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In Defense of Her Sex  
Women Apologists in Early Stuart Letters  
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September, 1992

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Ph.D.

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In Defense of Her Sex  
Women Apologists in Early Stuart Letters  
Abstract

This study explores the problem of female defense in relation to the constitution of women as disempowered speaking subjects within the dominant rhetorical structures of early Stuart literature. The discourse of male rhetoricians defines a subordinate place for women in the order of language. The English formal controversy arguments over the nature of women in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries similarly deploy tropes of male precedence and female subordination to restrain women in the symbolic order and to inhibit any form of female discourse. In order to construct an effective defense a female apologist must reconstitute herself by working within and subverting these constraints. Early Stuart drama provides numerous instances in which women confront and contest the pre-established limits for female speech in their efforts to defend themselves and/or their sex. However, in the dramas selected for this scrutiny, despite the forceful defense strategies that female characters use in their attempts to negotiate their negative positions in language, they are ultimately marginalized. My final chapter therefore examines the rhetorical strategies whereby in her life and writing one woman author, Elizabeth Cary, successfully appropriated and transformed the gendered tropes into compelling female defenses.



## Pour la défense du sexe féminin

Les femmes apologistes dans les lettres du début de la période Stuart.

### Sommaire

Ce travail examine toutes les facettes du problème de la défense des femmes, en prenant pour acquis que la femme est un être faible ne pouvant s'exprimer par le biais de la langue qu'à l'intérieur des structures rhétoriques masculines dominantes du début de la période Stuart. Le discours des rhétoriciens a défini une place subordonnée pour les femmes dans l'utilisation de la langue. La controverse formaliste anglaise soutient cette thèse sur la nature des femmes au seizième et au dix-septième siècle, et déploie également des tropes masculins l'emportant sur le féminin subordonné afin de limiter les femmes dans l'ordre symbolique et afin de dominer le discours féminin quel qu'il soit. Pour arriver à bâtir une défense efficace, une apologiste doit se recréer par un travail intérieur et déjouer ces contraintes. Il existe de nombreux exemples dans le théâtre du début de la période Stuart où les femmes, pour se défendre en tant que telles, confrontent et contestent les limites préétablies du discours féminin. Cependant, dans les pièces choisies pour cette étude, les personnages féminins sont finalement marginalisés et ce, malgré les stratégies qu'elles tentent d'utiliser pour surmonter leur position négative dans le langage. C'est pourquoi le dernier chapitre examine les stratégies rhétoriques par lesquelles dans sa vie et dans ses écrits une femme-écrivain: Elizabeth Cary, réussit à s'appropriier et à transformer les tropes masculins en défenses féminines.

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## Introduction

This study explores the problem of female defense in relation to the constitution of women as disempowered speaking subjects within the dominant rhetorical structures of early Stuart literature. The discourse of male rhetoricians defines a subordinate place for women in the order of language. The English formal controversy arguments over the nature of women in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries similarly deploy tropes of male precedence and female subordination to restrain women in the symbolic order <sup>1</sup> and to inhibit any form of female discourse. In order to construct an effective defense a female apologist must reconstitute herself by working within and subverting these constraints. Early Stuart drama provides numerous instances in which women confront and contest the pre-established limits for female speech in their efforts to defend themselves and/or their sex. However, in the dramas selected for this scrutiny, despite the forceful defense strategies that female characters use in their attempts to negotiate their negative positions in language, they are ultimately marginalized. My final chapter therefore examines the rhetorical strategies whereby in her life and writing one woman author, Elizabeth Cary, successfully appropriated and transformed the gendered tropes into compelling female defenses.

The first chapter, "The Woman's Guide to Proper Speech," examines the conventions of the prestigious discourse of classical rhetoric, and Renaissance interpretations of this tradition, in connection with the female linguistic subordination that constrains female defenses. One source of woman's vexed

position in the symbolic order is the figuration of males as proprietors of women and women's speech. The premise of the female and female speech as male property categories denies women ownership of discourse and thus of authentic speech. This rhetorical fiction underlies a logic that figures woman as sequentially second and supplementary to man in the order of language in general, and speech in particular, and as discursive material to be disposed and shaped by male proprietors of the symbolic order.

Their exclusion from and their negative figuration in the discipline of rhetoric represents a key factor in the linguistic repression of women in the early seventeenth-century. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this missing element in women's education or its consequences for female speech. Among a number of critics <sup>2</sup> Joel Altman contends that classical rhetorical treatises formed the basis of Renaissance literary education (66). Altman holds that the study of Renaissance rhetoric from earliest grammar school days (Latin grammar schools from which women were excluded) gave Elizabethan drama a predilection for debating both sides of an issue: *in utramque partem* (203). This disputatious cast of mind not only sharpened men's intellectual and debating skills in general but also guided male writers in their creative literature, including dramatic works. For men verbal disputation constituted a sometimes pleasant, always useful, rhetorical game. Women were denied such linguistic play. At best eloquent women were represented as shrews, at worst as whores, unless they adopted male disguise, which temporarily entitled them to male verbal freedom. On occasions when they had to speak women were enjoined to do so reluctantly, briefly, and apologetically. In contrast to male speakers who received glowing praise for oratorical excellence in disputation, women were encouraged to restrict their verbal skills to complementing and amplifying, or ventriloquistically reinforcing, the male word.

According to the conventional scheme, man is figured as an empowered speaking subject, woman as an adjunct who invariably supports male discourse if she speaks at all. As shall be observed in my discussions of rhetorical treatises, the flowers of rhetoric described in such texts as Henry Peacham's The Garden of Eloquence are gendered tropes, cultivated for the use of male poets and orators.<sup>3</sup> In the rules established by male rhetoricians, the female speaker is almost erased from the order of Renaissance rhetorical discourse.

The second chapter considers the rhetorical structures of female defenses and attacks in the arguments over the nature of women in some selected early Stuart documents of the formal Renaissance controversy over women. The conventions of this patently rhetorical genre have some overlap with those of Renaissance rhetoric. Both sets of conventions are pertinent to this inquiry in that they frequently inform and structure the dramatic speeches that we analyze in the third and fourth chapters. It is of particular significance to the problem of women's speech that both sets of generic conventions figure and position women speakers as subordinate, excessive, and potentially disruptive or transgressive. The symbolic figuration that emerges from the formal attacks and defenses on women and the treatises and handbooks of rhetoric is that of a powerless, unstable female subject whose speech must be controlled by male regulators. Women's speech is figured, according to the logic of male discursive precedence and dominance, as the less privileged term in a system of dichotomous oppositions, the latter based on a symbolic network of relational differences between male and female. Male language is the positive stable term by which female language and speech are defined as negative (not male) and lacking male authenticity. In the ensuing symbolic order man is the presupposed subject and woman a presupposed adjunct, assigned by man to her subordinate place. Patriarchal

constructs of normative woman extend this system of feminine oppositions into a subset of dichotomies; woman is either transcendently good or demonically evil.

The historical Renaissance controversy over the nature of women represents an ideal debate platform for the generalized binary oppositions into which patriarchal symbolizations of femininity have divided and subdivided normative woman. The genre that could have functioned as a forum for the examination, revelation, and transformation of women's place in the symbolic order operated instead as a repressive mode of perpetuating and reinforcing female marginality. The epistemic limits suggested by this male control and limitation of female meaning carries through to the discourse of dramatic dialogue, as shall be seen in my consideration of the plays selected for this study.

From the perspective of current feminist critical awareness, the symbolic order signified by the formal controversy represents a sacrificial contract for women. In the late twentieth-century we are openly questioning both women's place in this order and the negative implications of a contractual model in which females are governed by males without consensual agreement, as the early seventeenth-century writers of attacks on and defenses of women did not. Julia Kristeva, for example, confronts the issue directly and situates it in a contemporary context. She proposes that we examine and "reveal our place [in the symbolic contract] first as it is bequeathed to us by tradition, and then as we want to transform it." <sup>4</sup>

In the essay "Women's Time" in The Kristeva Reader, attention is drawn to the sacrificial aspect of the symbolic contract for women. Kristeva notes the difficulties faced by women in identifying with the logic of separation and syntactic sequence on which language and the symbolic order are grounded. She argues that "women . . . seem to feel that they are the casualties, that they have been left out of the socio-symbolic contract, of language as the fundamental social

bond" (199). Challenging us to explore its constitution and function, Kristeva contends that "women are today affirming that they are forced to experience this contract against their will" (200).

From a contemporary perspective the problem may be defined from one angle as a lack of heterogeneity for females in the signifying process. It is the doubling of their symbolic polarization into opposing dichotomies that inscribes women in the interstices of our dominant discursive codes. In "Woman's Time" Kristeva argues for the singularity and multiplicity of possible identifications of each speaking subject (210). In her essay "Il n'y pas de maître à langage" Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse, she contends that "if the feminine exists, it only exists in the order of the signifying process, and it is only in relation to meaning and signification, positioned as their excessive other that it exists, thinks (itself) and writes itself for both sexes (134-35). Kristeva draws a parallel here between the semantic inscription of women in one or the other of the extreme fringe areas of language and their oppression in the order of symbolization. The polarization of females into opposing dichotomies and their definition as opposite and other, to males, by whom they are defined and positioned in the symbolic order, disempowers them in relation to language and meaning. It is this formulaic rhetorical figuration that denies the possibility of female heterogeneity and assures women's marginality in the signifying process.

In Sexual/Textual Politics Toril Moi explores some ramifications of woman's position in the order of language. Moi holds that the representation of women on the margins or borders of discourse has enabled the patriarchy to construe the feminine in terms of two disconcerting extremes; angelic or demonic. She contends that this construction results in two equally limited and untenable positions at either end of a scale of oppositions. While she does not



specifically relate the problem to female defenses or to female speech Moi's argument may be developed in those terms:

If patriarchy sees women as occupying a marginal position within the symbolic order, then it can construe them as the limit or borderline of that order. . . . [W]omen will then come to represent the necessary frontier between man and chaos; but because of their marginality they will always seem to recede into and merge with the chaos of the outside. Woman seen as the limit of the symbolic order will . . . be neither inside nor outside, neither known nor unknown. It is this position that has enabled male culture sometimes to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos, . . . and sometimes to elevate them as representatives of a higher nature. . . . In the first instance the borderline is seen as part of the chaotic wilderness outside, and in the second it is seen as an inherent part of the inside; the part that protects and shields the symbolic order from imaginary chaos. (167)

The binary feminine oppositions that Moi outlines are not due to an intrinsic sexism in language but to the pervasiveness of male constructs of femininity and to the polarized limits within which women are rhetorically framed. Women's repression is located within the discursive structures that construct the normative female according to patriarchal models of dichotomous extremes. This rhetorical frame denies the plurality and multiplicity of feminine meaning in literary and verbal representation and in speech. As we shall

observe, such arbitrary symbolic positioning of women-in-general presents a dilemma for early Stuart women's defenses; individual women speaking in defense of women have no legitimate position from which to speak. The problem in the formal debate as in the drama is to negotiate this impasse.

