunnar, ‘Donne’s ‘Valediction: Forbidding Mourning’ and the Golden Compasses of Alchemical Creation’, in *Literature and the Occult: Essays in Comparative Literature*, ed. by Luanne Frank (Arlington: The University of Texas at Arlington, 1977), pp. 72-110 (p. 85); *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 49.

What is innovative about Philips's use of *solve et coagula*, however, is that she recruits this discourse of spiritual alchemy to search for an inner female 'content' that cannot be adequately defined by 'dull' male 'Philosophers' (TML, 1):

Content,
to my dearest Lucasia
[...]
content is more divine
Then to be digg'd from Rock or Mine;
[...]

But now some sullen Hermit smiles,
And thinks he all the world beguiles,
And that his cell and Dish containe
What all mankind doe wish in Vaine.
But yet his pleasure's follow'd with a grone,
For man was never made to be alone.

Content her self best comprehends
Betwixt two souls, and they two friends,
Whose either Joys in both are fix'd,
And multiply'd by being mix'd;
[...]

Whose flame is serious and divine [.]
(C,¹⁰⁹ 15-16, 43-52, 58)

Here Philips's speaker rejects solitary male retreat (as foregrounded in Marvell's 'The Garden') and privileges a joint meditative practice that includes women: 'For man was never made to be alone' (C, 48). Philips takes the discourse of Ciceronian male *amicitia* further through a 'mix'd' (C, 52) alchemical lexicon that embraces the feminine:

Content *her self* best comprehends
Betwixt two souls, and they two friends,
Whose either Joys in both are fix'd,
And multiply'd by being mix'd [.]
(C, 49-52, my italics)

This communal excavation for the 'divine' (C, 58) is sanctioned by the *Hermetica*: 'Seek one that may lead you by the hand, and conduct you to the door of Truth, and Knowledg, where the cleer Light is that is pure from Darkness'.¹¹⁰ But this

¹⁰⁹ Katherine Philips, 'Content, to my dearest Lucasia', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 91-94 (pp. 92-93). From henceforth 'Content, to my dearest Lucasia' is abbreviated as C and is preceded by the line reference.

¹¹⁰ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 100.

collective quest for divine ‘Light’ was gendered as male by Ficino, who proclaims: ‘Hermes Trismegistus chose Aesculapius [Hermes’s disciple and student] [...] wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey’ – female companions are not mentioned by Ficino.¹¹¹ Philips, however, disrupts this male homosocial dynamic by asserting that women, too, are capable of sublime Hermetic friendship:

To My excellent Lucasia,
on our friendship. 17th. July 1651
[...]
never had Orinda found
A Soule till she found thine;
Which now inspires, cures and supply’s [sic],
And guides my darken’d brest:
For thou art all that I can prize,
My Joy, my Life, my rest.
Nor Bridegroomes nor crown’d conqu’rour’s mirth
To mine compar’d can be:
They have but pieces of this Earth,
I’ve all the world in thee.
Then let our flame still light and shine,
(And no bold feare controule)
As inocent as our design,
Immortall as our Soule.
(TMEL,¹¹² 11-24)

Hermetic disciples are advised to look for a ‘cleer Light [...] pure from Darkness’, and Katherine Philips’s poet-speaker, Orinda, acquires this clear light through her female friend, Lucasia, who ‘inspires, cures’ and ‘guides’ Orinda’s ‘darken’d brest’ (TMEL, 13-14).¹¹³ As we have seen, the poetic voice in the poem ‘God’ is potentially ungendered, but in ‘To My excellent Lucasia, on our friendship’, the voice is distinctly female and excludes male heteropatriarchal interruption: ‘Nor Bridegroomes [...] mirth / To mine compar’d can be’ (TMEL, 17-18, my italics). The Hermetic ‘light and shine’ (TMEL, 21) that Orinda is searching for seems to be a specifically female ‘light and shine’. Philips thus challenges the gender-biased interpretation of the *Hermetica* that is initiated by Ficino and proves that spiritual enlightenment can be gained through a Hermetic *sensus communis* between women.

¹¹¹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 97.

¹¹² Katherine Philips, ‘To My excellent Lucasia, on our friendship. 17th. July 1651’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 121-22. From henceforth ‘To My excellent Lucasia, on our friendship. 17th. July 1651’ is abbreviated as TMEL and is proceeded by the line reference.

¹¹³ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 100.

By cleansing Orinda's 'darken'd brest' (TMEL, 14), Lucasia leads Orinda to the 'golden One' (L, 14) – the alchemical *opus*, the philosopher's stone:

Lucasia, whose rich soule had it been known
 In that time th'ancients call'd the golden One,
 When innocence and greatness were the same,
 [...]
 Poets were Judges, Kings Philosophers;
 Ev'n then from her [Lucasia] the wise would coppys draw,
 And she to th'infant = World had given Law.
 [...]

Lucasia, whose harmonious state,
 The spheares and muses faintly imitate.
 [...]

she now life, and then doth light dispence,
 [...] is one shining orb of Excellence;
 [...]

bright and vigourous, her beams are pure,
 [...]
 So that in her that Sage [Hermes Trismegistus?] his wish had
 seen,

And Vertue's self had personated been.
 Now as distilled simples do agree,
 And in the Lembique loose Variety;
 So vertue, though in scatter'd pieces 'twas,
 Is by her mind made one rich usefull masse.

(L, 13-15, 18-20, 23-24, 31-32, 37, 45-50)

By aligning Lucasia to a shining 'orb' (L, 32) who emanates from the alchemical 'Lembique' (L, 48), Philips evokes the seventeenth-century descriptions of the *opus circulatorium* (the philosopher's stone). Martinus Rulandus, for example, states: 'the circle [...] stands for the most precious of all metals, as also for its philosophical antitype, the Gold of the Sages'.¹¹⁴ This renowned theory is famously celebrated by Donne in 'A Valediction: forbidding mourning':

Our two soules therefore, which are one,
 [...]
 Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.
 [...]

Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
 To move, but doth, if the'other doe.
 [...]

Thy firmness makes my circle just,
 And makes me end, where I begunne.

¹¹⁴ Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary*, p. 404.

(V, 21, 24, 27-28, 35-36)

For Donne's speaker, the female beloved is the 'fixt foot' (V, 27) of the compass that casts the 'circle' (V, 35). While Donne's speaker is free to 'rome' (V, 30), his female beloved can only 'hearke[n]' (V, 31) – wait and listen without a voice. For Philips, however, this spherical movement is an exclusive female personification that is initiated by Orinda's pen and voice: 'My [Orinda's] pen to rescue the declining age. / [...] *she* [Lucasia] now life, and then doth light dispence, / [...] is one shining orb of Excellence; / [...] *her* beams are pure' (L, 4, 31-32, 37 my italics). In this way, Philips reclaims the original female voice and presence of Sapience in *The Geneva Bible*: 'When he [God] prepared the heauens, I [Sapience] was there, when he set the compas vpon the depe. [...] And toke my solace in the compasse of his earth'.¹¹⁵ Sapience's sole female perception of God's heavenly/earthly 'compasse' is literally embodied in Orinda's name. By delineating the divine spherical movements of Lucasia in her poetry, Orinda, too, can become a female *alter Deus*.

The philosopher's stone was said to have been discovered by 'that Sage' (L, 45), Hermes Trismegistus. The seventeenth-century English alchemist, Elias Ashmole, claimed in 1651:

After Hermes [Trismegistus] had once obtained the knowledge of this Stone, he gave over the use of all other Stones, and therein only delighted: Moses, and Solomon (together with Hermes were the only three that) excelled in the knowledge therof, and who therewith wrought Wonders.¹¹⁶

Yet Philips queries this sanctified male exclusivity, as it is Lucasia who summons the 'golden One' – the stone – that guides male Poets, Kings, Philosophers and 'that Sage' (L 14, 18, 45), Hermes Trismegistus. This is made explicit when Orinda depicts Lucasia as a sacrosanct lawgiver: 'she to th'infant = World [sic] had given Law' (L, 20). This takes us back to the book given to Hermes in the mosaic in Siena Cathedral on which is written: 'SVSCIPITE O LICTERAS ET LEGES EGIPTII' (take up thy letters and laws o Egyptians).¹¹⁷ As Frances Yates points out, this Latin motto is a supplication from the

¹¹⁵ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Prouerbes 8. 27, 31.

¹¹⁶ Ashmole, Prologema, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, sig. B2r.

¹¹⁷ Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, p. 22.

lawgiver of the Hebrews, Moses.¹¹⁸ Indeed, it is a Mosaico-Hermetic law that governs Orinda's relationship with Lucasia:

Friendship in Emblem
or the Seale,
to my dearest Lucasia
[...]
The hearts (like Moses bush presum'd)
Warm'd and enlighten'd, not consum'd.
[...]
So friendship governs actions best,
Prescribing Law to all the rest.
(FIE,¹¹⁹ 19-20, 43-44)

A. G. Gilbert observes that 'law' has its root in the Greek word *logos*, which means word, law or decree.¹²⁰ By presenting Lucasia as a female lawgiver, Philips heralds a new feminized Mosaico-Hermetic identity – a new female *logos*. This sacrosanct femininity is augmented through Philips's above-cited allusion to 'the Seale', which recalls the voice of the bride from The song of Salomón: 'Set me as a seale on thine heart, & as a signet vpon thine arme'.¹²¹

It is a well-known fact, however, that women were not lawgivers in the seventeenth-century British public judicial system. T.E. laments in *The law's resolution of women's rights* (1632) that 'women have no voice in parliament. They make no laws, consent to none, they abrogate none. [...] I know no remedy, though some women can shift it well enough.'¹²² It is this 'shift[ing]' political potential that Philips's speaker grants to Lucasia:

To (the truly competent Judge of Honour)
Lucasia, upon a scandalous libell made by
J. Jones
[...]
Honour keeps court at home, and doth not feare
To be condemn'd abroad, if quitted there.
While I have this retreat, 'tis not the noise
Of slander, though believ'd, can wound my Joys.
There is advantage in't: for gold uncoyn'd

¹¹⁸ Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 45.

¹¹⁹ Katherine Philips, 'Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 106-108 (pp. 107-108). From henceforth 'Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia' is abbreviated as FIE and is preceded by the line reference.

¹²⁰ A. G. Gilbert, 'Foreword', in *Hermetica*, ed. and trans. by Scott, pp. 5-31 (p. 9).

¹²¹ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, The song of Salomón 8. 6.