As we scrutinize the early seventeenth-century controversy documents selected for this study, it becomes obvious that the effect of the patriarchal symbolization of the female just discussed is to define women and women's discourse inside the boundaries of a limited epistemic frame. In excluding women from representation outside of this containing frame the writers of female attack and defense pamphlets suppress any female potential for complexity, heterogeneity or verbal eloquence; women are simply excessively good or excessively evil, and are attacked or defended according to these categories. Frederic Jameson's hypothesis that "containment strategies . . . seek to endow their objects of representation with formal unity" clarifies one of the rhetorical structures shaping the discourse of the formal controversy (54). Jameson postulates that the methodological standards of these frames "allow what can be thought to seem internally coherent on its own terms, while repressing what lies beyond its boundaries" (53). He proposes that a particular system constructs "ingenious frames" to repress the unthinkable; what the system in question does not wish to acknowledge about itself (53). While he makes no reference to the problem of women's oppression in language, Jameson's argument illuminates the issues of this inquiry. Underlying the formal unity of the Renaissance debate is that which the male regulators of the genre wish to repress; women have the capacity to resist and transcend the patriarchal configurations of the female and of female discourse.

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic paradigm of language in The Dialogic Imagination also illuminates the rationale underlying the collective inscription of

women within opposing thresholds of the symbolic order in the Renaissance controversy.<sup>5</sup> His proposition that rhetorical genres provide an effective means for formulating or even reformulating another's speech articulates the rhetorical frame of the controversy. Bakhtin defines rhetoric as the art of argument and heuristics and as the contextualized dialogic framing of another's speech (340, 354). He proposes that

rhetoric relies heavily on the vivid re-accentuating of the words it transmits (often distorting them completely) that is accomplished by the appropriate framing context. Rhetorical genres provide a rich material for studying a variety of forms for formulating and framing such speech, [indeed] the most varied means for formulating and framing such speech. (354)

While he does not include the Renaissance controversy as an example of rhetorical genres, nor does he apply the ramifications of his theory to the drama,<sup>6</sup> Bakhtin's hypothesis that rhetorical genres are instrumental in the formulating and framing of another's speech helps to illuminate the relations between the genres of the formal controversy, the rhetorical treatises and handbooks, and the dramatic defenses that we analyze in the following chapters.<sup>7</sup> The Renaissance controversy influences the drama, specifically in the problems surrounding the speeches of women defending women.

In the formal controversy the female subject is positioned within the discursive structures of an already established linguistic, historical, and rhetorical network of signification. This rhetorical network is strongly influenced by the treatises and handbooks of rhetoric. In defining woman's speech in dichotomous extremes and constructing the female as a figure of excess, either in terms of good or evil, the rhetorical structure of the formal debate

provides an effective means for the male appropriation and control of women's discourse. The rhetorical frame in which woman and woman's discourse is figured in Renaissance rhetorical guides suggests a female instability requiring male regulation and restraint. This figuration places woman in a subordinate position in the symbolic order; it also facilitates the representation of woman and woman's speech as male property categories. Two critical effects of male appropriation of linguistic and discursive precedence are the inscription of silence as the sign of female chastity, and the confinement of female discursive space to the private domestic sphere.

My analysis of the rhetorical structures of the discourse of female dramatic defenses in chapters 3 and 4 reveals that whenever a female dramatic speaker transgresses the convention of female silence or ventriloquism and disrupts the order of language in which she is encoded, she is marginalized or sacrificed to preserve that order. In the tragedies analyzed—Shakespeare's Othello and King Lear, and Cary's The Tragedy of Mariam, the resolutions of dramatic conflict entail the deaths of Cordelia, Desdemona, and Emilia, who defends Desdemona, as well as Mariam. Chapter 3 focuses on the relations between the constraints against female speech and the tragic outcome of the heroines' attempts to defend themselves. In Othello and Mariam the central female characters are forced to defend themselves against husbands who reflect the doubled authority of husband and powerful civic figure. Herod's authority is absolute, whereas Othello derives his from the state in his capacity as military hero, representing the interests of the state. These domestic dramas focus on the contractual aspects of the institution of marriage as a mirroring of conventional unequal male/female political relations. At the beginning of King Lear the relations between father and daughter express this structure of authority, but Lear himself disrupts it and delegates it to the wrong daughters through a misguided choice.

Othello demonstrates most persuasively the power of male discourse to determine women's place and meaning in the order of language. Male verbal precedence and control of female discourse as figured in the conventions of Renaissance rhetoric and the formal debate enable Iago to accuse Desdemona to Othello of marital betrayal, creating an impasse for Desdemona's self-defense and Emilia's defense of her. Desdemona's death is directly linked to the subordination of women in the order of language. Like Cordelia, she appears to promise some complexity and individuality as a speaking subject at the beginning of the play, but is reduced through the force of male constructs of the female and male discursive authority to a stereotypical representation of a good woman. I shall analyze the steps whereby Iago rhetorically frames her in his discourse with Othello to suit his plot to destroy her. Desdemona is prevented from defending herself against his intentional but covert slanders by Othello's high regard for the male word in general, and Iago's word in particular.

In the opening scene of King Lear, Lear is in total command of vested authority, and he uses this power to control his daughters' speech. The occasion is an oratorical contest, the topic of which is devotion to Lear. As a reward for their lavish declamations of his entitlement to absolute filial allegiance and affection, and absolute control of their discourse, Lear elects to transfer his entire dominion to his elder daughters, Goneril and Regan. Cordelia, the younger daughter, resists his attempt to direct her speech and expresses her sincere, but not absolute, interpretation of the duties of a daughter. While Cordelia's opening speeches promise some heterogeneity and autonomy as a dramatic character, she is unable to defend herself to Lear. He misinterprets her definition of the proper filial obligations, and insists that she echo his demands for an absolute commitment. For her autonomous speech Cordelia is disowned by Lear and

exiled from the kingdom. The action of the rest of the play turns on the consequences of Lear's flawed judgement.

Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedy of Mariam, the only recorded drama written and published by a woman in England during the Renaissance, also dramatizes the problem of women's speech in relation to patriarchal proprietorship of the symbolic order. The heroine, Mariam, wife of Herod, refuses to accept the proper feminine discursive strategies with her absolutist husband and loses her life as a consequence. In assuming control of and rejecting Herod's proprietorship of her discourse, Mariam symbolically rejects the gendered dichotomies that inscribe women and women's speech as male property categories, silence as the sign of female chastity, and the private domestic sphere as the proper place for female speech. Cary plays on the implications of conventional linguistic gendering and ironically reverses the stereotypical antitheses in her representations of Mariam and Salome. Cary's ironic reversal of gender clichés subverts male gender constructs and draws attention to the oppression of women in the order of language. Cary's chorus imposes formal unity through its conservative stance; however, it also exposes the injustice of Herod's absolutism and the justice of Mariam's cause. Mariam may be read as a defense of a woman's right to protest patriarchal tyranny, the choric judgement and the heroine's tragic end notwithstanding.

Indeed, Elizabeth Cary's play might be fruitfully analyzed as an extended trope of reversal. Through her semantic shifts of the ethos of silent feminine submission in relation to the characterization of Mariam, Salome, and Herod, Cary reveals the inadequacies of the male fictions that construct the female as subordinate and the male as dominant in the order of language. Kristeva contends that the patriarchal constructs of woman (which I have already outlined in some detail), presuppose her potential as a subversive or transgressive force: "Woman .

. . . does not exist with a capital 'W,' possessor of some mythical unity . . . [but as a] force for subversion" (Reader 205). As I shall discuss in the Cary chapter, in the context of her own situation during the writing of *Mariam*, Cary was compelled to state her case indirectly. Yet, if the play is interpreted as a rhetorical reversal, it effectively subverts the status quo and defends female entitlement to challenge the patriarchal limits set for woman's discourse.

The discourse of comedy seems to offer more flexibility to female characters in their negotiations with the symbolic order. Moll Cutpurse in Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* and Maria in Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* are disruptive heroines who manage to achieve their goals in the plays. Yet both of these female characters speak from a marginalized position in language as exceptions among their sex. I shall argue that their characterizations represent gender play rather than feminist ideals. Moll is a transvestite who remains outside the circumference of the symbolic order. In adopting male dress she assumes the liberties of male speech. While her defense of herself and her sex is successful, her discursive freedom does not extend to women in general. Moll attributes her autonomous speech and conduct to her rejection of the conventional female role of a married woman. Her repudiation of the sartorial code, however, is the most important element of her subversion of the tropes of male dominance and female submission in the order of language. The link between speech and dress, which originates in the rhetorical guides to proper speech, directly affects a dramatic speaker's verbal negotiations. When, for example, Lorenzo adopts female disguise to defend his sister in the tragi-comic *Swetnam* play of the formal controversy, he speaks as a reticent, apologetic woman; he also loses the case. When Moll appropriates male garments, she also appropriates the male linguistic power that enables her to construct a persuasive female defense and to elude the conventional constraints on female speech.

Like Moll, Maria escapes the antithetical female constructs. Her defense, which includes a feminist agenda, focuses on the contractual arrangements between wife and husband in the institution of marriage. Since Maria's marriage is sufficiently repressive to exceed the parameters of the conventional model, she has some license to defend herself against her new husband Petruchio's tyranny and misogyny. Maria's discursive strategy exploits the language of madness and inconstancy conventionally assigned to female discourse. In appropriating this subversive feminine language for her own purposes Maria engages in a rhetorical strategy of appropriative irony; that is, she plays with the system that disempowers her as a speaking subject and exploits its logic without openly challenging it. While she exploits the lunatic female language Maria is exempted from the conventional proprieties of female speech. Once Petruchio is cured of his misogyny, however, she declares her return to the woman's place in the symbolic order. Interestingly enough, the lunatic discourse that emancipates and defends Maria from Petruchio's tyranny is the language that Petruchio uses to tame Kate in Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew.

In the final chapter I shall examine other forms of the discourse of female defense. My analysis focuses on some of Cary's letters to the British Privy Council and to Charles I, two of her literary prefaces, and a dedication to Queen Henrietta Maria. These documents are considered in relation to the tropes of male dominance and female submission that figure the order of language. Cary's conversion of the negative (for women) linguistic figuration into positive female defenses will thus be explored in the epistolary form and in several other modes of female defense. The judicial and forensic resonances of the formal debate will be observed in all of the dramatic defenses. In a consideration of the interrelations of Cary's life and her art, these resonances materialize into literal courtroom settings as she deploys legal discourse in her own and other women's



defenses. Within the terms of this study, Cary succeeded in crossing the boundaries set for female containment in language. She also examined, rejected, and reconstituted male constructs of the female and engaged in her own versions of male gender games.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For an extensive discussion of the symbolic order, see Julia Kristeva's essay "Woman's Time" in The Kristeva Reader (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 187-213; especially 196-99.

Although I refer to the symbolic order throughout this study in a sense close to Kristeva's concept of an articulated network of differences that constitutes language and meaning by the separation of subject and objects through a linguistic law of syntactical sequence, my usage of the terminology is more restricted. Kristeva's conception of the symbolic order is grounded in the view of language as a psycho-socio-symbolic structure, which takes as its starting point the constitution of subjective identity through a sacrificial logic of separation. Her conflation of psycho-socio-linguistic categories accepts as an *a priori* logical premise the Lacanian extension of Freud's hypothesis that the castration fantasy is a valid paradigm for the structuring of the "symbolic field" (197-98). She posits that

castration is, in sum, the imaginary construction of a radical operation which constitutes the symbolic field and all beings inscribed therein. This operation constitutes signs and syntax; that is language, as a *separation* from a presumed state of nature, of pleasure fused with nature so that the introduction of an articulated network of differences, which refers to objects henceforth and only in this way separated from a subject, may constitute *meaning*. This

logical operation of separation (confirmed by all psycho-linguistic and child psychology) which preconditions the binding of language which is already syntactical, is therefore the common destiny of the two sexes, man and women.

Following Freud and Lacan, Kristeva figures the phallus as the major referent in the lack, desire, or exclusion that represents the necessary break or separation for, and at the same time constitutes, the subject in the order of language, allowing for her or his insertion into the symbolic order (198). While undoubtedly Kristeva's psychoanalytic investigation of the sociopolitical implications of women's position in the symbolic order is germane to my argument, I limit my inquiry primarily to the rhetorical and literary (with some emphasis on the political) aspects of women's relation to language, power, and meaning. My examination of woman's place in the symbolic order focuses on her significance as different from, other than, and marginal to man, by whom she is defined. I build and support my arguments on the relations of gender, language, and meaning in early Stuart female defenses through an examination of the linguistic configuration of women established in the discourse of Renaissance rhetorical handbooks, and perpetuated and reinforced in the formal controversy and in the examples of early Stuart drama. Bearing in mind that the Renaissance conception of the subject's position in the order of language is based on a different *a priori* premise than the castration theory that structures the Kristevan adaptation of the Lacanian model, in my analysis of early seventeenth-century defenses I argue that the rhetorical constitution of gender invokes a pre-existent natural and divine order in which women are figured as subordinate to men in logical and syntactical sequence. Like the Freudian/Lacanian/Kristevan model this prior

order is generally accepted as both a logical necessity and the origin of all subsequent configurations of female and male subject positions in language, or our common symbolic order. Thus although I bring the perspective of contemporary feminist awareness to bear on the early seventeenth-century materials selected for this inquiry, my rhetorical and literary analysis is grounded in the context of the Renaissance theoretical models in which they were situated. I have chosen to explore a wide generic range of early Stuart materials — rhetorical treatises, formal debate arguments, dramatized fictional representations of women defending women, personal letters of petition, literary prefaces, and a literary dedication — in order to demonstrate that the rhetorical structures constituting women in subordinate positions in the order of language represent a widely accepted model and source for linguistic gender conventions and power relations.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Walter Ong, Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology (Ithaca: Cornell P, 1971) 64-120; James J. Murphy, ed., Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983) 61; Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978) 66; Dennis Baron, Grammar and Gender (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986) 57; Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers, eds., Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 253.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence, 1593, ed. William C. Crane (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimilies and Reprints, 1954) sig. ABIV.

<sup>4</sup> See Kristeva, Reader 199. As I have discussed in note 1, Kristeva's conception of the "symbolic order" includes the psychoanalytic and social

implications of this terminology. Similarly, she views the "symbolic contract" as a psycho-socio-symbolic structure. For Kristeva, women's position in this interrelated symbolic structure defines their relation to power, language and meaning.

<sup>5</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 340, 354. Bakhtin's approach to language in this text is grounded in his formulation of dialogism; the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia; the constant interaction among meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others.

<sup>6</sup> Bakhtin's interest in rhetorical genres, "journalistic, moral, philosophical and others," is due to their significance in the understanding and development of the novel (269).

<sup>7</sup> It is particularly illuminating to the discussion and analysis of Othello.

The Woman's Guide to Proper Speech

What becometh a woman best and first of al: Silence.  
 What seconde: Silence. What third: Silence. What  
 fourth: Silence. Yea, if a man should ask me til'  
 downes day, I would stil crie, silence, silence,  
 without the which no woman hath any good gifte, but  
 hauing the same, no doubt she must haue many other  
 giftes, as the whiche of necessitie do euer follow  
 suche a vertue.

Thomas Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique (Fol. 108)

I

The male writers of the influential rhetorical treatises circulated in the early seventeenth-century define for men dominant positions as proprietors, for women subordinate places as subjects, of rhetorical discourse. As self-appointed controllers and possessors of rhetoric, male rhetoricians authorize themselves to determine a woman's place and meaning in the order of language. According to rhetorical conventions looking back to classical rhetoric, the female place in all forms of discourse is sequentially and discursively second and submissive, and women and women's speech are figured as subject to male disposition. Indeed,

the discipline excludes the female as an active presence and places the most stringent constraints on female speech. The gendering of power relations in rhetorical discourse carries negative consequences for female discourse generally but, as we shall note in the following chapters, more specifically in the constitution of women's defenses.

Although women are dissuaded from both the study and the use of the figures of rhetoric, they are frequently used as figures of rhetoric by male poets and rhetoricians to illustrate vices or ornaments of language. Within the rhetorical framing context of the *artes sermocinales* women are defined according to two simplified binary oppositions; as chaste and silent positive ideals, or as excessively vocal negative examples. Figured as disempowered male properties to be merchandized or blazoned <sup>1</sup> by male patriarchal merchants, these passive female subjects of male discourse are disconcertingly prone to abrupt semantic shifts. As shall be noted, when, for example, the positive power of rhetoric is praised this generally occurs in the context of male eloquence; whenever its negative potential for duplicitous artifice is condemned, it is usually in conjunction with a female association or with a female rhetorical figuration.

Our exploration of the rhetorical structures of female defenses will thus be preceded by an analysis of the conventions and strategies by which male authors assume control and possession of the discourse of rhetoric. The negative effects of linguistic gender distinctions on the female are not limited to rhetorical discourse. In the following chapters the tropes of male dominance and female subordination will be discovered in the discourse of other genres. I draw attention to displays of male proprietorship and control of rhetorical discourse and female meaning in such noncanonical forms as the formal controversy and epistolary genres, as well as in dramatic masterpieces of the established canon. The gendered language revealed in these various forms of discourse suggests self-

interested male writers mediating between women and language; in effect, men speaking for women. Such carefully articulated linguistic gendering illustrates Bakhtin's thesis that the speaker mediates between language and meaning, determining the use to which meaning is put. In The Dialogic Imagination Bakhtin posits that "every discourse has its own selfish and biased proprietor." He adds that there are no words with meanings shared by all, "no words belonging to no one." When we seek to understand a word what matters is "the self-interested use to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker" (401).

Two instances of biased mediation that I shall analyze occur in the rhetorical treatises of George Puttenham and Thomas Wilson, where female meaning takes on positive or negative connotations according to the interests of the writers. In these and other materials of this scrutiny, male rhetoricians use the discourse of rhetoric to silence, attack, exclude, or to praise women in various ways. The rhetorical discourses of female praise and blame alike are deployed to exclude women from public speaking and the public sphere, and to limit their place and meaning in language to the category of passive examples. Some concession to the obviously logical impossibility of the task of entirely silencing women is made in the male rhetoricians' allowance that when women must speak, they should do so only reluctantly, from their negative, subordinate, and vulnerable positions in the order of language.

While the formal Renaissance debate over women discussed in the next chapter appears to have been a literary game in which the nature of women was a topos of rhetorical play rather than a serious issue, the discipline of rhetoric was treated in all earnestness. The high estimation in which the rhetorical arts were held is evidenced by the period's staggering legacy of rhetorical treatises and handbooks.<sup>2</sup> Within the discipline, too, the power of rhetoric was lauded. In



1593, in The Garden of Eloquence, Henry Peacham referred to the figures of rhetoric as “martial instruments both of defense & invasion [which allow us to] defend ourselves, invade our enemies, revenge our wrongs, ayd the weake, deliver the simple from dangers, conserve true religion, & confute idolatry.”<sup>3</sup> Such perhaps hyperbolic claims testified to faith in the efficacy of rhetoric as an omnipotent means of defense or attack. As we shall see, the writers of formal controversy treatises employed (and, in some instances, abused) rhetorical techniques and conventions to attack or defend women. As well, the rhetorical structures of women’s defenses in other genres are closely related to this key discipline of the Renaissance trivium.

In effect, the rhetorical treatises and handbooks that I examine reveal that the object of Peacham’s praise was officially excluded from the female curriculum during the Renaissance. While humanist educators encouraged female learning, at least among the aristocracy, they enjoined against instructing women in rhetoric. The tradition that so highly prized the arts of speech and writing largely reserved the field as a male prerogative. Indeed, in the rhetorical guides, as in the formal controversy tracts, female silence is figured as complementary to male eloquence. Women do not use the resources of rhetoric; men use rhetoric, and they use female models to elaborate their discussions of rhetorical figures and techniques. One instance of this practice with negative connotations for the female example is the paronomastic wordplay surrounding the discussion of a nameless woman in Thomas Wilson’s The Rule of Reason,<sup>4</sup> presumably to illustrate ambiguity of meaning. Another is George Puttenham’s rhetorical constitution of a female replica of deceit and dissimulation in The Arte of English Poesie.<sup>5</sup>

I shall attempt to demonstrate in this chapter that the discipline of rhetoric is used to repress female speakers. Further, I contend that male appropriation of

rhetorical training is a principal factor in the general problem of woman's subordinate place in the order of language. In the influential Renaissance guides to speech and style that are considered in this study, woman has no legitimate authority for speech; the male argument is that silence best becomes a woman. She thus has no place from which to speak, because the decorum of place decrees that woman's place is in the home, where her husband or father controls her speech. Indeed, according to the dictates of Renaissance rhetorical decorum and theory woman has no proper place in the order of language, because her speech is prefigured as potentially excessive, false, or duplicitous.

Rhetoric is used strategically by such male writers on the discipline as Wilson and Puttenham to disempower the female speaker. The masculine claim for linguistic precedence is one means by which this rhetorical divestiture is accomplished. This claim is in part based on an argument for a natural order in language, an order that invariably figures the female as secondary and complementary. Male proprietorship of rhetoric allows for patriarchal control of symbolic constructs of femininity and for a gendering of rhetorical tropes and structures that tends to undermine feminine speech. In the rhetorical treatises analyzed in this inquiry, female language is figured in the margins and interstices of the patriarchally arrogated symbolic order, and women and women's speech are represented as male property categories.

It is one of the ironies in the conjunction of the sexual and the symbolic that although rhetoric was a prohibited discipline in the education of Renaissance women, in Renaissance iconography the term *rhetoric* was represented as a majestic female being. This representation goes as least as far back as Martianus Capella's De nuptiis Philogiae et Mercurii libri novem (The Marriage of Philology and Mercury).<sup>6</sup> I shall explore some of the elements in the rhetorical handbooks of speech and style that underlie the generally negative symbolic

connotations for the female in this iconographic figuration. In pointing to such features as negative valuations of women in rhetorical exempla, female subordination in linguistic and discursive ordering, negative semantic shifts in terms that, although originally valorized as masculine, undergo a transformation through the addition of feminine suffixes or metaphorical assignment of sex, I shall identify some of the liabilities for the female in connection with rhetoric as a discipline and as an iconographic representation.

The two aspects of rhetoric that presented particular problems for Renaissance women were its public and polemical associations. Walter Ong's etymology of the term makes this conjunction explicit:

"Rhetoric" is the anglicized Greek word for public speaking, and thus refers primarily to oral verbalization, not to writing. It comes from the Greek term *rhema*, a word or saying, which in turn derives from the Proto-Indo-European *wer*, the source of the Latin *verbum* and of our "word."<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding its oral derivation, however, rhetoric was developed as a formal discipline only with the advent of writing. In its evolution both as a discipline and as a term over the years, rhetoric, which was originally fused with dialectics, became a separate discipline. The initial fusion with dialectics reflects the centrality of the link between rhetoric, polemics, and oratory. Ong notes that since it was originally concerned with the form of the oration, "[t]he study of rhetoric gave the most diverse literary genres a more or less oratorical cast" (64). He attests that whether it was used in its epideictic, deliberative, or forensic sense, rhetoric retained a "polemic cast of expression" (66). The common conception of rhetoric as "the art of persuasion," to which Ong refers (65), derives from the Aristotelian formulation of the term. Aristotle's definition

links rhetoric to dialectical argument and limits what has become a comprehensive discipline to "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."<sup>8</sup> Other scholars define the discipline more broadly.<sup>9</sup>

The public and polemical features of rhetoric might well also account for the frequent conflation of the term with its end and effect, eloquence. In The Arte of English Poesie, for example, Puttenham describes his treatise on the rhetorical figures and tropes of poetry as "the arts of poetry and eloquence" (170, 180). As the ability or power to persuade with fluent and graceful discourse,<sup>10</sup> eloquence fits the criteria for the classification of rhetoric as persuasion. Its etymology, the Latin *eloquens*, which is the present tense of *eloque*, "to speak out" is close to the Greek definition of rhetoric as public speaking. As we shall see, Puttenham's conception of rhetoric as a system of figures and tropes, or figures of speech links this rather slippery discipline to style, and to the added signification of style as ornament. In my analysis of this connection, which, to a large degree, reflects the influence of Cicero on Renaissance rhetoric, I shall attempt to clarify some relations between rhetorical style and female dress and speech.