¹²² T.E., *The law's resolution of women's rights* (1632), in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Aughterson, pp. 152-57 (p. 153).

Had been unusefull, nor with glory shin'd:
 This stamp'd my innocence, which lay i' th' Oare,
 And was as much, but not so bright, before.
 Till an Alembique wakes and outward draws,
 The strength of sweets ly sleeping in their cause:
 So this gave me an opportunity
 To feed upon my own integrity.
 And though their Judgement I must still disclaime,
 Who can nor give, nor take away a fame:
 Yet I'le appeale unto the knowing few,
 Who dare be Just, and rip my heart to you.
 (TTCJH,¹²³ 51-66)

As Carol Barash points out, the above-cited poem was written in response to a threat initiated by one of Philips's husband's opponents, J. Jones.¹²⁴ According to archival evidence, Philips's manuscript poem, 'Upon the double murther of K. Charles, in answer to a libellous rime made by V. P.', fell into the hands of Jones, who threatened to publish it and 'slander' (TTCJH, 54) Philips and her husband.¹²⁵ In 'To (the truly competent Judge of Honour) Lucasia, upon a scandalous libell made by J. Jones', however, it is Lucasia's transfigurative alchemical 'Alembique' (TTCJH, 59) that has the power to cleanse Jones's 'slander' (TTCJH, 54) and clear Philips's name. Lucasia is thus fashioned as a transformative Hermetic Sibyl, as she is 'much more then Nymph or Goddess bright; / [...] They give us Love, you [Lucasia] give us Law'.¹²⁶ Lucasia is a 'Judge of Honour' in the 'court' of the 'home' (TTCJH, 51). Lucasia's private judgement has the potential to be heard 'abroad' and 'appeale unto the knowing few' (TTCJH, 52, 65) – an entreaty that is deliberately both selective and open-ended. Lucasia's transformative 'Alembique' (TTCJH, 59) does not just refer to spiritual grace, but a regenerative political and societal power. Philips seems to point to the 'shift[ing]' intersection between public and private lawgiving. Men, like J. Jones, may have the power to initiate a public 'libell', but women, like Lucasia, are endowed with a moral lawgiving *auctoritas* that stems from the semi-public, semi-private court of the home.

But why does Philips utilize Hermetic alchemy specifically in her 'Lucasia' poems? As we have seen, the *Hermetica* encouraged the 'friendship, and commixture of

¹²³ Katherine Philips, 'To (the truly competent Judge of Honour) Lucasia, upon a scandalous libell made by J. Jones', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 114-16 (p. 116). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as TTCJH and is preceded by the line reference.

¹²⁴ Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714*, p. 72.

¹²⁵ Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714*, p. 72.

¹²⁶ Katherine Philips, 'A Triton to Lucasia going to Sea, shortly after the Queen's arrival', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 218-19 (p. 219), lines 23-24.

contraries' and this maxim could be appropriated to compound the class hierarchies that existed among women.¹²⁷ Elizabeth Wahl argues that Anne Lewis Owen ('Lucasia') came from a family of a 'higher [social] rank' than Philips's own 'merchant-class connections' in London.¹²⁸ More than any other of Philips's friends, Anne Owen offered Philips the 'prospect of joining a network of influential people she could use to further her literary career'.¹²⁹ Indeed, Katherine Philips did face financial difficulty and was of a different financial class to the heiress, Anne Owen. The seventeenth-century biographer, John Aubrey, records that Katherine Philips's uncle Oxenbridge was imprisoned for a debt incurred on behalf of his niece and her husband.¹³⁰ It is therefore not unlikely that Katherine Philips, through Anne Owen, is seeking an emotional, spiritual, societal and ultimately, financial, patronage:

To my Lucasia
[...]
Oh may good heaven but so much vertue lend,
To make me fit to be Lucasia's friend!
But I'll forsake my self, and seek a new
Self in her brest, that's far more rich and true.
Thus the poore Bee unmark'd doth humm and fly,
And dron'd with age would unregarded dy,
Unless some curious artist thither come
Will bless the insect with an Amber Tomb.
Then glorious in its funerall, the Bee
Gets eminence, and gets Eternity.
(TML, 27-36)

Philips's speaker here searches for a new, regenerated 'Self' in Lucasia's 'brest' that is 'rich and true' (TML, 29, 30). 'Rich' denotes both spiritual richness and financial richness. The 'eminence' (TML, 36) that Philips's speaker desires to gain through Lucasia is both spiritual and societal. As Lyndy Abraham observes, in alchemical terms, the sting of the bee signifies a 'secret fire, the mercurial solvent which destroys the old metal or outmoded state of being'.¹³¹ But Philips's speaker fashions herself as a 'poore Bee unmark'd' and 'unregarded', waiting to be resurrected by the 'curious artist', Lucasia, who will 'bless' the Bee with an 'Amber Tomb' (TML, 31, 32, 33, 34). Amber as an alloy, according to Martinus Rulandus, is one part silver to five parts gold and in

¹²⁷ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 123.

¹²⁸ Elizabeth Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 142.

¹²⁹ Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, p. 142.

¹³⁰ John Aubrey, *Brief Lives [...] Set Down [...] Between the Years 1669 and 1696*, cited in Germaine Greer, *Slip-Shod Sibyls: Recognition, Rejection and the Woman Poet* (London: Viking, 1995), p. 163.

¹³¹ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 20.

Richard Crashaw's 'The Weeper', amber is aligned to spiritual gold: 'Not the soft Gold which / Steales from the Amber-weeping Tree'.¹³² As Margaret Healy points out, amber is one of the 'fruits' of the golden *opus*.¹³³ Amber was thus regarded by some as a synonym for gold: spiritual and esoteric, financial and exoteric.¹³⁴ Moreover, the precious 'Tomb' (TML, 34) that Lucasia possesses is reminiscent of the regenerative 'Emerald Tablet' that was supposedly found on the tomb of Hermes Trismegistus and on which was written thirteen precepts, one of which declares: 'So shalt thou have the Glory of the whole World, all obscurity therefore shall fly away from thee'.¹³⁵ Lucasia's 'Amber Tomb' (TML, 34) is not a tomb of death, but a Hermetic womb of life that will cleanse Philips's speaker of spiritual and social 'obscurity'. Read within this Hermetic context, it seems likely that the poem, 'To my Lucasia', is an alchemical, esoteric rendering of 'Friendship's exalted interest' (FIE, 26).

Philips subtly manipulates the *Hermetica*'s stress on the 'friendship, and commixture of contraries' to establish and justify a sense of equality between herself and her friend/patron, Lucasia:¹³⁶

Friendship's Mysterys, to
my dearest Lucasia.
[...]
We are our selves but by rebound,
And all our titles shuffled so,
Both Princes, and both subjects too.
(FM,¹³⁷ 23-25)

This elegantly demolishes the infamous hierarchy of Donne: 'She' is all States, and all Princes, I'.¹³⁸ Philips, in the above-cited lines, mixes the discourse of the Commonwealth with a Royalist ideology. '[S]huffled' (FM, 24) intimates a political reshuffling or reform – princes and subjects are on an equal footing; princes protect

¹³² Martinus Rulandus cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 7; Richard Crashaw, 'The Weeper' (1646), in *The Complete Poetry Richard Crashaw*, ed. by George Walton Williams (New York: New York University Press, 1972), pp. 121-37 (p. 126).

¹³³ Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, p. 140.

¹³⁴ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 7.

¹³⁵ 'The Smaragdine Table of *Hermes Trismegistus*', in *Five Treatises of the Philosophers Stone* (London, 1652), sig. A3v.

¹³⁶ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 123.

¹³⁷ Katherine Philips, 'Friendship's Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia. (set by Mr. H. Lawes.)', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 90-91 (p. 91). From henceforth 'Friendship's Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia. (set by Mr. H. Lawes.)' is abbreviated as FM and is preceded by the line reference.

¹³⁸ John Donne, 'The Sunne Rising', in *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. by Gardner, pp. 72-73 (p. 73), line 21. This poem may have been written after 1603, see 'Notes to the Text, Note 133', in *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659*, ed. by Woudhuysen, p. 794.

their subjects and vice versa. Philips's language of mutuality: 'we [...] our [...] both' (FM, 23, 24, 25), contrasts with Donne's isolated, (phallic?) 'I' and stress on difference. Lorna Hutson argues that Philips's poems to her female friends draw attention to the 'erotic and political subjection of one woman to another'.¹³⁹ But in Philips's above-quoted lines, we find both subjection *and* reformed egalitarianism at work.

Philips's female class conflation recalls the feminized Hermetic *discordia concors* of Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611). As illustrated in Chapter 3 of this study, Lanyer utilizes an alchemical discourse to appeal to the inner circle of her potential patron, the Hermetic alchemist, Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland. Kate Chedgzoy and Shannon Miller have recently suggested that *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* travelled beyond Margaret Clifford's immediate circle and may have been read by later seventeenth-century poets, such as John Milton, who acquired access to Lanyer's text as it circulated through a 'cultural network' in which both Milton and the 'Clifford women were involved'.¹⁴⁰ Miller argues that *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* was disseminated among the 'royal family, court musicians, and the Cumberland family itself: the Countess's own Puritan proclivities, Milton's connection to [the court musician] Henry Lawes, and even the possible performance of Milton's *Comus* [1637] at the fourth Earl of Cumberland's Skipton Castle offer possible lines of connection between the author of *Paradise Lost* [1674] and Lanyer's volume of poems'.¹⁴¹ Miller goes on to identify a range of textual and conceptual connections between *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and *Paradise Lost*, such as the representation of Eve, the relationship between 'mystical visions, acts of (gendered) gazing, and the implications of structures of governance'.¹⁴²

As demonstrated, one writer who was connected to both the court musician, Henry Lawes, and the poet, Milton, was Katherine Philips. Henry Lawes set four of Philips's poems to music and published 'Friendship's Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia' in his second book of *Ayres and Dialogues* (1655).¹⁴³ Milton was a friend of Philips's

¹³⁹ Lorna Hutson, 'The Body of the Friend and the Woman Writer: Katherine Philips's Absence from Alan Bray's *The Friend* (2003)', *Women's Writing*, 14 (2007), 196-214 (p. 210).

¹⁴⁰ Kate Chedgzoy, 'Remembering Aemilia Lanyer', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 2 (2010), 14-35 (p. 31); Shannon Miller, *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 49.

¹⁴¹ Miller, *Engendering the Fall*, p. 49.

¹⁴² Miller, *Engendering the Fall*, p. 48.

¹⁴³ Thomas, 'Introduction', p. 6; Thomas, 'Commentary on Poem 17', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, p. 336.

uncle, John Oxenbridge.¹⁴⁴ Philips therefore could have read Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* through these two connections. Philips never mentions Lanyer in her surviving letters. But these letters date from 1658-1664.¹⁴⁵ Philips's earlier correspondence with John Oxenbridge and Henry Lawes is yet to be uncovered.¹⁴⁶ What I would like to propose here is that Philips read and responded to the feminized Hermeticism of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. I wish to point to the textual and conceptual links between Philips's poetry and Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and in so doing re-assess what is meant by the 'Hermetic metaphysical tradition'.

As argued in Chapter 3 of this study, in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Lanyer aligns her potential patron, Margaret Clifford, to three alchemical guises: Dame Nature, Lady Alchymia, and the Hermetic hermaphrodite – the philosopher’s stone – the phoenix. All three of these guises are climatically encapsulated in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’ (the country-house poem that closes *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*):

Farewell (sweet *Cooke-ham*) where I first obtain'd
Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd;
[...]
you (great Lady [Margaret Clifford]) Mistris of that Place,
From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace;
[...]
each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee:
[...]
The swelling Bankes deliver'd all their pride,
When such a *Phœnix* once they had espide.
[...]
With *Moyſes* you did mount his holy Hill,
To know his pleasure, and performe his Will.
(TDC, 1-2, 11-12, 33-34, 43-44, 85-86)

Lanyer's repetition of 'Grace' (TDC, 2, 12) denotes both spiritual and financial grace and anticipates Philips's female-female esoteric-exoteric compounding terminology: 'rich [...] eminence' (TML, 30, 36). Furthermore, as evinced in this chapter, the *Hermetica* describes how 'herbs, trees, stones, and spices' have 'within themselves [...]

¹⁴⁴ Chernaik, 'Philips [*née* Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), *poet*', *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁵ See *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda: Volume II: The Letters*, ed. by Thomas.

¹⁴⁶ The process of recovering Philips's writings from the archives is still ongoing. See Patricia M. Sant and James N. Brown, 'Two Unpublished Poems by Katherine Philips (text)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 24 (1994), 211-28; Stevenson, 'Still Kissing the Rod? Whither Next?', p. 299; Elizabeth H. Hageman and Andrea Sununu, 'New Manuscript Texts of Katherine Philips, the 'Matchless Orinda'', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700*, 4 (1993), 174-219.

a natural force of divinity'.¹⁴⁷ It is arguably these Hermetic-alchemical 'plant[s]', 'floure[s]' and 'tree[s]' (TDC, 33) that are activated and transmuted by Margaret Clifford in 'The Description of Cooke-ham'. Here Lanyer foresees and perhaps inspires Anne Clifford's account of her mother in her 1652 family memorial: 'She [Margaret Clifford] was a lover of the study and practice of alchimy [...] for she had [...] knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants'.¹⁴⁸ For Lanyer's speaker in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Margaret Clifford heals both bodies and souls:

To heale the soules [...]
 By thy [Margaret Clifford's] faire virtues; [...]
 [...]
 If they be blind, thou giv'st to them their sight;
 If deafe or lame, they heare, and goe upright.
 (SDRJ, 1371-72, 1375-76)

This natural sensual-spiritual curative capability also imbues Philips depiction of Lucasia:

never had Orinda found
 A Soule till she found thine;
 Which now inspires, cures and supply's,
 And guides my darken'd brest [.]
 (TMEL, 11-14)

Lucasia, whose rich soule had it been known
 In that time th'ancients call'd the golden One,
 [...]
 Choosing what nature, not what art prefers;
 [...]
 Ev'n then from her the wise would coppys draw [.]
 (L, 13-14, 17, 19)

This representation of female inner/outer nature contrasts with Henry Vaughan's 'Vanity of Spirit'. As we have seen, in 'Vanity of Spirit', Vaughan's speaker fretfully 'peirc[es]' and 'rifle[s]' Dame Nature's 'wombe', 'bosome' and 'head'.¹⁴⁹ For Lanyer and Philips, however, the female muse is a spiritual Dame Nature at one with the inner and outer landscape who requires no phallogentric rifling or piercing.

By describing Margaret Clifford as a hermaphroditic Arabian bird, a '*Phœnix*' (TDC, 44), Lanyer echoes the *Hermetica*'s emphasis on androgyny: 'Man [...] being hermaphrodite, or Male and Female [...] he is governed by, and subjected to a Father,

¹⁴⁷ Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*, cited by Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, p. 389.

¹⁴⁸ Anne Clifford, 'A Summary of Records', p. 20.

¹⁴⁹ Vaughan, 'Vanity of Spirit', in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. by Martin, p. 418, lines 9-13.

that is both Male and Female'.¹⁵⁰ Marvell's speaker insinuates in 'The Garden' that androgyny is a state of perfection that man finds himself in *before* the creation of Eve. However, as demonstrated, in Philips's poem 'God' and here in Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham', metamorphic androgyny is reclaimed and celebrated for women. Both Margaret Clifford and Lucasia are women who possess and bestow a Mosaico-Hermetic masculine 'Will' (TDC, 86) and 'Law' (L, 20).

A *Chymicall Dictionary* (1650) describes the phoenix as the 'quintessence of Fire; also the Philospher's Stone [Christ]' and it is a resurrective Christ-like supremacy that Lanyer's speaker endows to Margaret Clifford:¹⁵¹

The swelling Bankes deliver'd all their pride,
When such a *Phænix* once they had espide.
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford]
walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see [.]
(TDC, 43-44, 81-84)

Lanyer's woman-to-woman searching for the stone, Christ, is similarly recounted by Philips in her 'Lucasia' poems: 'Though ne're stone to me, 'twill stone for me prove, / By the peculiar miracle of Love'.¹⁵² There is no archival evidence to prove that Philips read and responded to Lanyer's writings. As outlined above, however, there is textual evidence to suggest that a 'partial' and 'strange' inter-poetic dialogue might have taken place between these two writers.¹⁵³

But Lanyer never explicitly mentions Hermes Trismegistus by name in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. Philips, however, does and this is revealed in an epitaph:

EPITAPH.
ON HECTOR PHILLIPS. at S^t Sith's Church
[...]
Seaven years Childless Marriage past,
A Son, A Son is born at last;
So exactly limm'd and Fair
[...]

¹⁵⁰ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵¹ *A Chymicall Dictionary* (1650), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 152.

¹⁵² Katherine Philips, 'Wiston = Vault', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 105-106 (p. 106), lines 19-20.

¹⁵³ Rosalind Smith argues that there are 'partial' and 'strange' feminine literary traditions in the Renaissance and my use of these adjectives here is indebted to her. Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer*, p. 11.

Yet, in less then six weeks, dead.
 Too promising, too great a Mind
 In so small room to be confin'd:
 Therefore, fit in Heav'n to dwell,
 He quickly broke the Prison shell.
 So the Subtle Alchymist,
 Can't with Hermes=seal resist
 The Powerfull Spirit's subtler flight [.]
 (E,¹⁵⁴ 5-7, 10-17)

Lyndy Abraham notes that here Philips's speaker compares the 'flight of her dead son's spirit from his body to the escape of alchemical spirits from the hermetically sealed alembic'.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Philips's speaker intimates that her son's spirit is so 'Powerfull' (E, 17) that it can transcend 'Hermes=seal' (E, 16). The subtle exoteric alchemist may not be able to contain Hector Phillips's spirit, but the spiritual Hermetic alchemist knows that the 'dissolution' of the body 'is not death'.¹⁵⁶ The *Hermetica* imparts that at the dissolution of the material body, man gains an immortality of the soul:

dissolution is not death [...] they [Bodies] are dissolved, not that they may be destroyed, but that they may be made new.
 [...]

We must now speak of the Soul and Body, O Son; after what maner the Soul is Immortal; and what operation that is, which constitutes the Body, and dissolves it.¹⁵⁷

Hermes addresses these esoteric mystical words to his son, Tat, and Philips adapts this father-to-son discourse to console and regenerate herself, a sorrowful mother, and her dead child.

Yet the *Hermetica* does not construct a binary opposition between the material body and the immortal soul, but foregrounds a lexicon of contiguous oppositions:

contrariety, [in] all things must consist. And it is impossible it should be otherwise.
 [...]

The Minde is in Reason, Reason in the Soul, the Soul in the Spirit, the Spirit in the Body. [...] The Spirit being diffused, and going through the veins, and arteries, and blood, [...] moveth the living Creature [.]
 [...]

¹⁵⁴ Katherine Philips, 'EPITAPH. ON HECTOR PHILLIPS. at S^t Sith's Church', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, p. 205. From henceforth, 'EPITAPH. ON HECTOR PHILLIPS. at S^t Sith's Church' is abbreviated as E and is preceded by the line reference.

¹⁵⁵ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 99.

¹⁵⁶ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 152.

¹⁵⁷ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, pp. 152, 201.

Man [...] seeth and toucheth Heaven by his Sense.¹⁵⁸

The *Hermetica*'s conflation of soul and body is arguably utilized by Ficino to establish and validate an erotic-spiritual connection between himself and his patron/friend/disciple, Lorenzo de' Medici:

I burn with the fire of love [...] if ever we [Marsilio and Lorenzo] appear to grow cool, [...] our coolness burns with more heat than the passion of others [...]. Your [Lorenzo's] bite is sweeter than sweetness. Oh how sweetly you bite, how sharply you kiss! You mingle a magic sweetness with the sharp, and a sharpness with the sweet, as does Nature in the most succulent tastes.

[...]

you ought to remember that if Lorenzo is not absent, neither is Marsilio, for Marsilio dwells in Lorenzo [.]

[...]

I love my own in you. I praise you in art, and I value art in you. I honour you in nature, and I marvel nature in you. I revere you through God, and I reverence God through you.¹⁵⁹

This published letter to Lorenzo encapsulates Ficino's esoteric writing style, as he fuses the spiritual, the erotic, the Platonic, the transcendental, the sensual and the alchemical. The *Hermetica* tells us that '[s]oul and corporeal substance together are embraced by nature' and it is this corporeal-immaterial love for human/divine Nature that Ficino reveres through Lorenzo.¹⁶⁰ The cluster of imagery in the above-cited letter that relates to cooling, burning and heating captures the movements of the alchemical alembic that transforms metals, herbs, minerals and plants. But Ficino is not searching for an exoteric 'alchemy' which 'turns iron into gold', but is celebrating an inner alchemy that sublimates man into the divine: 'He who transforms human love into divine is transformed from man into God'.¹⁶¹ It is thus an inner heat and fire that Ficino is conjuring in his Hermetic friendship with Lorenzo.