## II

The arguments against the inclusion of rhetoric in the female curriculum in the Renaissance were largely generated by prevailing conceptions of the decorum of place. The combination of Renaissance humanism and Ciceronian rhetoric that dominated the discipline in the period stresses the notion that a rhetorical education predisposes the student to public and community service.<sup>11</sup>

Rhetoric was associated with public speaking, and public places. It was also taught in the male Latin grammar schools such as St. Paul's, places more public than the prescribed private education for women permitted. Ruth Kelso reports in Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance that "[i]n England . . . [young girls] were admitted to elementary schools though not . . . to grammar schools or the universities" (66). Elsewhere Kelso remarks that "[n]o public provision [was] made for the training of girls, except what teachers ma[d]e in consultation with parents" (76). Even the elementary school training that was permitted could be eliminated and a young woman could receive her entire education privately at home (76). Women were, thus, from a very early age identified with private places; decorum decreed that even a learned woman's place was in the home, where she had opportunities for neither public speech nor education in the Latin grammar schools.<sup>12</sup>

The restriction of women to private places prevented their complete mastery of the Latin handbooks and treatises that were indispensable to a scholarly grounding in rhetoric. Although a few rhetorical texts were translated into English at this time, most of the authoritative works were in Latin. As Walter Ong observes, "[t]he learned [Renaissance] world was a Latin-writing, Latin-speaking, and even Latin-thinking world."<sup>13</sup> He adds that this "situation still registers in our [current] vocabulary, where elementary schools are called . . . grammar schools—the grammar here referring historically to the teaching of beginners' Latin which was Latin grammar" (212). In any case, during the Renaissance Latin was the "inside" language of the closed male environment to which women had no direct access (120). If, like Sir Thomas More's daughter, Margaret, they were taught Latin in their homes where the vernacular was spoken, they were not immersed in it as male scholars were in educational institutions outside the home. Even if a rare female scholar like Margaret More

had been able to acquire the necessary Latin expertise within domestic confines, she would have been constrained to express her abilities only in the private sphere. Indeed, in Margaret's own case, as one of her father's letters makes explicit, all of her accomplishments are intended for a private audience, "her father and her husband."<sup>14</sup>

The restriction of woman to the private sphere, and the appropriation of the Latin scholarly treatises requisite to an education in rhetoric for males only, implies male proprietorship of rhetorical discourse. Bakhtin's contention in The Dialogic Imagination that every discourse has its own "selfish and biased proprietor" suggests a rationale for the approach to rhetoric as a commodity marked for male usage (401). According to the rules of academic decorum, female guides to eloquent speech must be located elsewhere, outside the boundaries of "the closed . . . environment appropriated for males."<sup>15</sup> Ong's account of the education of Renaissance women reveals that even the most accomplished female scholars who were allowed to dabble in poetry and to study Latin at home were forbidden access to the extensive training required for proficiency in rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> The etiquette of the decorum of place extended to the definition of feminine discursive place. Women's speech was excluded from the academy and located ambiguously and inconspicuously on the fringes of male scholarly discourse.

It was not only in the academy that the impropriety of female eloquence was stressed. On the whole, the Renaissance decorum of place allowed no proper sphere for women's speech. In his influential De Institutione Christianae Feminae,<sup>17</sup> Juan Luis Vives warns against the dangers of rhetorical eloquence and sees it as a serious liability for women. Dennis Baron notes that Vives pointedly presupposes a linkage between feminine verbal intercourse in public places and the loss of chastity.<sup>18</sup> In praising silence as the noblest ornament of women, Vives eliminates rhetoric from the education of Christian women. To emphasize

this exclusion he chooses the ever-silent Virgin Mary as an emblem of ideal female verbal decorum.<sup>19</sup>

Elsewhere in his treatise Vives is less vehement, declaring that, "As for eloquence I have no great care nor a woman needeth it nat but she nedeth goodnes and wysedome."<sup>20</sup> Ruth Kelso reports that in the same text Vives does allow that he "will not condemn [the eloquence that] Quintilian and Jerome so highly praise in Cornelia and Hortensia."<sup>21</sup> Yet, in praising the oratorical accomplishments of mythical, classical female exemplars Vives evades the possibility that women of his own time might be effective orators, and might indeed benefit from training in the discipline of rhetoric.<sup>22</sup>

Lionardo Bruni is explicit in banning rhetoric as a female pursuit. He forbids "rheteric in all its forms—public discussion, forensic argument, logical fence and the like—as absolutely outside the province of women."<sup>23</sup> In Bruni's prohibition, too, the decorum of place enters the argument both directly in his reference to public discussion, and indirectly in his metaphorical term, "province," for women's intellectual space.

The constraints against feminine instruction in rhetoric in conjunction with the decorum of place tend to hinge on comparisons of the public speech of a woman with public nakedness. Barbaro writes that "it is proper . . . that not only arms but indeed the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs."<sup>24</sup> In De re uxoria Barbaro advises that even when women are called upon to communicate that they "should speak to the point so briefly that they may be thought reluctant rather than eager to open their mouths."<sup>25</sup> In The Arte of English Poesie Puttenham insists that it is unseemly, and "indecent," for a married woman even to be talked about publicly. He gives the example of a foreign ambassador who took an occasion to praise the wives and women at a

banquet table in the presence of their husbands. Puttenham holds that this incident breaks the laws of decorum, for "the chiefe commendation of a chaste matrone, was to be knowen onely to her husband, and not to be obscured by straungers and gwestes" (299). In these examples decorum is linked to feminine chastity and both are identified with a reluctance to speak. In the latter instance the argument shifts to a somewhat different ground: feminine decorum and chastity in relation to speech may be mysteriously breached if a woman becomes the subject of a male discussion. I shall discuss this phenomenon in more detail in an analysis of the preface to Thomas Wilson's The Rule of Reason. In all of these arguments the proper or positive female model is represented as silent, almost silent, or at least anxious to avoid public attention in relation to speech. In the light of such figurations it is not surprising that rhetoric was a forbidden territory for women.

Saint Paul and Aristotle were frequently quoted authorities for the injunctions against public speaking for women.<sup>26</sup> As I have discussed elsewhere, the assumption that the discipline of rhetoric prepared its scholars for a public position was fuel for the strong male objections to rhetorical eloquence as a fit object of female study. According to Vives, women should confine their administrative abilities to their private households:

Wene you it was for nothyng that wyse men forbad  
you rule and gouernaunce of countreis and that saynt  
Paul byddeth you shall nat speke in congragayton and  
gatherynge of people? All this same meaneth that you  
shall nat medle with matters of realmes or cities.  
Your own house is a cite great inough for you; as for  
the abrode neither know you nor be you knowen.<sup>27</sup>



Vives's analogy of a woman's house as "a cite great inough for you" emphasizes the idea that women's speech beyond the domestic threshold trespasses against the decorum of both discursive and metaphorical place.

At first glance, Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie, registered at Stationer's Hall in 1588, appears to be an exception to the rule. While the dedication to Queen Elizabeth is common enough practice during her reign, his avowed "chiefe purpose . . . for the learning of Ladies and young Gentlewomen . . . to know their schoole points and termes appertaining to the Art[s of poetry and eloquence] . . . is not (170, 180). Puttenham's statement in the heading of book 1, chapter 3, that poets were historically the "first . . . Oratours . . . of the world" conflates rhetoric, poetry, and eloquence (24). He describes poetry as:

more eloquent and rhetoricall than ordinarie prose . . .  
because it is decked and set out with all manner of  
fresh figures, which maketh that it sooner innegleth  
the judgement of man, and carrieth his opinion this  
way and that, wither soeuer the heart by impression  
of the eare shal be most affectionately bent and  
directed. . . . (24-25)

In its incorporation of poetics and rhetoric as a field of learning for women Puttenham's project appears remarkably liberal and even feminist.

A close reading of the work, however, reveals a number of inconsistencies. The poet-maker of the first chapter is figured as male and compared to the male divinity who fashioned our world. In his discussions of the *artes sermocinales* Puttenham gives predominantly male examples and even designates eloquent speech as masculine property. Eloquence, he attests,

is of great force [not] as the propertie and gift of yong  
men onlely, but rather of old men [who] speake most

grauely, wisely, assuredly, and plausibly, which  
 partes are all that can be required in perfit eloquence,  
 and so in all deliberations of importance where . . .  
 good persuasion is no lesse then speach itselſe. . . .  
 (154)

That is not to say that women are absent from various discussions of the language arts; they are frequently used as examples. Nevertheless, in a treatise ostensibly directed toward the cultivation of feminine linguistic skills, women are largely relegated to the role of passive exempla. When Puttenham does finally address the topic of feminine rhetorical aptitudes, he implicitly instructs women to practice as second-rate poets and orators. In chapter 21, which deals with the vices and deformities in speech and writing, Puttenham apprises his readers that

euery surplusage or preposterous placing or undue  
 iteration or darke words or doubtful speach are not so  
 narrowly to be looked upon in a large poeme nor  
 specially in the pretie Poesies and deuices of Ladies  
 and Gentlewoman makers whom we would not haue  
 too precise Poets least with their shrewd wits when  
 they were married they might become a little too  
 phantasticall wiues. (256-57)

Thus the aspiring female poets who are the stated subjects of Puttenham's rhetorical instruction are actually incidental to the main thrust of the text. After a conspicuous absence from the bulk of the discussion, women are marginally located in the chapter on linguistic vices. In contrast to the patriarchal orators who are praised for having achieved "perfit eloquence," female exemplars are identified with surplusage, preposterous placings, and the undue repetitions and ambiguity that are tolerated, but not greatly admired. Puttenham has given an

earlier hint that women are not to be taken too seriously as poets by positioning them among the excesses and surplusages of language in his definition of the figure *metalepsis* or the “farfer” (farferched). In his explication of the term he suggests that the deviser of this figure had a desire to please women rather than men (193). Puttenham has also previously used the adjective “phantasticall” with reference to poets in a less than complimentary sense. The term is generally disdainful; the best poets are referred to as “not phantastici but euphantafiotē” (33–35). Women poets and orators are thus inscribed among the second-rate; women are not encouraged to be too precise in their “pretie Poesies and deuices” because they do not figure prominently in the art and craft of either poetry or rhetoric. They are represented as future wives in whom any potential for linguistic superiority must be suppressed in deference to their future husbands’ sequential and discursive precedence. The paternal condescension is half hidden in the flattering allusion to the “shrewd wits” of the “Ladies and Gentlewoman makers” who are destined for marriage rather than art. Puttenham’s encomium to would-be feminine poets and orators is an effective dispraise or detraction; women’s speech and writing, according to his model, are always figured in the shadows of male eloquence.