There was, of course, a flurry of interest in Ficino's writings in Queen Henrietta Maria's court and Katherine Philips is likely to have come across Ficino's *Epistolae* in Italian (a language in which it was translated and published).¹⁶² However, for a woman

¹⁵⁸ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, pp. 48, 50, 155.

¹⁵⁹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, pp. 69, 70, 71.

¹⁶⁰ *Hermetica*, ed. and trans. by Scott, p. 116.

¹⁶¹ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, IV, p. 56; VI, p. 54.

¹⁶² For the circulation of Ficino's writings in Henrietta Maria's court, see Jayne, 'Introduction', p. 22. An Italian translation of Ficino's *Epistolae* was undertaken by F. Figliucci and printed as *Le Divine Lettere*

to adopt a Ficinian sensual-spiritual voice could lead to scandalous accusations of sexual dissidence.

Indeed, prior to 1653, the poet, John Taylor (1578-1653), attacked Katherine Philips in a manuscript poem. As Kate Lilley points out, Taylor's accusations against Philips are phrased in the 'sodomitical rhetoric of abuse and inversion': 'The Jangling of bells backward rung / So is thy [Philips's] tongue'.¹⁶³ Taylor assails Philips for being a 'dame of Corinth' and a 'second Sapho', commanding her to 'Committ no Rape. / Vpon the Muses be not bold'.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Taylor portrays Philips as an adulteress:

Save then you, the Cyprian Queene [Venus]
Is often seene.
Not in her Glory, but the Nett,
By Vulcan sett:
That Sooty God, had Eyes & Art.
And playd his part.¹⁶⁵

Vulcan is the god of fire, the patron of artists who worked iron and metal.¹⁶⁶ Taylor's use of Vulcan here may be a satiric dig at Philips's use of exoteric alchemical imagery in her poetry. Vulcan catches his wife, Venus, in an act of adultery with Mars.¹⁶⁷ What Taylor is implying here is that Philips's husband will catch her committing adultery with his political oppositions, the Royalists. Taylor presents Katherine Philips as a sexual and political sodomite.

Given this context, how can Philips safe-guard her reputation from critics such as Taylor and simultaneously engage in the act of writing erotic poetry? One way is to appropriate a Hermetic secret style of writing that will speak to different interest groups for different purposes. Martinus Rulandus argues that

[i]n the writings of Hermetic Science, the Philosophers never express the true significance of their thoughts in the vulgar tongue, and they must not be interpreted according to the literal sense of the expressions. The sense which is presented on the surface is not the true sense. They discourse in enigmas, metaphors, allegories, fables [...] Some Philosophers have had recourse to a mute language by which to speak to the eyes of the spirit.¹⁶⁸

del Gran Marsilio Ficino in Venice in 1546 and 1563. See 'Bibliography', in *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, II, p. 235. Philips was connected to the culture of Henrietta Maria's court via the royal musician, Henry Lawes.

¹⁶³ Lilley, 'Dear Object', p. 169. Lilley here cites John Taylor's 'To M^{rs} K:P: from M^r J.T.'.

¹⁶⁴ John Taylor, 'To M^{rs} K:P: from M^r J.T.', cited in Lilley, 'Dear Object', p. 169.

¹⁶⁵ John Taylor, 'To M^{rs} K:P: from M^r J.T.', cited in Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 282-84 (p. 283), lines 27-32.

¹⁶⁶ Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, Note 11, p. 283.

¹⁶⁷ Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, Note 12, p. 283.

¹⁶⁸ Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary*, pp. 381-82.

Rulandus's above-quoted statement makes two salient interconnected points. First, Hermetic discourses are allegorical and are designed to be read on multiple levels concurrently. Secondly, Hermetic idiom is permeated with a silent-speaking 'mute language' that can have different meanings for different readers.¹⁶⁹ This second point originates from the seventh book of the Hermetic *Pymander*, which is entitled 'His [Hermes] secret Sermon in the Mount of Regeneration, and the Profession of Silence'.¹⁷⁰ On this mount, Tat declares to his father, Hermes: 'Now [...] instruct me of Regeneration, either by word of mouth, or secretly'.¹⁷¹

This Hermetic silent-speaking allegorical lexicon, I would argue, is manipulated by Philips to create a cryptic woman-to-woman sensual-spirituality:

To my Lucasia, in defence of
declared friendship

O! my Lucaisa, let us speak our Love,
[...]

Although we know we love, yet while our soule
Is thus imprison'd by the flesh we wear,
There's no way left that bondage to controule,
But to convey transactions through the Eare.

Nay, though we read our passions in the Ey,
It will obleige and please to tell them too:
Such Joys as these by motion multiply,
Were't but to find that our souls told us true.

[...]

And as a River, when it once has pay'd
The tribute which it to the Ocean ow's,
Stops not, but turns, and having curl'd and play'd
On its own waves, the shore it overflows:

So the Soul's motion does not end in bliss,
But on her self she scatters and dilates,
And on the Object doubles, till by this
She finds new Joys, which that reflux creates.

(DDF,¹⁷² 1, 29-36, 41-48)

¹⁶⁹ Rulandus, *A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary*, p. 382.

¹⁷⁰ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 80.

¹⁷¹ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 81.

¹⁷² Katherine Philips, 'To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 153-56 (pp. 153, 154-55). From henceforth 'To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship' is abbreviated as DDF and is proceeded by the line reference.

This above-cited poem begins as a ‘defence’ – Philips’s speaker and Lucasia will ‘speak’ their ‘Love’ (DDF, 1) in defiance of critics such as John Taylor. This ‘Love’ will be articulated via ‘transactions through the Eare’ (DDF, 1, 32) – visible to all, but privy to none but the lovers themselves. Philips in this poem constructs an ambivalent Hermetic mode of discourse whereby the physical and spiritual are not always clearly discernable. The poem is designed to be read on a spiritual level, a physical level and on both these levels simultaneously. The reading of the poem is ultimately dependent on the ‘passions’ (DDF, 33) of the onlooker.

Take, for example, Philips’s above-cited metaphor of the River/Ocean. For the twenty-first-century critic, Andrea Brady, Philips’s River image is a metaphor for spiritual baptism: ‘divine grace can ‘dilat[e]’ [DDF, 46] the vicious soul [...] the achievement of salvation is not the end of the soul’s motion, but the beginning of its self-anointing in ‘bliss’ [DDF, 45]’.¹⁷³ Brady’s interpretation can certainly be sustained by textual evidence. The ‘passio[n]’ (DDF, 33) that Philips’s speaker finds in her lover’s ‘Ey’ (DDF, 33) is a potential commemoration of the Passion of Christ. Philips’s speaker discovers an *amici Christi* through the eyes of her beloved.

For the critic, Valerie Traub, however, Philips’s ‘passions’ (DDF, 33) seem to entail bodily passions and sexual impulse. Traub argues that ‘To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship’ figures ‘in humoral terms’ a ‘female orgasm: a dilation, swirling, and scattering of fluids’.¹⁷⁴ For Traub, Philips is an erotic *lesbian* poet (Traub’s italics marking the ‘epistemological inadequacy’ and ‘historical contingency’ of the term).¹⁷⁵ For Brady, on the other hand, Philips is a stoical Platonic philosopher (inspired by her male contemporary, the Cambridge Neoplatonist, Henry More).¹⁷⁶ What I am suggesting here is that Philips’s Hermetic, esoteric style of writing facilitates both these readings and this is intentionally epitomised by the River image, which has shape-shifting alchemical connotations.

According to the fifteenth-century French alchemist, Nicolas Flamel, the ‘moist river’ often ‘transfigures himselfe from one forme to another’.¹⁷⁷ The river, for some alchemical thinkers, was a mercurial symbol. Michael Maier, for instance, compares the potency of King Mercury to the fertility of the Prince of Rivers, the Nile:

¹⁷³ Brady, ‘The Platonic Poems of Katherine Philips’, p. 313.

¹⁷⁴ Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, p. 306.

¹⁷⁵ Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁶ Brady, ‘The Platonic Poems of Katherine Philips’, p. 313.

¹⁷⁷ Flamel, *His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures* (1624), cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 202.

[My [Mercury's] utility to man] is so immense and so rich, that like the Prince of Rivers, the *Nile* (which dischargeth itselfe by a seven-fold streame unto the Mediterranean Sea) spreads and divides it self into so many branches, according to the number of Metallick formes, which merely draw their rise and being from me [Mercury].¹⁷⁸

But these transformative mercurial waters were not just gendered as male – they were dual-natured – male and female. The 'Hermetis Trismegisti tractatus aureus' states that 'there are two Stones of the Wise, found in the Shores of the Rivers' which are 'Male and Female'.¹⁷⁹ In Robert Herrick's 1648 poem, 'To the King and Queene, upon their unhappy distances', the parted 'Man and Wife' are compared to separated streams which will unite and become 'chemically mixed': 'Like Streams, you are divorc'd: but'twill come when / These eyes of mine shall see you mix agen'.¹⁸⁰ Philips, in 'To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship', however, does not confront her readers with two rivers (male and female), but one river – a potent female force that connects one woman to another. Philips reclaims the fertile mercurial waters to delineate the fluvial interconnections between the tributaries of the female soul and body. Philips's River/Ocean moves backwards and forwards (DDF, 43), appealing to a variety of onlookers, but fully understood by no one but the whispering female lovers figured in the poem (DDF, 32). In this manner, the River/Ocean image arguably becomes a self-referential reflection of the protean nature of language itself that leads to the creation of poetry – a *flumen orationis* or *flumen verborum* (a river of speech). These creative waters come back to 'her self' (DDF, 46) – the speaker's own body, mind, spirit, consciousness and writing. Lucasia creates 'bliss' (DDF, 45) in the speaker because she arouses a secret verbal and written dilation.

Philips's 'mute' secret language was certainly registered in the seventeenth century. It was regarded by some as being dangerously risqué. This is evinced through Philips's coterie member, Sir Francis Finch ('Palaemon'). In 1654 Finch privately published his treatise, *Friendship*, which begins 'D.[ear] Noble *Lucasia-Orinda*'.¹⁸¹ As Patrick Thomas notes, Finch's compounding of the two names 'Lucasia-Orinda', is intended to express the women's achievement of 'one soul in bodies twain' ideal of

¹⁷⁸ Michael Maier, *Lusus Serius: or Serious Passe-time* (London, 1654), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 136.

¹⁷⁹ 'Hermetis Trismegisti tractatus aureus', in William Salmon, *Medicina Practica with the Calvis Alchymiae* (1691), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 192.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Herrick, 'To the King and Queene, upon their unhappy distances', cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 192.

¹⁸¹ Francis Finch, *Friendship* (London, 1654), sigs. A2, A4.

Platonic friendship.¹⁸² Finch contends that '*Friendship is virtuous [...] Every Motion, Passion, Affection, and Alteration of the Soul, is indeed first perceptible in the Eye [of the friend]*'.¹⁸³ It may have been in response to this statement that Philips writes of the 'passions in the Ey' (DDF, 33) – the receptacle of the soul. By dedicating *Friendship* to 'Lucasia-Orinda', Finch indicates that he is also gaining inspiration for 'virtuous' friendship from Orinda's 'Lucasia' poems.

Philips encourages Finch's reading, interpretation and dissemination of her verse, as she writes a poem of praise to him, eulogizing his treatise, *Friendship*:

To the noble Palaemon on his
incomparable discourse of Friendship
[...]

Hadst thou [Finch] not been her [Friendship's] great deliverer,
And first discover'd, and then rescu'd her;
And raising what rude malice had flung down,
Unvayled her face, and then restor'd her Crown [.]
(TNP,¹⁸⁴ 15-18)

Here Philips's speaker implies that Finch's adumbration of 'Lucasia-Orinda' as 'virtuous' friends has the power to eradicate the 'rude malice' (TNP, 17) flung down on Philips by slanderers such as John Taylor. Finch (in opposition to Taylor) has '[u]nvayled' (TNP, 18) the true virtuous hermeneutic of Philips's friendship poems.

Yet Finch's *Friendship* also contains a tacit warning to Philips:

*Love is the Crown and Perfection of all our Passions, Friendship of our Love. [...] 'Tis more then once that Abraham is stiled in Scripture the Friend of God. And we find one of the highest and constituent qualities and effects of Friendship expressed clearly by God in the preambulatory chapter to Sodoms destruction, to wit, Communication of secrets and counsels; Shall I (sayes God) hide from Abraham the thing I am about to do? What followes we know, a positive Declaration of the doom of Sodom [...]*¹⁸⁵

According to Finch, 'virtuous' friendship is distinct from the 'doom of *Sodom*' and emanates from the sacred love of God.¹⁸⁶ The ideal friend, for Finch, is typified by God

¹⁸² Patrick Thomas, 'Commentary to Poem 12', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, p. 330.

¹⁸³ Finch, *Friendship*, pp. 10, 15.

¹⁸⁴ Katherine Philips, 'To the noble Palaemon on his incomparable discourse of Friendship', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 83-84. From henceforth 'To the noble Palaemon on his incomparable discourse of Friendship' is abbreviated as TNP and is proceeded by the line reference.

¹⁸⁵ Finch, *Friendship*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁶ Finch, *Friendship*, p. 4.

who explicitly communicates all ‘secrets and counsels’ to his followers.¹⁸⁷ What Finch is arguably insinuating here is that Philips should employ an open, non-secret idiom in her friendship poems – this would prevent any scandalous slanders of sodomy.

In what appears to be an outright rejection of Finch’s advice, Philips writes:

The fruit of Sodom will impayr,
And perish at the touch:
In being then in fancy Less,
And we expect more then possess.

For by our pleasures we are cloy’d,
And so desire is done;
Or elce, like Rivers, they make wide
The Channells where they run [.]
(AP,¹⁸⁸ 9-16)

The first-century Romano-Jewish historian, Josephus, claimed that the fruit growing near the Dead Sea contained Sodom’s ashes and would dissolve into ashes when plucked.¹⁸⁹ It is this corrupt fruit of Sodom that is consumed by Satan’s cohorts in Milton’s Pandemonium:

greedily they plucked
The fruitage fair to sight, like that which grew
Near that bituminous lake where Sodom flamed;
[...]
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
Chewed bitter ashes [.]¹⁹⁰

The ‘fruit of Sodom’ (AP, 9) in Philips’s poem, however, is ambiguously placed and is not explicitly aligned to the Satanic. For Philips’s speaker, the ‘fruit of Sodom’ may ‘impayr’, damage and injure, but its ‘touch’ also leads to the pleasurable, mercurial, River-like ‘run’ of waters (AP, 9, 15-16). Philips’s ‘fruit of Sodom’ (AP, 9) is simultaneously touched, scorned, rejected and tasted. Philips’s above-cited River-like ‘run’ (AP, 15-16) of waters has been interpreted by Carol Barash as a radical delineation of ‘female ejaculation’.¹⁹¹ Patrick Thomas, on the other hand, avers that this very same poem is a categorically ‘conventional lyric’ written on ‘a conventional

¹⁸⁷ Finch, *Friendship*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Katherine Philips, ‘Against Pleasure. set by D^r Coleman’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 137-38. From henceforth ‘Against Pleasure’ is abbreviated as AP and is proceeded by the line reference. ‘Against Pleasure’ is undated by Thomas and so could have been written after the publication of Finch’s *Friendship* (1654).

¹⁸⁹ Josephus, *De Bellis*, cited by John Leonard, ‘Notes to *Paradise Lost*, 562’, in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Leonard, p. 427.

¹⁹⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book X, lines 560-62, 565-66, p. 232.

¹⁹¹ Barash, *English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714*, p. 99.

seventeenth-century theme'.¹⁹² What I am arguing here is that Philips's 'fruit of Sodom' (AP, 9) exemplifies her use of double-speak. Far from opting for an explicitly 'virtuous' mode of discourse, Philips fosters an ambivalent 'mute language' that can be read concurrently on multiple levels – conventional *and* radical.

Unlike Sir Francis Finch, the libertine writer, Aphra Behn, celebrates and wishes to emulate Philips's cryptic double-speak. Whereas John Taylor berates Philips for being a dissident 'second Sapho', Behn in *circa* 1676 praises her for the very same fact:¹⁹³

Let me [Behn] with *Sappho* and *Orinda* [Philips] be
Oh ever sacred Nymph [Daphne], adorn'd by thee;
And give me Verses Immortality.¹⁹⁴

Behn aspires to belong to a 'sacred' female lyric tradition that is initiated by Sappho and upheld by Orinda.

It is Orinda's sacred-libidinal double-speak that Behn uses and venerates in her own homoerotic love poetry to women:

To The Fair Clarinda, Who Made Love to Me,
Imagined More Than Woman

Fair lovely maid, or if that title be
Too weak, too feminine for nobler thee,
Permit a name that more approaches truth:
And let me call thee, lovely charming youth.

[...]

And without blushes I the youth pursue,
When so much beauteous woman is in view,

[...]

In pity to our sex sure thou wert sent,
That we might love, and yet be innocent:
For sure no crime with thee we can commit;
Or if we should – thy form excuses it.
For who, that gathers fairest flowers believes
A snake lies hid beneath the fragrant leaves.

[...]

When ere the manly part of thee, would plead
Thou tempts us with the image of the maid,

¹⁹² Patrick Thomas, 'Commentary to Poem 47', in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, p. 355.

¹⁹³ Taylor, 'To M^{rs} K:P: from M^r J.T.', in Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, p. 283, line 43.

¹⁹⁴ Aphra Behn, 'Of Plants. Book VI. Sylva', in *The Uncollected Verse of Aphra Behn*, ed. by Germaine Greer (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1989), pp. 110-58 (p. 127), lines 597-99. Greer dates the writing of this poem to c. 1676, see Germaine Greer, 'Commentary: 'Of Tress'', in *The Uncollected Verse of Aphra Behn*, pp. 211-20 (pp. 211-13).

While we the noblest passions do extend
 The love to Hermes, Aphrodite the friend.
 (TFC,¹⁹⁵ 386-87)

The above-quoted poem is instilled with a latent woman-to-woman Hermetic-alchemical imagery that is generated by Behn's reading of Clarinda/Orinda.¹⁹⁶ The Hermes (TFC, 387) that Behn cites refers to the Greek God, Hermes, who with Venus produced Hermaphroditus.¹⁹⁷ But Clarinda's alluring Hermes-like androgyny also in part stems from the *Hermetica*: 'Man [...] being hermaphrodite, or Male and Female, [...] he is governed by, and subjected to a Father, that is both Male and Female'.¹⁹⁸ Behn's portrayal of Clarinda is reminiscent of the ideal alchemical hermaphrodite – the philosopher's stone. In alchemical texts the union of two metallic seeds was often presented as the chemical wedding of male and female (Figure 1).

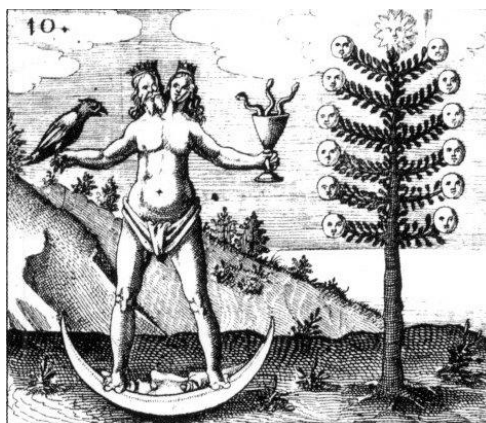


Figure 1, The alchemical hermaphrodite. From Johann Mylius, *Phiolosophia reformatata* (Francofurti, 1622), Emblem 10, p. 262. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark 1033.i.7.

Nicolas Flamel, for instance, describes the product of metallic union as 'the Androgyne, or Hermaphrodite of the Ancients'.¹⁹⁹ It is arguably this shape-shifting androgynous alchemical quality that is embodied by Behn's Clarinda, as she is a 'lovely maid' (TFC, 386) who simultaneously reveals and conceals the 'manly part' (TFC, 387).

¹⁹⁵ Aphra Behn, 'To The Fair Clarinda, Who Made Love to Me, Imagined More Than Woman', in *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology, 1560-1700*, ed. by Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 386-87. From henceforth 'To the Fair Clarinda, Who Made Love to Me, Imagined More Than Woman' is abbreviated as TFC and is proceeded by the page reference. This poem was first published in 1688.