In part, Puttenham’s prescription for female linguistic subordination is grounded in the Renaissance passion for patriarchal order. However, a passage in another well-known text, Henry Peacham’s The Garden of Eloquence, frankly illustrates that the logic of such ordering is based on the gendering of rhetorical tropes:

Order is an apt and meet placing of words among themselves which is of two sorts; one when the worthiest word is set first, which order is natural as we say men and women, sun and moon, day and night,

the king and his nobles, life and death, and not women  
and men, moon and sun, night and day, . . . death and  
life, which in common speech is foolish. (R.y.)

As Peacham explains, the other kind of order occurs in rhetorical amplification when the weightiest word is placed last. Puttenham gives an example of the second kind of ordering, described by Peacham, when he refers to Elizabeth as last in recital but first in importance. This example of female precedence is misleading, however. As reigning monarch Elizabeth was presumably an exception to the rule of masculine sequential precedence.<sup>28</sup> Her exceptional status does not disrupt the general order, where masculinity is equated with priority.

In both collocations, although the author adverts to the arts of speech and eloquence, which are acquired rather than natural skills, he attempts to transpose the male-defined order of nature onto the order of language. Peacham makes extensive use of metaphor to naturalize the idea of patriarchal order. The title and the opening epistle on the publisher's imprint page declares the central metaphor: the author's work is a "garden" that contains "all manner of flowers, exornations, forms and fashions of speech" As the experienced orator hides all evidence of his carefully cultivated rhetorical skills, so the writer of this rhetorical handbook seeks to convince his readers that the eloquence to which he refers is not an arbitrary linguistic order but a "natural" one. Nonetheless the allusion to a female nature or natural material disposed by a shaping male artist is not a natural phenomenon but a metaphor, one of the figures of speech in Peacham's metaphorical garden.<sup>29</sup>

There is a fundamental problem with Peacham's garden metaphor: a garden literally denotes both artificial arrangement and cultivation. Someone has to plant, if not also tend, the flowers or other vegetation. The term connotes the

presence of an outside agent, as for example, a poem or other literary work of art does. Like Puttenham, however, Peacham plays with a popular rhetorical commonplace. Renaissance poets as well as rhetoricians extended the vegetative metaphor to all of nature as anthropomorphized, feminized and awaiting improvement by a male artist. In his An Apology for Poerry Sir Philip Sidney affirms that the male poet "goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit." <sup>30</sup> By wit Sidney refers to "his [the poet's] own invention." <sup>31</sup> In the Apology feminized nature is secondary and inferior to male artistic disposition: <sup>32</sup> "Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden" (524). Puttenham offers a variation on the poet as gardener improving nature. In representing or imitating

. . . another man's tale or doings he [the poet] . . . doth  
as the cunning gardener that using nature as a  
coadiuter, furdurs her conclusions and many times  
makes her effectes more absolute and strange. But  
for that in our maker or Poet, which rests onely in  
deuice and issues from an excellent sharpe and quick  
inuention, . . . he is . . . as nature herselfe working by  
her owne peculiar vertue and proper instinct and not  
. . . as other artificers do, is then most admired when  
he is most naturall and least artificiall . . . because  
they hold as well of nature to be suggested and uttered  
as by arte to be polished and reformed. (79)

Like Sidney, Puttenham wants the male poet to have it both ways: to both imitate and improve nature.

Throughout his treatise Puttenham himself scrupulously follows the traditional gendering of verbal order, as, for example, in his discussion of the

authority of "fathers and mothers" behind the poet's praise of the gods (43). In a passage on *auxesis*, or the figure of amplification as an example of the second type of order, only children are ranked lower than women in Puttenham's hierarchy of importance: "He lost besides his children and his wife, / his realme, ronown, liege, libertie and life" (226). Other writers of rhetorical handbooks follow the same rules of sequential precedence and use the same rationale for justification. In Literary Fat Ladies Patricia Parker notes that such writers as Richard Sherry stress that a disregard of the patriarchal order of discourse is a trespass against an order not constructed but "natural" (112). In his Treatise of Schemes and Tropes Sherry warns against the "*unnatural*" placement of "Mistress" before "Master" or "women" before "men" (22; emphasis added).<sup>33</sup>

Thomas Wilson is even more vehement in his insistence on proper linguistic ordering. In The Arte of Rhetorique he argues that any disruption of the patriarchal order of language is a double violation, against nature and against decorum:

Some will set the carte before the horse, as thus. My mother and my father are both at home, even as though the good man of the house ware no breaches, or that the graye Mare were the better Horse. And what thoughe it often so happeneth (God wotte the more pitye) yet in speakinge at the leaste, let us kepe a natural order, and set the man before the woman for maners sake. (189)<sup>34</sup>

For Wilson, the reversal of gender precedence in this example is preposterous.<sup>35</sup>

Always emphatic in his statements on gender and speech, Wilson gives a rhetorical instance of patriarchal ordering carried to its logical end in relation to feminine speech:

What becometh a woman best and first of al: Silence.  
 What seconde: Silence. What third: Silence. What  
 fourth: Silence. Yea, if a man should ask me til'  
 dowmes day, I would stil crie, silence, silence,  
 without the which no woman hath any good gifte, but  
 hauing the same, no doubt she must haue many other  
 giftes, as the whiche of necessitie do euer follow  
 suche a vertue. (Fol. 108)

Wilson's purpose in this passage is to illustrate of one of the rhetorical figures of repetition. The figure is *conversio in eadam*; in effect, a doubling of repetition, a combination of primary *repetitio* and *conversio eiusdem in extremum*. This doubling device entails repetition of the first and last words in each sentence. The Latin term *extremum* is particularly appropriate to the rhetorical effect, which begins with a quadrupling of emphasis and ends with the male author crying out for the conversion of woman into an emblem of silence. It would be difficult to imagine a more forceful deprecation of female discourse. In making his rhetorical point, Wilson's figure effaces woman's speech entirely.

The aesthetic affirmation of a natural order that supports patriarchal claims to linguistic and discursive precedence infers a purposeful rationale. Parker suggests that "the motivated discourse of rhetoric . . . both stages and reflects the ordering of society" (98). Although the social implications of rhetorical ordering are beyond the scope of this study, the implications of the staging of patriarchal order in syntactic arrangement are crucial to the examination of speeches by female characters in the discourse of Jacobean drama.

The illustrations discussed thus far indicate that the subordination of women within the order of language is predicated on the assumption of an innate female inferiority complemented by a natural masculine superiority. The

negative linguistic valuation leaves women and women's speech in vulnerable positions for attack by male authorities. In Puttenham's text we learn that even those verbal qualities that might be construed to derive from what is assumed to be feminine "nature" carry negative connotations. The context is a discussion of decorum relating to the sound or voice of a male speaker; in this case, the orator Philefens:

who spake . . . with so small and shrill a voice as the  
Emperor Anthonine was greatly annoyed therewith,  
and to make him shorten his tale, said by thy beard  
thou shouldst be a man, but by thy voice a woman.  
(271)

Puttenham's example calls to mind the Erasmus quotation at the beginning of this chapter. In order to avoid folly, which would leave him open to censure, the male orator should avoid feminine discursive traits. The implication is that not only a small, shrill voice, but also an unduly long tale, feminizes an orator's speech. According to the logic of natural male precedence, oratory that is defective in sound and unduly copious is classified as female. The example suggests an abridged syllogism, or enthymeme: A good orator speaks in a distinctively masculine voice and style. / An orator who speaks with a feminized voice or style is a poor orator. In an enthymeme, however, one of the premises would be missing; in this instance the conclusion is lacking; that is, only male speakers are potentially good orators. The argument is thus an example of incomplete syllogistic reasoning.

Puttenham, however, carries the logic further:

Phauorinus the Philosopher was counted very wise  
and well learned but a little too talkative and full of  
words: for the which Timocrates reprov'd him in the



hearing of one Palemon. That is no wonder quoth  
 Palemon, for so be all women. And besides,  
 Phauorinus being knowen for an Eunuke or a gelded  
 man, came by the same nippe to be noted as an  
 effeminate and degenerate person. (272)

Again, in this instance the linkage of the female with oratory carries negative associations. Phauorinus's main fault as a speaker, his excessive wordiness, is attributed to his condition as an effeminate man; he is a eunuch. His speech is subjected to reproval by Timocrates in the hearing of Palemon. These two unequivocally male judges condemn the philosopher's feminized speech characteristics. Despite his superior wisdom and learning, Phauorinus is deficient as an orator. What is interesting in the final statement of this passage is the symbolic intersection of linguistic effeminacy and degeneracy. The author observes, appropos of Phauorinus's feminized speech in conjunction with his questionable male status, that he "came by the same nippe to be noted as an effeminate and degenerate person."

The term "nippe," connoting a small pinch or bite, by which the speaker, Phauorinus, is condemned as a degenerate, implies a verbal attack. It is evident that Phauorinus is in his curiously vulnerable position due to the signs of linguistic effeminacy that he exhibits. Indeed, the examples which we have studied reveal that male preeminence in rhetorical discourse, decorum, and order in language makes almost any association of speech and the female a potential liability. Women's speech per se and effeminacy in men's speech styles are generally associated with linguistic faults and vices. I am using the term *degenerate* here to signify deterioration. It has an added connotation (appropriate in this context) of sexual deviance. The Latin word root,

*degenerare*, "to fall from one's ancestral quality" is also relevant to the point on linguistic decline that I am making.

### III

Gender relations are evident also in the negative semantic shifts that occur in specific examples of feminized language. Even a term that is originally valorized can undergo a semantic transformation and become depreciated through identification with the feminine. The representation of the term *rhetoric* is a notable example of such linguistic transposition. Although no precise date has been established, the anthropomorphization of *rhetoric* as a female persona is a longstanding practice, dating back at least as far as Cicero in the first century B.C. One instance of Cicero's association of rhetoric with a feminized *prosopopoeia* occurs in a passage in a late treatise entitled Brutus: Or. Remarks on Eminent Orators. In the context of a conversation between Brutus, Atticus, and Cicero on the career of the orator Phalereus, Cicero refers to rhetorical eloquence as a female figure: "He [Phalereus] was the first who relaxed the force of Eloquence, and gave *her* a soft and tender air; . . . in the very city in which [she] was born and nurtured . . . before *she* grew to maturity."<sup>36</sup>

In the fifth century, Martianus Capella's allegorical narrative on the nuptials of Mercury and Philology contains a particularly vivid anthropomorphization of rhetoric. The occasion is the series of speeches given by the seven sister arts who serve as bridesmaids to Philology. Capella depicts a striking scene in which a "great group of earth-gods" (156) are arrested in their contemplations by the arrival of "Rhetoric":

in strode a woman of the tallest stature and abounding self-confidence, a woman of outstanding beauty; she wore a helmet and her head was wreathed with royal grandeur; in her hands the arms with which she used either to defend herself or to wound her enemies, shone with the brightness of lightning. The garment under her arms was covered by a robe wound about her shoulders in the Latin fashion; this robe was adorned with the light of all kinds of devices and showed the figures of them all, while she had a belt under her breast adorned with the rarest colors of jewels. (156)

The association of Capella's feminized icon and rhetoric in this passage is unequivocally positive. The attention to her dress, "in the Latin fashion; . . . adorned with the light" of the colors and ornaments of rhetoric, links Capella's feminized icon to the exalted oratorical style of the famous Roman orators. Later in the same passage, he refers to "her excellence and exaltation of speech" (156). Interestingly, however, the magnificence of "Rhetoric" as a literary creation is not limited to her splendid dress and elegant oratory. She also represents military power and prowess in feats of arms as she displays the martial weapons of defense and attack, described by Peacham. Her tall stature, supreme self-confidence, and helmet and arms in conjunction with "royal grandeur" suggest a heroic male figure or an Amazonian personation: "When she clashed her weapons on entering, you would say that the broken booming of thunder was rolling forth with the shattering clash of a lightning cloud; indeed it was thought that she could hurl thunderbolts like Jove. For like a queen with power over everything she could . . . change the countenance and senses not only of cities but of armies

in battle" (156). James Willis remarks that the richness of Capella's figurative language in this passage "is unusual even for Martianus" (157).<sup>37</sup> It is certainly the language of high epideictic praise. "Rhetoric" is literally praised to the skies: she is even given the power of Jove to hurl thunderbolts with her eloquent speech. This is conventional praise for male orators<sup>38</sup>, of course, but not for females.