¹⁹⁶ Barash notes that Behn's 'Clarinda' tropes on Philips's poetic persona, Orinda, and recalls the female knight, Clorinda, from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581). Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714*, p. 128.

¹⁹⁷ *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans. by Golding, ed. by Forey, Book 4, lines 352-55, p. 131; lines 469-71, p. 134.

¹⁹⁸ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, pp. 21-22.

¹⁹⁹ Flamel, *His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures*, cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 98.

Furthermore, the ‘flowers’ and ‘snake’ (TFC, 387) that Behn conjures also have an alchemical significance. Paracelsus proposed that the Philosopher’s ‘stone doth discover most fair colours in the production of its Flower’ and Behn’s flower-gatherer discovers the ‘snake’ (TFC, 387) – the uroboros – the alchemical *opus* and symbol of eternal life (Figure 2).²⁰⁰

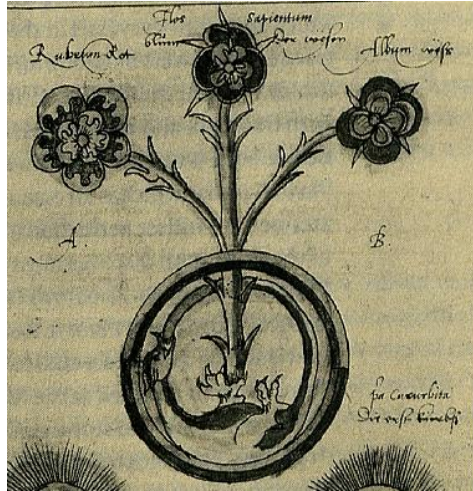


Figure 2, Uroboros with alchemical flowers. From ‘Alchemistisches Manuskript’ (1550), Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS L IV 1, p. 293. © Universitätsbibliothek, Basel.

Behn’s alchemical fusion culminates in the union of spirit, body and text. Clarinda’s ‘form’ (TFC, 387) signifies spiritual form, bodily form and ultimately poetic form. Behn seems to have cracked Clarinda/Orinda’s secret Hermetic erotic-poetic ‘form’, but far from critiquing it (like Francis Finch) she imitates it and thus seeks to continue a female Hermetic poetic tradition.

The reading of Philips’s verse is dependent on the subjective ‘passions’ of the reader’s ‘Ey’ (DDF, 33). I have argued that Philips appeals to these subjective ‘passions’ through her use of a mercurial Hermetic double-speak that enables her to engage with both a ‘virtuous’ spirituality and a risqué eroticism. Moreover, the *Hermetica*’s emphasis on the ‘friendship [...] of contraries’ allows Philips partially to liberate herself from the binaries that she was struggling against: soul/body; public/private; male/female; esoteric/exoteric; Royalist/Parliamentarian.²⁰¹ The wide dissemination of Ficino’s 1471 translation of the *Hermetica* made it possible for a writer like Katherine Philips to offer her own pro-woman hermeneutic of the Hermetic.

²⁰⁰ Paracelsus, *His Aurora and Treasure of the Philosophers* (London, 1659), cited in Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 80.

²⁰¹ *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 123.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

**‘[T]his same *Metaphisicall* / God, Man, nor Woman, but elix’d of all’:¹
Engendering the Metaphysical**

In 1601, an anonymous poet genders the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) in the following way:

Now yeeld your aides, you spirites that infuse
A sacred rapture, light my weaker eie:
Raise my inuention on swift Phantasie,
That whilst of this same *Metaphisicall*
God, Man, nor Woman, but elix’d of all
My labouring thoughts, with strained ardor sing,
My Muse may mount with an vncommon wing.
(AN, 20-26)

This above-quoted extract is taken from the poem, ‘*A narration and description of a most exact wondrous creature, arising out of the Phænix and Turtle Doues ashes*’, which was first printed in Robert Chester’s *Loves Martyr* (1601, reprinted 1611). Chester’s volume also includes poems by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, John Marston, ‘Ignoto’, and ‘Vatum Chorus’. For the anonymous poet-speaker of ‘*A narration*’, the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) is not an exclusive male category (as Dryden would have us believe), but involves an ‘elix’d’ (AN, 24) mixing of ‘Man’, ‘Woman’ and ‘God’ (AN, 24).² In Plato’s *Symposium*, Aristophanes states that ‘[l]ong ago, our nature was not the same as it is now but quite different. [...] Then “androgynous” was a distinct gender as well as name, combining male and female’.³ This ‘combining’ of ‘male and female’ is linked to the divine in the *Hermetica*:

the first Mind [...] which is Life and Light, being bisexual, gave birth to
another Mind, a Maker of things;
[...]

He, [God] filled with all the fecundity of both sexes in one, and ever
teeming with his own goodness, unceasingly brings into being all that he
has willed to generate [...]⁴

¹ Anon. (John Marston?), ‘*A narration and description of a most exact wondrous creature, arising out of the Phænix and Turtle Doues ashes*’, in Robert Chester, *Loves Martyr* (London, 1601), p. 173, lines 23-24. From henceforth ‘*A narration and description of a most exact wondrous creature, arising out of the Phænix and Turtle Doues ashes*’ has been abbreviated as AN and is preceded by the line reference.

² Dryden, ‘A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire’, p. 19.

³ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Gill, p. 22.

⁴ *Hermetica*, trans. by Scott, pp. 49, 133.

By engaging with this Platonic-Hermetic bisexuality, the poet-speaker of 'A *narration*' is able to attain a 'sacred rapture' (AN, 21) that transforms procreative 'labouring thoughts' (AN, 25) into innovative poetic 'invention' (AN, 22). For the poet of 'A *narration*' it seems that the divine androgyne is a 'Metaphisicall' (AN, 23) maker par excellence.

The birds cited in the title of 'A *narration*' (the 'Phœnix' and the 'Turtle Dou[e]') recall the biblical Song of Songs where the bride declares: 'The flowers appeare in ye earth: the time of the singing of birdes is come, & the voice of the turtle is heard in our land'.⁵ The mixing of the birds, the 'Phœnix' and the 'Turtle Dou[e]' in 'A *narration*', brings to life an elixed 'wondrous creature', Christ. By using the alchemical verb 'elix'd' (AN, 24), the poet of 'A *narration*' anticipates George Herbert's 1633 poem, 'The Elixer':

This [elixer] is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.⁶

Both the poet of 'A *narration*' and Herbert imply that the elixir of eternal life can only be granted by God through Christ.

As Caroline Walker Bynum points out, in the medieval period, Christ was often depicted as a gender-fluid mother.⁷ This has its origins in the Gospel of St Matthew where Christ likens himself to a hen gathering her chicks under her wings: 'I [Christ] haue gathered thy [Jerusalem's] children together, as the henne gathereth her chickens vnder her wings'.⁸ This passage in the Bible is explicated by the twelfth-century writer-theologian, Anselm of Canterbury, who states: 'But you, Jesus, good lord, are you not also a mother? [...] Christ, mother, who gathers under your wings your little ones, [...] by your gentleness, those who are hurt are comforted; by your perfume, the despairing are reformed'.⁹ This medieval trope of portraying Christ as both 'lord' and 'mother' is revived (in part) in the early sixteenth century by women writers. For the influential

⁵ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, The song of Salomón 2. 12.

⁶ George Herbert, 'The Elixer', in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 640-41 (p. 641), lines 21-24. 'The Elixer' was written sometime between *circa* 1615 and 1625, but was published posthumously in 1633. See Helen Wilcox, 'Introduction', in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. by Wilcox, pp. xxi-xlv (p. xxxvii).

⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 110-69.

⁸ *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition*, Matthewe 23. 37.

⁹ Anselm of Canterbury, 'Prayer 10 to St Paul', cited in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 114.

early-sixteenth-century writer, Marguerite of Navarre, for instance, Christ possesses both a vast maternal womb-like capacity and an implanting penetrative phallus:

Il s'ayme donc en moy et par m'aymer,
 Il faict mon cuer par amour enflammer.
 Par ceste amour il se faict aymer tant,
 Que son effect (non moy) le rend content.
 Se contentant, tousjours il multiplie
 Trop plus d'amour, qu'amour ne luy supplie.
 O vray aymant, de charité la source,
 Et du tresor divin la seule bourse,
 Doib je penser, ny oseroie je dire
 Que c'est de vous? le puis je bien escrire?
 Vostre bonté, vostre amour se poeut elle
 Bien comprendre de personne mortelle?
 Et s'il vous plaist ung petit l'imprimer
 Dedans ung cuer, le poeut il exprimer?
 Certes, nenny! car la capacité
 N'est pour tenir la grande immensité [.]

[He loves himself in me and by loving me,
 he fills my heart with love.
 In such loving he makes himself to be so loved
 that its consequence (not mine) brings him joy.
 Making himself happy, he endlessly multiplies
 greater love than love can give.

True lover, source of all devotion,
 the unique font of heavenly riches,
 may I believe, dare I say
 that it comes from you? Am I able to write it?
 Your munificence and love,
 can a human heart understand them?
 And whatever small amount you implant
 in a heart, can the heart express it?
 Surely not. For it is not large enough
 to contain your vastness.]¹⁰

Christ, for Marguerite of Navarre's speaker here, can 'endlessly' multiply (spiritually) because he simultaneously 'implant[s]' and 'contain[s]'.¹¹ It is arguably Marguerite of Navarre's widely-circulating representation of the gender-fluid Christ that anticipates and influences the sacredly androgynous depiction of the 'wondrous creature' of 'A narration': 'God, Man, nor Woman, but elix'd of all' (AN, 24). Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* has special relevance for Chester's *Loves Martyr* because the 'Phœnix' in Chester's volume is likely to be a personification of

¹⁰ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 142-43, lines 1307-22.

¹¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, pp. 142-43, lines 1311, 1319, 1322.