Still more hyperbolic praise of "Rhetoric's" oratory follows: "This golden-voiced woman, pouring out some of the jewels of crowns and kingdoms, was followed by a mighty army of famous men" (157). Yet the graphic figurative language is a little curious. The female *prosopopoeia* does not lead an army of Amazons or an army of women and men, but an army of "famous men." Indeed, her rhetorical skills are deployed in the interests of male fame as Capella continues the narrative with a description of two celebrated male orators "who outshone the rest" (157). The positive connotations of rhetoric in this early narrative thus shift into an enhancement and praise of male oratory, the magnificent female literary personification of "Rhetoric" notwithstanding.

The fictive iconology of a feminized rhetoric was an English literary practice well before the Renaissance. Among the instances cited by Wilbur Samuel Howell in Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700<sup>39</sup> is the allegorical poem "De Curia Sapience."<sup>40</sup> In this allegory, attributed by Stephen Hawes to John Lydgate and published by Caxton in 1480, the poet-hero "encounters the seven ladies, symbolizing the seven sister arts" in the Castle of Sapience (47). The female personifications bear some resemblance to those in Capella's Marriage of Mercury and Philology. As in the Capella allegory, the interrelated disciplines of dialectic and rhetoric are figured as learned and eloquent speakers. While the two are frequently conflated in Renaissance rhetoric, they are separate icons of the trivium in "De Curia."<sup>41</sup> One episode in the poem focuses on Dame

Dialectica's preparations for the teaching of her art in the form of a "breuis tractatus de Dialectica" (47). In this episode the lexicon and familiar formulas and topics of logical argument are described. "Dame Rhetoryke, Modyr of Eloquence," is the next learned sister encountered by the poet. Cicero is described as "The chosen Spowse unto this lady fre" (122), thus facilitating an association of rhetoric and female iconography with Ciceronian style. In this instance the feminized connotations in the association between Dame Rhetoryke's elegant language and Cicero are highly complimentary.<sup>42</sup>

Here are the two stanzas to which Howell refers:

And many a clerke had lust for to here;  
 Hyr speche to theym was parfyte sustynaunce,  
 Yche worde of hyr depuryd was so clere  
 And enlumyned wyth so parfyte plesaunce,  
 That heuyn hit was to here her bean parlaunce;  
 Her termes gay of facound souerayne  
 Cacemphaton in noo poynt myght dysteyne.

She taught theym all the craft of endytyng,  
 Whyche vyces ben that shuld auoyded be,  
 Whyche ben the coloures gay of that konnyng,  
 Theyre difference and eke theyre propurte;  
 Yche thyng endyted how hit shuld peynted be;  
 Distinction she gan clare and discuss,  
 Whyche ys come, colon, periodus.<sup>43</sup>

Other than the possible sexual innuendo in the noun "lust" in the opening sentence, the entire first stanza is in the mode of epideictic praise of Dame Rhetoryke's perfect eloquence. The second stanza focuses on her expertise in

the devices and ornaments of speech, rhetorical disposition, the avoidance of speech faults or vices, and the proper distinctions between the parts of speech. The fifth line gives a hyperbolic compliment to her speech style, proclaiming that it was heaven to hear her "beau parlaunce." In short, she is admired as an ideal orator, an exemplary stylist, and a perfect instructor in the arts of eloquence. As a rhetorical icon she explicitly links feminized language to an ornamental speaking style. This pattern of linguistic gendering rhetorically links female speech to dress, as shall be observed shortly.

Stephen Hawes' didactic allegory, The Pastime of Pleasure, which centers on the knight-hero's quest for salvation through a classical education in the sister arts and his efforts to win a fair "lady who dwells in the bright chamber of logic" within the Tower of Doctrine, is another illustration of the feminine personification of rhetoric.<sup>44</sup> Following his instruction in logic the knight ascends the tower stairs to the chamber of Dame Rhetoryke. Hawes's female rhetorician works with Cicero's five-part division, but she outlines her exegesis of the rhetorical terms in English.<sup>45</sup> Hawes's innovative approach is of interest to this inquiry not only as the first conversion of Ciceronian rhetoric to poetics in English, but also in its favourable representation of the feminized personification of rhetoric.

The figuration of rhetoric as a feminized and idealized term also holds interesting ramifications for male constructions of women and women's speech. Like the "De Curia" poem, The Pastime uses the rhetorical epideictic function of *laus* to praise Lady Rhetoryke's graceful style. In the latter the poet asks his feminine mentor to paint his tongue with her royal flowers (81). This floral image may be construed as a metaphor for the colours of rhetoric, the latter itself a metaphor for the figural schemes and tropes of vivid rhetorical description. The image further suggests the familiar iconography of Rhetorica in decorative floral

clothing in such well-known pictorial representations as the one in Gregor Reisch's *Margarita philosophica*.<sup>46</sup> The emphasis on ornaments of speech in connection with the clothing of the female rhetorical model represents, as we shall see in a scrutiny of some passages in Sidney's and Puttenham's treatises, a potential liability. In these works such an association facilitates a negative shift in connotation for the male-constituted feminized icon which carries over to female discourse.

Although the associations between the female, rhetoric, and literary and visual iconography are not a primary area of interest in this study, they present an interesting line of inquiry. Since the interrelationship has some bearing on the the linguistic feminization of rhetoric I shall briefly investigate some of the ramifications. Dominic A. Larusso notes a linkage between the feminine, rhetorical language, and visual design; he indicates the desirability of further research into the symbolism of the gendered representations of rhetoric:

In my collection of over twenty-five professional photographs of sepulchres, campanili, pulpit supports, and various church facades designed, constructed, or restored on the peninsula during the Renaissance, all but one show rhetoric as a lady. Apart from the ancient tie to the various muses, little thought appears to have been given to determining the extent of any conscious development of this feminine emphasis in both language (rhetorica) and visual design.<sup>47</sup>

Larusso directs his research to some of the broader implications of the classical rhetorical tradition for the Italian Renaissance. His observation is made in the context of a brief discussion of Renaissance emblem books and of "possible ties

among Ars Pictura, Ars Poesis and Ars Rhetorica" (52-53). He does not however, pursue this connection.

Heinrich F. Plett, like Larusso, alludes to potential links between the feminine and rhetorical iconography in literature and the visual arts. In his essay "The Place and Function of Style in Renaissance Poetics" he explores the traditional personification of rhetoric as a female figure in iconography that he traces back to Capella's De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii.<sup>48</sup> Plett focuses on the revival of rhetorical stylistics in the period, and he attributes this renewed interest to "Petrarch's rediscovery of Cicero" (357). Plett's remarks are of interest to my own inquiry for the illustration that they afford of the potential for shifting connotations in linguistic terms, and for the insights that they contribute to my hypothesis of a symbolic conjunction between the feminization of rhetorical stylistics, female dress, and speech. I have already alluded to Puttenham's conflation of rhetoric, poetry, and eloquence. In his analysis of Puttenham's poetics as these are set forth in The Arte of English Poesie Plett points to the dependence of Puttenham's aesthetic categories on the linguistic and sociopolitical ideals of courtly decorum (366). He defines Puttenham's theoretical model of rhetorical stylistics as a courtly poetics (368). Plett attests that Puttenham "takes up the traditional personification of rhetoric as a female figure" (367). He quotes the following passage as an epitome of Puttenham's courtly aesthetics:

And as we see in these great Madames of honour, be they for personage or otherwise never so comely and bewtifull, yet if they want their courtly habillements or at leastwise such other apparell as custome and ciuillite haue ordained to couer their naked bodies, would be half ashamed or greatly out of countenance



to be seen in that sort, and perchance do think themselves more amiable in eury man's eye, when they be in their richest attire, suppose of silkes or tyssewes and costly embroideries, then when they go in cloth or in any other plaine and simple apparell. Euen so cannot our vulgar Poesie shew it selfe . . . if any lymme be left naked and bare and not clad in other . . . kindly clothes and colours, such as may conuey them somewhat out of sight, that is from the common course of ordinary speach and capacitie of the vulgar judgement, and yet being artificially handled must needs yield it much more bewtie and commendation. (149-150) <sup>49</sup>

In another work that deals more explicitly with the symbolic feminization of rhetoric, Plett uses the same passage to illustrate his argument that the splendid clothing of the ladies of the court represents "the aesthetically beautiful disguise of an otherwise bare inventio." <sup>50</sup> I would clarify Plett's point by observing that in representing an analogy between female dress and the ornaments of speech, Puttenham's comparison reveals one of the techniques whereby male rhetorical discourse defines the complementary and subsequent (or accessory) place of the female in the order of language. The figures of rhetoric are themselves figured in the beautiful garments of courtly ladies, and both are praised for giving aesthetic delight and for covering naked, unadorned language, troped as the female body. In linking ornaments or figures of speech to the dress of courtly ladies and in likening the pleasing effect of elegant rhetorical language to women's clothing, designed to enhance the female body so as to appeal to the eyes of men, Puttenham adheres to the conventional female personification of rhetoric. He

also takes the figuration to one of its logical implications: Puttenham's rhetorical model implies a union of the feminine *prosopopoeia* and stylistic decorum. Speech, like a proper courtly lady, is never naked or plain in Puttenham's conflated icon of rhetoric, poetry, and eloquence. In the context of the traditional iconography of "Rhetorica" it comes adorned in the "costly embroideries" and "kindly . . . colours" of resplendent female attire. It is entirely in accordance with the rhetorical frame in which this feminized icon of rhetoric is contained that the aesthetic standards are judged by the male gaze.

Puttenham's model of rhetorical stylistics implies a union of the feminine, stylistic decorum, and female dress. In the quoted passage the diction of Poesie is covered and enhanced by the figures and ornaments of rhetoric, which are troped as the elegant garments of a courtly lady. This rhetorical figuration reflects Ciceronian stylistics, as we shall discuss shortly, specifically Cicero's metaphor of speech costumes. In the passage examined, the rich feminine attire that "co[v]ers" the "naked and bare" limbs of the language that the author would have poets use signifies rhetorical decorum. The stylistic convention in this illustration lauds the feminized icon. We must keep in mind, however, the Renaissance penchant to argue *in utramque partem*. From this perspective the epideictic praise of the female exempla may be viewed as one side of a rhetorical disputation.

The positive signification of richly ornamented speech with its patent appeal to the senses and the laudatory connotations of the feminized rhetorical personification may quickly shift, however. Plett draws attention to Sidney's reversal of Puttenham's courtly lady, Rhetoric, into a painted whore:

that noney-flowing matron Eloquence appareled, or  
rather disguised, in a courtesan-like painted  
affectation: one time with so many farfetched words,

they may seem monsters, but must seem strangers to  
any poor Englishman. . . . (93) <sup>51</sup>

Although the linkage of the feminine and the farfetched is common to both authors, as I have remarked earlier in the Puttenham example, the potential for negative reversal of the feminized term is particularly striking in the Sidney quotation. As it is in the formal Renaissance debate over women the female example may be used by the male writer as either a figure of *vituperatio* or of *laus*. In Sidney's figuration the feminized icon praised by Puttenham has become the other side of the argument as an object of vituperation. Correspondingly, rhetorical figures and ornaments of speech have become monstrous and alien in their association with the farfetched; in their overt analogies to courtly women they have degenerated into courtesans. They are now described as painted whores and models of affectation. The lexical choice is appropriate to the rhetorical framing context in which fallen women are signified by a linguistic term that has shifted from the positive designation of courtly lady to the negative signification of prostitute. The term *courtesan* is derived from the valorized male term of *courtier*; both originate from the Latin *cobors* and the Old French *cort*. The negative connotations of this instance of the gender marking of an originally masculine term with a feminine suffix illustrate the potential for a negative semantic shift in the male symbolic construction of the female.

The Sidney passage occurs in the context of a declamation on the lack of authenticity in poetic language. His allusions to the "affectation," "farfetched words," and "monsters" attributed to the feminized icon Eloquence, disguised as a courtesan, are part of the rhetorical framing context that links linguistic degeneracy to an association with the female—in this case, metaphorical assignment of sex. <sup>52</sup> Sidney's declaration that such words "must seem strangers to any poor Englishman" imply that male English poets should avoid decadent

and deceptive feminized language and strive for an authentic and valorized, hence male, language. The inference is that the negative corrupting influences are simultaneously feminine and outside the aesthetic standards of the anglicized patriarchal symbolic order. Male English poets are advised to use the authentic and male-connoted inside language of this order. Feminized affected poetic language is on the fringes where it is all too easy for feminized terms, like courtly ladies, to fall, through a semantic shift into disgrace.

The ease with which Sidney denounces the feminized personification of rhetoric in the quoted passage springs in part from the Renaissance penchant for an *in utramque partem* format as an organizing principle for almost any issue. As shall be seen in the formal controversy, this rhetorical model allows the female topos at the center of the debate to be employed by the male originators of the genre as a figure of epideictic praise or vituperation with equal facility. In Sidney's defense of poetry the denunciation of the feminized icon is also facilitated by the Ciceronian stylistic notion of speech costumes. In *De Oratore* Cicero refers to "the costume of a speech."<sup>53</sup> Cicero's figure occurs in the context of a dialogue on style that focuses on the "power and judgement" of the orator "to clothe and deck his thoughts with language" (41). The rules regarding the proper "costumes" for speech require the observance of the proper stylistic decorum: language should be, among other criteria, "graceful, dignified and becoming" (41). The decorum of speech here corresponds to the etiquette of proper attire. Elsewhere Cicero expounds on the importance "of adorning language" (218). While in the cited excerpts Cicero does not overtly link rhetorical stylistics with the decorum of female dress, Sidney, like Puttenham, makes this connection.

In Sidney's representation matron Eloquence's magnificent apparel becomes a deceptive disguise; the lady whose speech is characterized as "honey-

flowing" is transformed by a few strokes of his pen into a painted courtesan. As the transformation continues, Sidney turns the adornments of the courtly lady into the false paintings and affectations of a formerly genteel, but now fallen, woman who embodies duplicitous eloquence. She stands in contrast to the ideal male poet who represents linguistic integrity. Thus, whether rhetorical skills in fashioning eloquent speech are admired, as they are by Puttenham or deplored, as by Sidney, the notions of verbal duplicity, and misleading disguise are associated with the feminized icon. In Sidney's case, such artifice is represented as an abuse of language, which the English male poet should avoid.

In his transposition of the female figure of eloquence from a positive to a negative connotation, Sidney carries the Ciceronian convention of speech costumes a step further; in his comparison speech is not only clothed but also painted. The explicit analogy is to women's cosmetics, and the implication is that the "paint" conceals the lady's internal emotions and motives as well as any external flaws in her appearance. Words, metaphorically clothed in rich garments, are disguised by artificial figures of speech (the flowers and colours of rhetoric), which the female personification of eloquence uses in order to deceive. The figure of deception is anthropomorphized by the paint on the figural courtesan's face. In terms of rhetorical stylistics we have an allusion to delivery as well as style. Style, compared to the rich raiment of beautiful language, degenerates into disguise, troped as the feigned affectations of expressive but insincere delivery. As a symbol of rhetorical ornament and artifice the female figure is deployed in this representation to insinuate connections between rhetoric, women's speech, and dissimulation.

The association of the female *prosopopoeia* with style and with the ornaments of speech here provides the potential for a negative shift in connotation. In the Sidney passage that I have analyzed, the colours of rhetoric

are metaphorically depicted as the cosmetics painted on a courtesan's face to create an illusion of natural beauty. Such "colours" may create a pleasing impression, but they are open to attack as impostures or *trompes l'oeil* that fool the eye and cheat the senses. Sidney, the male artist who applies the false colours to his feminized figure of eloquence, displays his painted courtesan as an illustration of excessive artifice: in effect, bad art. She is used as a passive example to reflect the negative valuation of a feminized term and to enhance the positively valorized masculine discourse of the male poet. The implication is that authentic English poetry, which reflects the linguistic standards of the male poet, avoids the excesses of rhetorical figures and colours, here troped as female cosmetics.<sup>54</sup>

In The Arte of English Poesie Puttenham, too, makes a connection between rhetorical colours and women's cosmetics. He praises the beauties of rhetorical ornaments, but he cautions against the excessive use of such figures, as they may disfigure and spoil the poet's language. Again, the poet is male, and the ornamental figures of speech and the excess that can mar his workmanship are associated with a passive feminine example. Puttenham elaborates on the enhancement of rhetorical style:

figures and figurative s[p]eaches, which be the flowers as it were and coulours that a poet [s]etteth upon his language of arte, . . . as th' excellent painter bestoweth the rich Orient colours upon his . . . pourtraite: [s]o neverthele[ss] as the [s]ame colours in our arte of Poe[s]ie . . . be . . . u[s]ed in exce[ss]e, or neuer so little di[s]ordered or mi[s]placed, they not only giue it no manner of grace at all, but rather do disfigure . . . and [s]poil the whole workman[s]hip . . .

no le[ss]e then if the crim[s]on tainte which should be  
laid upon a Ladies lips, or right in the center of her  
cheeks [s]hould by [s]ome ouer[s]ight or mi[s]hap be  
applied to her forehead or chinne, it would make . . . a  
very ridiculous bewtie. . . . (150)

Although in the passage just quoted rhetoric is used, as it is elsewhere, as the instrument of male eloquence, Puttenham's personification of poetry conflated with rhetorical eloquence is female and a passive recipient of the male writer's stylistic devices. Further, in the figure within the figure, the painting within Puttenham's description of the art of poetry, the artist's excess is located in the female subject of his workmanship. It is the feminized personification of poetry who is degraded and undergoes ruin or disfigurement if the male artist betrays any excess or impropriety in his application of colours. The "crim[s]on tainte," which, misplaced, can mar the portrait, leaving it "no manner of grace at all," is situated in the visage of the female example. Excessive and "disordered" or "misplaced" figurative ornamentation in poetic language is thus figured as improperly applied women's cosmetics. The colours of rhetoric are troped as a lady's crimson rouge, and the negative valuation of their excessive or improper usage is assigned to the female subject. In the binary model of rhetorical style that emerges from this analysis, masculine restraint is opposed to feminine prodigality requiring patriarchal control. In this rhetorical framing context the linguistic vices and excesses caused by unrestrained figurative embellishment are subtly gendered as feminine.

IV

In the preceding discussion the abuses and faults of eloquence have been associated with the feminization of rhetoric, first as a term, then as a discipline. Rhetorical affectation, duplicity, and excess have, in various contexts, been attributed to the male-defined feminine construct. In all of these instances female speech is in a defensive position, open to attack, and potentially suspect. It is as if the familiar Platonic mistrust of poets has been transferred, during the course of centuries, to a suspicion of women's speech, particularly in conjunction with figurative language. One effect of this distrust is a heightened affirmation of patriarchal linguistic supremacy and integrity. In her introduction to Shakespeare and the Question of Theory Patricia Parker draws a similar conclusion. Parker contends that there is a propensity for the association of "the slippery and suspect deviance of figurative language itself" with the feminine. To illustrate her argument she invokes Johnson's figure of a Shakespearean figure, the pun, as a "fatal Cleopatra" (viii).

The pun, of course, is a common Renaissance figure of ambiguity, one that achieves its rhetorical effect through the slipperiness and deviance of language in general. Although figural linguistic indeterminacy does not have a specifically feminine connotation, Thomas Wilson is one rhetorician who, like Johnson, links it to a female example. Wilson, however, takes the figuration a step further and turns it into a curious attack on women. We find Wilson's attack in the preface of his treatise on logic, The Rule of Reason.<sup>55</sup> M. J. Doherty remarks that in this text, a complement to the Arte of Rhetoryke, Wilson privileges logic, feminizes rhetoric, and limits it (rhetoric) to style.<sup>56</sup> Citing Wilson's claim that "Rethorique useth gay paincted Sentences,"<sup>57</sup> Doherty contends that Wilson's



feminized rhetoric is "debased in its identification with verbal cosmetics."<sup>58</sup> I would argue that Wilson also genders logical discourse as male and debases the female example that he deploys to represent the negative aspects of linguistic indeterminacy.

The passage that we shall examine in the Wilson preface centers on a pun directed at a woman who neither speaks nor is present, but is merely the passive topic of male conversation. In using the silent woman in this thinly veiled attack as a negative criterion of semantic ambiguity, Wilson's rhetorical strategy perfectly illustrates Peacham's thesis that the figures of rhetoric may be used as "martial instruments of . . . invasion."<sup>59</sup> Wilson figures doubtfulness in meaning as female and proprietorship of meaning as male. He illustrates his premise with an example that purports to explain the derivation of the English term "reason" from the Greek word "Logique":

And therefore, he that speaketh Logique speaketh nothing els but reason, yea, there by many Greke woordes made Englishe, whereof all men have not the meanyng. As for example, a young man of Cambridge, sitting in his chaumbre, with 11 or three of his felowes, and happenyng to fall in talke of a woman, then lately married to a scholer, when every one had saied his phantasie as well of the man, as of the woman, comparyng the qualities of the one with the propreties of the other, saiyng their pleasure every one of them, of her beautie and her bodie, *pro et contra*; this young man chopping in with his reason, saied: I cannot tell my maisters but surely I for my part, take her for a catholike woman, let other men thinke what

thei list. When his felowes heard this drie report, they laughed apace, as knowyng by their learnyng, what this woorde ment. For [Catholike] being a Greek woorde, signifieth nothing in Englishe, but universal or commune. And we cal in Englishe a common woman, an evil woman of her bodie. Therefore, though termes be darke, and the meanyng unknownen to many, yet the trueth enclosed, is alwaies one, and geven us of God, use what termes we list. This then perceived, that Logique is the rule of reason, I thinke it as needlesse, to ask whether it be, or no, as to aske, whether any man can speake, or no.<sup>60</sup>

In her analysis of the Wilson excerpt just quoted, Parker speculates on the doubtfulness of Wilson's own logic. The passage "raises from the outset a . . . question about the nature and motivation of [the author's] control . . . [of the discipline of logic]." <sup>61</sup> I would like to pursue this question in relation to my own inquiry. My reading of the passage suggests that Wilson's curious descent into illogical discourse coincides with the phrase "to fall in talke of a woman." Whether his lexical choice is intentional or not, the term "fall" begins the implication that *a fall into doubtful language is somehow connected with male talk of a woman*. The extension of the already shaky logic becomes even more dubious as Wilson moves into a discussion of the nameless woman, describing male fantasies that culminate in the men's debate over the woman's beauty and body. The logical leap to the catholicity of the woman in question, with the dubious implications about her chastity, is based on no more than paronomastic wordplay: the Greek signification of "Catholike" as universal or common. Wilson reinforces his already spurious pun with a rhetorical figure that is actually one of

the vices of language: *cacemphaton*, the figure of foul speech, allowing for the interpretation of a lewd sense. The figure is amplified in the suggestive clause "saiying their pleasure every one of them of her beautie and her bodie, *pro et contra*." In this passage the lascivious quality of the male gaze is transferred to the suddenly disreputable woman. As Wilson hastens to elaborate, in the English language a common woman is called "an evil woman of her bodie." Only the learned men of the anecdote would have access to the meaning of the term, so damning to the feminine subject of the jest. In a flash of non sequitur Wilson then concludes that although words are ambiguous and meaning available to only a few, the truth enclosed within the terms is always one and God-given. He adds that logic, as he has disclosed it, is the rule of reason.