Elizabeth I, who in 1544 had translated into English Marguerite of Navarre's *Le miroir*.¹² Furthermore, it is most probably Marguerite of Navarre's portrayal of the sacrosanct hermaphroditic Christ that Elizabeth I herself uses to consolidate her own political-divine gender-fluid identity in her renowned 1588 speech at Tilbury: 'I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king'.¹³

This mixing of male and female was manipulated by other non-royal Renaissance women, who used it to gain 'Metaphisicall' (AN, 23) agency:

Wald michtie Ioue grant me the hap
With yow to haue yo[u]r brutus pairt
and metamorphosing our schap
My sex intill his vaill convert
No brutus then sould caus ws smart [.]
(MQ, XLIX, 41-45)

In this above-quoted anonymous extract (by Marie Maitland?) from the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586), the female speaker embodies a mercurial gender-shifting identity that is attained through an alchemical 'vaill'/phial (MQ, XLIX, 44). This Scottish female-voiced poem foreshadows the gender-fluctuating definition of the 'Metaphisicall' (AN, 23) found in 'A narration'. What I am suggesting here is that the Renaissance gender-fluid metaphysic is not simply an English male phenomenon, but one that was influenced by a polyglottal female metaphysical culture.

Poem XLIX's and 'A narration's' adumbration of the 'Metaphisicall' (AN, 23) androgyne finds its way into Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611). This is how Lanyer presents the 'Metaphisicall' (AN, 23) hermaphrodite in her dedicatory poem to the alchemical enthusiast, Mary Sidney:¹⁴

When bright *Bellona*, so they did her call,
Whom these faire Nymphs so humbly did receive,
A manly mayd which was both faire and tall,
Her borrowed Charret by a spring did leave.
(ADLM, 33-36)

¹² Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen argue that the 'Phœnix' of *Loves Martyr* refers to Elizabeth I, who was often described as a 'rare [...] Phenix' by her courtiers. Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen propose that the 'Turtle Doue' of *Loves Martyr* is likely to be a personification of Elizabeth I's courtier and cousin, Sir John Salusbury (the principal dedicatee of Chester's volume), a 'man who suffered much for his unshakeable determination to serve his close kinswoman Elizabeth'. Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Introduction', in William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece and the Shorter Poems*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), pp. 1-124 (pp. 108-11, 118-19).

¹³ Elizabeth Tudor, 'Speech to the Troops at Tilbury', in *Women's Writing of the Early Modern Period, 1588-1688: An Anthology*, ed. by Hodgson-Wright, p. 1.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3 of this study for evidence of Mary Sidney's interest in alchemy.

As outlined in Chapter 3 of this study, the alchemical process of conjunction (the union of two metallic seeds), was often depicted as a chemical wedding of Sol and Luna, sun and moon, which gave birth to the hermaphrodite or double-being (*rebis*).¹⁵ George Ripley spoke of the joining of the ‘*Red Man* and the *Whyte Woman*’ and according to Nicolas Flamel, this union resulted in the creation of the ‘Androgyne [...] of the Ancients’.¹⁶ Lanyer’s ‘manly mayd’ (ADLM, 35), Bellona, appears in the liminal twilight of morning, where Sol, *Apolloe*, graces ‘his eie’ (ADLM, 68) and Luna, *Phoebe*, mixes with *Aurora* (ADLM, 61-62). Bellona’s helmet is laden with ‘myrtle bayes’ and ‘olive branches’ (ADLM, 39). Myrtle plants blossom with white-scented flowers, which were distilled in the later Middle Ages and used in perfumery and from olive branches precious oil could be obtained (*OED*).¹⁷ In Lanyer’s poem, nine ‘faire Virgins’ (ADLM, 9) surround Bellona with their ‘Harps and Vialls [phials?]’ (ADLM, 10), waiting to decoct Bellona’s herbal gifts. According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine, music and the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’, and Lanyer places this syncretic theory within a gender-fluid femino-centric context in her dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney.¹⁸ Lanyer’s gender-bending punning on Viall/phial (ADLM, 10) is reminiscent of Poem XLIX of the Maitland Quarto: ‘My sex intill his vaill [phial?] convert’ (MQ, XLIX, 44) and provides further evidence of Lanyer’s reading of the Maitland Quarto.

The ‘manly mayd’ (ADLM, 35), Bellona, prefigures Lanyer’s gender-ambivalent representation of Christ. As outlined in Chapter 3 of this study, Christ in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* is accessed through a spiritual alchemical process: the *nigredo* or chaotic darkness (‘He [Christ] in the waters laies his chamber beames, / And cloudes of darknesse compasse him about’ [SDRJ, 97-98]); the *albedo* or cleansing (‘The Innocent [...] as a Dove shall flie / [...] Her [the Virgin Mary’s] teares did wash away his [Christ’s] pretious blood’ [SDRJ, 119, 1017]); the *rubedo* or dawning light (‘Thou [Christ] as the Sunne shalt shine; or much more cleare’ [SDRJ, 56]). This exoteric-esoteric process culminates in the birth of the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) divine hermaphrodite, Christ:

¹⁵ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 98; Kathleen P. Long, ‘Introduction: Gender and Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Culture’, in *Gender and Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Long, pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

¹⁶ Ripley, *The Compound of Alchymy and Flamel, His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures*, cited by Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 98.

¹⁷ For further exposition on the domestic usefulness of myrtle and the ‘Oyle’ of ‘Oliue’, see Newton, *An Herbal for the Bible* (1587), pp. 37, 201.

¹⁸ Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, p. 40.

This is that Bridegroom that appears so faire,
So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight,
That unto Snowe we may his face compare,
His cheekes like skarlet, and his eyes so bright
As purest Doves that in the rivers are,
Washed with milke, to give more delight;
His head is likened to the finest gold,
His curled lockes so beauteous to behold;

Blacke as a Raven in her blackest hew;
His lips like skarlet threeds, yet much more sweet
Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,
[...]
His cheekes are beds of spices, flowers sweet;
His lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirrhe,
Whose love, before all worlds we doe preferre.
(SDRJ, 1305-15, 1318-20)

As Erica Longfellow observes, Lanyer's above-quoted blazon of Christ offers a poetic rendering of the description of the lover, Christ, found in the biblical Song of Songs (5. 11-16).¹⁹ Indeed, the Song of Songs was interpreted in the early seventeenth century through the lens of spiritual alchemy. Joseph Hall's 1609 printed paraphrase of the Song of Songs, for example, is imbued with alchemical imagery. Hall's church/bride proclaims:

[W]hen once my royall and glorious husband hath brought mee both into these lower roomes of his spirituall treasures on earth, and into his heauenlie chambers of glorie, then will we reioyce [...] the sweet influence of his graces, like to some precious ointme[n]t, spreads it selfe ouer my soule [...]

My welbeloued [...] is of perfect beautie, in whose face is an exact mixture of the colours of the purest & healthfullest complexion of holinesse [...]

His actions, and his instruments [...] are set forth with much port & maiestie, as some precious stone beautifies the ring where in it is set [...] the mysteries of his wil are most pure and holy [.]²⁰

Christ's gift to his church/bride (according to Hall) is a 'spirituall treasur[e]': a 'precious ointme[n]t', an 'exact mixture', a 'precious stone [...] pure and holy'.²¹ What I am suggesting here is that Lanyer uses Hall's alchemical interpretation of the Songs of Songs and instils it into *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* to appeal to the alchemical healer, Margaret Clifford. Christ is the 'gold' that Lanyer bestows to her principal dedicatee,

¹⁹ Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, p. 77.

²⁰ Joseph Hall, *An open and plaine Paraphrase, vpon the Song of Songs* (London, 1609), pp. 3-4, 9-10, 53-54, 56.

²¹ Hall, *An open and plaine Paraphrase, vpon the Song of Songs*, pp. 3, 9, 53, 56.

the alchemical enthusiast, Margaret Clifford: 'I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule; [...] this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice' (LM, 9-13).

It is the gender-fluid Christ who is resurrected via Margaret Clifford in Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham':

The swelling Bankes deliver'd all their pride,
When such a *Phænix* once they had espide.
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford]
walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see [.]
(TDC, 43-44, 81-84)

By describing Margaret Clifford as a hermaphroditic Arabian bird, a '*Phænix*' (TDC, 44), Lanyer evokes the holy '*Phænix*' of Chester's *Loves Martyr*. Margaret Clifford (for Lanyer's speaker) embodies a newly resurrected Elizabeth I. According to Roger Prior, Elizabeth I may have visited Cooke-ham in the summer of 1592, so Lanyer's allusion to the Christ-like '*Phænix*', Queen Elizabeth, in 'The Description of Cooke-ham' is not unlikely.²²

As we have seen in Chapter 5 of this study, 'Metaphisicall' (AN, 23) gender ambiguity features in Katherine Philips's poem, 'God':

When shall those cloggs of sence and fancy break,
That I may heare the God within me speak?
When with a Silent and retired art,
Shall I with all this empty hurry part?
To the still voice above, my Soule advance;
My light and Joy fix'd in God's Countenance;
[...]
With such distinctions all things here behold,
And so to separate each drosse from Gold [.]
(G, 49-54, 57-58)

For Philips's poet-speaker here, the 'Silent and retired art' (G, 51) is implicitly left open to all sexes and genders. At no point in the poem 'God' does the poet-speaker

²² Roger Prior, 'Æmilia Lanyer and Queen Elizabeth at Cookham', *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 63 (2003), 17-32 (p. 22). For Elizabeth I's association with the 'phoenix', see Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1996, 1st pub. 1995), pp. 80-81, 122, 208, 220.

unequivocally refer to her/his sex or gender. ‘God’ elucidates Philips’s contention that ‘soules no sexes have’.²³ For Philips, the ‘still’ (distilled) ‘voice’ of God (G, 53) is accessed through gender mutability and Philips here seems to celebrate the definition of the gender-fluctuating ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) found in ‘A *narration*’.

One seventeenth-century male poet known for ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) alchemical mixing is Andrew Marvell. Lyndy Abraham and Maren-Sofie Røstvig have argued that Marvell’s country-house poem, ‘Upon Appleton House’ (written in *circa* 1650-1653), is an alchemical-Hermetic poem, dedicated to the Hermetic devotee, Thomas, third Lord Fairfax (1612-1671). Abraham and Røstvig suggest that Marvell was ‘widely read’ in the ‘alchemical literature’ of his time and they compare ‘Upon Appleton House’ to Giordano Bruno’s *De gli eroici furori* (1585), Michael Maier’s *Atalanta Fugiens* (1618), Elias Ashmole’s *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1651), and Lord Fairfax’s manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica* (written after 1650).²⁴ What I would like to propose here is that Marvell was certainly ‘widely read’ in the alchemical literature of his time and his sources for ‘Upon Appleton House’ include the writings of Renaissance metaphysical women: the poetry of Lanyer, Philips and Marie Maitland.

The female metaphysical strand in ‘Upon Appleton House’ is prevalent in Marvell’s presentation of Lord Fairfax’s daughter, Mary Fairfax (1638-1704):

The young Maria [Mary Fairfax] walks tonight:
[...]
She, that already is the law
Of all her sex, her age’s awe.

See how loose Nature, in respect
To her, itself doth recollect;
And everything so whisht and fine,
Starts forthwith to its *bonne mine*.
The sun himself, of her aware,
Seems to descend with greater care;
[...]

The modest halcyon comes in sight,
Flying betwixt the day and night;
[...]

²³ Philips, ‘A Friend’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 165-68 (p. 166), line 19.

²⁴ Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, pp. 39-237; Maren-Sofie Røstvig, ‘In ordine di ruota: Circular Structure in ‘The Unfortunate Lover’ and ‘Upon Appleton House’’, in *Tercentenary Essays in Honor of Andrew Marvell*, ed. by Kenneth Friedenreich (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977), pp. 245-67 and ‘‘Upon Appleton House’ and the Universal History of Man’, *English Studies*, 42 (1961), 337-51.

Both Lanyer and Marvell seem to be invoking the description of Dame Nature/Sapience/Lady Alchymia found in the *Hermetica*:

God smiled, and bade Nature be; and there came forth from his voice a Being in woman's form, right lovely, at the sight of whom the gods were smitten with amazement; and God the Forefather bestowed on her the name of Nature. And he conferred on Nature the government of all things in the world below, and bade her be productive of all manner of seeds. And Nature communed with herself [...] And God filled his august hands with the abundance of seeds which Nature supplied, and gripping the handfuls firmly, said 'Take them, thou holy Earth, take them, all-honoured one, thou that art destined to be mother of all things [.]',²⁶

Both Mary Fairfax and Margaret Clifford embody the Hermetic Dame Nature, as they command and transform the natural landscape that surrounds them:

'Tis she [Maria/Mary Fairfax] that to these gardens gave
That wondrous beauty which they have;
She straightness on the woods bestows;
To her the meadow sweetness owes;
Nothing could make the river be
So crystal pure but only she;
She yet more pure, sweet, straight, and fair,
Than gardens, woods, meads, rivers are.
(Marvell, UAH, 689-96)

each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee
[Margaret Clifford]:
The very Hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread upon them did intend.
[...]
The gentle Windes did take delight to bee
Among those woods that were so grac'd by thee.
(Lanyer, TDC, 33-36, 39-40)

The *Hermetica* has particular appurtenance for both 'Upon Appleton House' and 'The Description of Cooke-ham' because the Fairfax and Clifford families were actively involved in Hermetic-alchemical practices. This is evinced in the case of the Fairfax family through Lord Fairfax's manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica* and his wife's (Lady Anne Vere Fairfax's) extant domestic alchemical receipt book.²⁷ Likewise, Margaret Clifford's passion for Hermetic alchemy is captured in Anne Clifford's account of her mother in her 1652 family memorial: 'She [Margaret Clifford] was a

²⁶ *Hermetica*, trans. by Scott, p. 181.

²⁷ Lord Fairfax's manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica* is held in the British Library, London, MS Additional 25447. Lady Anne Vere Fairfax, *Booke of Receipts* (c. 1640-1650), Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 118.

lover of the study and practice of alchimy [...] for she had [...] knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants'.²⁸ As outlined in Chapter 3 of this study, Margaret Clifford also kept an alchemical receipt book.²⁹

Both Mary Fairfax and Margaret Clifford summon (by their presence) the elixed symbol of regeneration, the philosopher's stone. This is evinced in 'Upon Appleton House' through the symbol of the flaming 'halcyon' (UAH, 669, 687). According to the influential sixteenth-century Swiss medic-chemist, Paracelsus, the halcyon is a symbol of rebirth: 'The renovation and restoration of our nature are none otherwise than in the case of the halcyon which bird, indeed, is renewed in its own proper nature'.³⁰ Mary Fairfax arouses the regenerative power and motion of the halcyon:

The young Maria walks tonight:
[...]

The modest halcyon comes in sight,
Flying betwixt the day and night;
[...]

by her flames, in heaven tried,
Nature is wholly vitrified.
(UAH, 651, 669-70, 687-88)

Similarly, it is the elixed Christ-like '*Phaenix*' (TDC, 44) that Margaret Clifford resurrects in 'The Description of Cooke-ham':

The swelling Bankes deliver'd all their pride,
When such a *Phaenix* once they had espide.
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford]
walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see [.]
(TDC, 43-44, 81-84)

What I am suggesting here is that Lanyer's alchemical-Hermetic country-house poem, 'The Description of Cooke-ham', presages Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House'. It is likely that Marvell, in his presentation of Mary Fairfax, drew conceptual and textual

²⁸ Anne Clifford, 'A Summary of Records', p. 20.

²⁹ MS WD/Hoth/A988/5.

³⁰ Paracelsus, 'The Book Concerning Renovation and Restoration' (Geneva, 1658), cited in Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, pp. 212-13.

inspiration from Lanyer's delineation of Margaret Clifford in 'The Description of Cooke-ham'.³¹

By describing Mary Fairfax as a divine lawgiver – '*She*, that already is the law / Of all her sex, her age's awe' (UAH, 655-56) – Marvell invokes Katherine Philips's representation of 'Lucasia' (Anne Owen): 'she [Lucasia] to th'infant = World [sic] had given Law' (L, 20). Both Marvell and Philips here hark back to the book given to Hermes in the mosaic in Siena Cathedral on which is written 'SVSCIPITE O LICTERAS ET LEGES EGIPTII' (Take up thy letters and laws O Egyptians).³² As Frances Yates points out, this Latin motto is a supplication from the lawgiver of the Hebrews, Moses.³³ But it is arguably the female Hermetic Sibyls who will distribute this sacred law, as it is the Hermetic Sibyls who flank the mosaic of Hermes in Siena Cathedral.³⁴ If Lord Fairfax is a patriarchal Mosaico-Hermetic figure in 'Upon Appleton House' – 'The trees before their Lord divide' (UAH, 620) – then Mary Fairfax presumably takes on the role of a Hermetic Sibyl, disseminating the Mosaico-Hermetic 'law' to 'all her sex' (UAH, 655-56). As indicated above, one source for Marvell's play on this feminized Hermetic 'law' is Katherine Philips's scribally circulating 'Lucasia' poems.³⁵

According to the renowned seventeenth-century alchemist, Michael Maier, the Hermetic

succession passed to Maria the Hebrew, who was closest to Hermes [...] the whole secret, she [Maria] says, is in the knowledge of the Vessel of Hermes, because it is divine [...] He who understands this properly grasps the truest mind of Maria, and she will open up to him those secrets of chemistry which [...] all have wrapped in dark silence.³⁶

³¹ For the circulation of Lanyer's poetry in the mid seventeenth century, see Miller, *Engendering the Fall*, p. 49.

³² Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, p. 22; Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 45.

³³ Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 45.

³⁴ Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, pp. 19, 20.

³⁵ For the scribal circulation of Philips's writings, see Elizabeth H. Hageman and Andrea Sununu, 'More Copies of it abroad than I could have imagin'd': Further Manuscript Texts of Katherine Philips, 'the Matchless Orinda', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700*, 5 (1995), 127-69.

³⁶ Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum* (1617), cited in Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, pp. 76, 77, 78.

Marvell's Mary Fairfax evokes the Prophetess Maria, as she revives the flaming 'halcyon' (UAH, 669, 687), the bird of Hermes, and uses her ability as a polyglottal linguist to access 'heaven's dialect' (UAH, 712):³⁷

She counts her beauty to converse
In all the languages as hers;
Nor yet in those herself employs
But for the wisdom, not the noise;
Nor yet that wisdom would affect,
But as 'tis heaven's dialect.
(UAH, 707-712)

Marvell's tacit word-play on Mary Fairfax's/Maria's name – 'The young Maria walks tonight' (UAH, 651) – is presaged by Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586):

Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir
mait land and gold scho gave aboũdantlie
Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir
q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie
This is in sing of trew Virginitie [.]
(MQ, LXIX, 41-45)

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this study, the figure of Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto evokes the Prophetess Maria as she distributes alchemical 'gold' (MQ, LXIX, 42) – a synonym for pristine, esoteric knowledge. Poem LXIX's placing of Marie Maitland/the Prophetess Maria within the *locus amoenus* foreshadows and arguably influences Marvell's depiction of Mary Fairfax as the Prophetess Maria. Indeed, Marvell was certainly interested in pro-union Scots, evinced in his delineation of the Scottish army officer, Archibald Douglas (d. 1667), who Marvell presents as the ideal alchemical hermaphrodite in the poem, 'The Loyal Scot' (written in c. 1670):

brave Douglas, on whose lovely chin
The early down but newly did begin;
And modest beauty yet his sex did veil,
While envious virgins hope he is a male.³⁸

Marvell's above-quoted line from 'The Loyal Scot' ('And modest beauty yet his sex did veil [phial?]) is reminiscent of Poem XLIX from the Maitland Quarto ('My sex intill his vaill [phial?] convert' [MQ, XLIX, 44]) and provides further textual evidence for the scribal circulation of the Maitland Quarto in the seventeenth century.

³⁷ For further exposition on the bird of Hermes, see Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, pp. 25-26.

³⁸ Andrew Marvell, 'The Loyal Scot', in *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Donno, pp. 183-91 (p. 183), lines 15-18.

Reading Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House' through the lens of Renaissance women's writing forces us to re-assess the potential sources for Marvell's metaphysical Hermetic country-house poem. When Marvell's poet-speaker of 'Upon Appleton House' states, 'Out of these scattered sibyl's leaves / Strange prophecies my fancy weaves' (UAH, 577-78), we are left wondering who precisely these sibyls are who motivate Marvell's poet-speaker's poetic 'fancy' (UAH, 578). Marvell's sibyls recall the Hermetic Sibyls that surround Hermes in Siena Cathedral and lead Marvell's speaker to his 'mosaic read' (UAH, 582). But I would argue that Marvell's sibyls also evoke the 'scattered' (UAH, 577) writings of Renaissance women that permeate 'Upon Appleton House'. Reading 'Upon Appleton House' alongside the writings of Lanyer, Philips and Maitland demonstrates that the Renaissance metaphysical tradition is not simply a male tradition, but one that is 'elix'd' (AN, 24) of both male *and* female literary traditions.

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