Wilson's conclusion regarding the one and God-given truth is, like the notoriously equivocal truth of Greek oracles, elusive. One might conclude that any ambiguous meanings in language have, by way of circuitous reasoning, been transposed into masculine doubtfulness regarding the chastity, and indeed the general character, of women. Wilson does not, however, directly state or rationally support this claim. Yet, his logic is less puzzling if we recall two factors discussed earlier. Puttenham's guidelines for the decorum of place in his rhetorical treatise prohibit any public praise of a woman and imply that such a breach of decorum would raise questions about her chastity: "the chiefe commendation of a chast matrone, was to be knowen onlely to her husband, and not to be obseured by straungers and gwestes."<sup>62</sup> Thus, as I shall discuss at length in my analysis of *Othello*, without opening her mouth a woman who is an innocent subject of male conversation may become a potential object of male criticism. The example which Puttenham provides in the passage just cited is the unseemly and "indecent" praise of wives and women in the presence of their husbands at a banquet by a foreign ambassador (299). Here too the negative

implications of male colloquy affect women who do not speak. Although it is difficult to assign Wilson's crude jest to any code of decorum, it illustrates Puttenham's rule: in forbidding public discussion of a woman even to praise her, rhetorical etiquette makes her vulnerable to his (Wilson's) slur on her chastity.

The Wilson passage directly alludes to one familiar Renaissance convention, the ubiquitous *in utramque partem* debate platform. The reference to the male gossips discussing the man and the woman (in the proper syntactic sequence of male first), "comparing the qualities of the one with the properties of the other," coincides with this format. Wilson also evokes the spirit of the pro and contra arguments of the formal debate over women in his description of the men's "*pro et contra*" deliberation of the woman's "beautie and . . . bodie," although the public talk of the female body is a violation of the controversy conventions. Yet, the latter is appropriate to the rhetorical context in which this male author of an authoritative guide to speech and style figures and displaces the slipperiness and deviance of the figurative language that he himself uses onto a female example.

Bakhtin's thesis that the speaker mediates between language and meaning, determining the use to which meaning is put is perfectly illustrated by Wilson's argument. Wilson sanctions his unspoken postulate and gives a sense of closure to his own circular reasoning by an invocation to divine authority. Bakhtin's proposition is pertinent as well to Parker's earlier query regarding Wilson's motives. If the speaker, in this case Wilson, determines both meaning and language in logical discourse, he controls logic. The woman in Wilson's example is merely a property to be constituted by the male-dominated discourse of logic, and patriarchally controlled language in general. As in the formal controversy, she can be attacked or defended according to the motivations of any male proprietor of language. In this extension of his previous call for female silence,

Wilson stages an attack on his feminine subject that simultaneously allows him to assign her meaning and to determine her mute place in the order of logical discourse.

Wilson's disposition of woman as a property category reinforces the Renaissance motif of female surveillance by patriarchal guardians. In his essay "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," Peter Stallybrass contends that the guardianship of woman as male property extends to female discourse.<sup>63</sup> Stallybrass draws attention, as I did earlier, in the discussion of Vives and his humanist contemporaries, to the equation of female silence with chastity. He describes "[t]he [Renaissance] surveillance of women [as a] concentrat[ion] upon three specific areas: the mouth, chastity, the threshold of the house" (126). It is probably not necessary to elaborate on the frequently analyzed sexual resonances of the first two areas of surveillance. I would like, though, to discuss another allusion by Stallybrass; that is, the topos of woman as "that treasure, which, however locked up, always escapes" (128). The latter analogy illuminates Wilson's rhetorical strategy. In the passage that I have quoted, Wilson, the author/proprietor of the discourse of logic, has intruded on the figurative enclosure in which the nameless woman is inscribed as her husband's private property; he has taken her into the forbidden public area. The rhetorical effect is to transfer the wantonness generally ascribed to talkative women who pass beyond the thresholds of their houses to the woman who has been captured as the subject of male conversation and is now game for male linguistic sport.

If Wilson has a purpose in shifting from what promises to begin as an encomium of a specific woman to a dispraise or attack on women in general, it is to demonstrate male control of female place and meaning in the order of language. Furthermore, the play on the negative semantic implications and the female connotations of the word "Catholique" by an Anglican who was exiled from

England during the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, might well figure as an innuendo of Protestant anti-Catholic prejudice.<sup>64</sup> In this connection we have numerous instances of English writers, notably Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, representing the Catholic church as a whore. It was also common literary practice to personify the "true" Protestant church as female, as, for example, in the same poem. Patricia Parker draws attention to the figuration of the church as female and to the associations of the feminized church with harlotry.<sup>65</sup> Like the feminized term *rhetoric*, this figuration could work both ways for women, either positively or negatively, depending on the purposes of the male writer. Wilson's intentions, however obscure, clearly entail some discredit to women.

The rhetorical term for Wilson's verbal strategy in this context is *meiosis* or "the disabler." Puttenham explains one of the several purposes of this device as showing contempt for one's adversary by disabling him scornfully. He uses the following example to clarify his explanation of *paralepsis* or "the passager"<sup>66</sup> as the policy underlying such a technique:

It is . . . many times used for a good pollicie in . . .  
 persuasion to make wise as if we set but light of the  
 matter, and . . . passe over it lightly when indeede we  
 de intend most effectually and despightfully if it be  
 not inuectiue to remember it: it is also when we will  
 not seeme to know a thing, and yet we know it well  
 inough, and may be likened to the maner of women,  
 who as the common saying is, will say nay and take it.  
I hold my peace and will nat say for shame  
The much untruth of that uncivil dame:  
For if I should her colours kindly blaze,  
It would so make the chaste ears amaze & c. (239-40)

In the Wilson preface the woman who is passed over lightly in the paronomastic jest is actually the subject of an attack, a curious introduction to a text in which most of the content is a fairly dry discussion of logic and reason as the foundation of government. If, however, we regard it, like the Puttenham example, as a means of representing normative woman as a passive illustration of one of the vices of language—in Wilson's case, ambiguity of meaning, in Puttenham's example, deceit and dissimulation—it is less puzzling. In both instances the female subject is constituted by the rhetorical discourse of, and used as a model of contempt by, the male authors of the texts on logic and rhetoric. In the discursive practices of these authoritative guides to speech, style, and reasoning, normative woman has no legitimate place from which to speak. She may be rhetorically constituted in her "colours" by Puttenham or represented as a negative example of paronomastic word play by Wilson. As Stallybrass proposes, within the discursive practices of the patriarchal guardians of language normative woman is represented as a commodity or "property category; . . . her signs are the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house" (127). If silence is a sign of female chastity the implication is that for a woman to speak at all is to risk a verbal attack by the male proprietors of language. The Wilson and Puttenham quotations examined in the preceding discussion might well be veiled warnings against female speech. Whatever the purpose of such examples, however, the authors present themselves not only as proprietors of language, or the common symbolic code, but also as creators of symbolic constructs of femininity. Within this code and within these constructs the exemplary woman is represented as silent, or at least reluctant to speak, and as a passive property to be disposed by the guiding male author.

In the rhetorical treatises examined in this scrutiny women and women's speech are figured as male property categories. The representation of female speakers as subject and complementary to male speakers and to male precedence in the order of language dramatizes the limits of female empowerment in speech and writing. In the drama that is so much involved with dialogue this rhetorical gendering has particular consequences. The oppression of women by male rhetoricians who control the symbolic order also resonates in the conventions of the formal attacks and defenses of women that I investigate in the next chapter. Like the women dramatic characters speaking in defense of women, the formal controversy writers defending women must negotiate the constraints of a prewritten script that allows the female no legitimate place in the order of rhetorical decorum.



Notes

<sup>1</sup> For an illuminating discussion of the rhetorical techniques and strategies underlying the poetic mode of the blazon used by male poets (most notably Petrarch) and rhetoricians to publish or blaze female beauty as a catalogue or inventory of various anatomical parts, see Nancy Vickers' essay, "The blazon of sweet beauty's best; Shakespeare's Lucrece," Shakespeare and the Question of Theory, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985) 95-115. Vickers explains that "the term derives from the French blasoner and from the English "to blaze, to proclaim as with a trumpet, to publish, and, by extension to defame or celebrate." She defines the poetic blazon as "a conventional poetic description of an object praised or blamed by a rhetorician-poet." The poet frequently operates as an active merchant displaying and merchandizing the blazed bodily parts of the woman as a "passive object for sale" (97).

<sup>2</sup> In a collection of essays entitled Renaissance Eloquence, editor James J. Murphy comments that in addition to an accepted canon or core of Renaissance rhetoricians dominating the footnotes of essays on literature and rhetoric, there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of neglected authors (32). He lists the names that recur most frequently in these publications :

Rudolph Agricola	Marius Nizolius
Francis Bacon	Henry Peacham
Leonard Cox	George Puttenham
Desiderius Erasmus	Richard Rainolde

Pierre Fabri	Peter Ramus
Thomas Faranby	Johann Sturm
Abraham Fraunce	Johannes Susenbrotus
Luis de Granada	George Trapezuntius
Justus Lipsius	Juan Luis Vives
Philip Melanchton	Thomas Wilson (23)

It is evident in this list of names that, for Murphy, all of Europe rather than England alone is the "ground for collecting ideas about rhetoric" (28). While in this essay the discussion of rhetoric focuses on English Renaissance publications, the same problem prevails on a smaller scale.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence ed. William C. Crane (1593; Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1954) sig. ABiv<sup>r</sup>, cit. Viviana Comenoli, "Gender and Eloquence in Dekker's The Honest Whore, Part II" 249.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Wilson, The Rule of Reason Containing the Arte of Logique, ed. Richard Sprague (Northridge, Ca., San Fernando Valley State College, 1972).

<sup>5</sup> George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, (1589; Yorkshire: Scholar P, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Dictionary of the Middle Ages, 13 vols. (New York: Scribner & Sons; 1982-89) vol. 8. See also Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, trans. William Harris Stahl, Richard Johnson, and E. L. Burge, ed. James Willis, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1971-77) vol. 2, 155-57.

Martianus Minneus Felix Capella, author of De Nuptiis was a North African, possibly a proconsul of Africa. He wrote this nine volume work between 410 and the 470s. In the work, which was a familiar Renaissance source

for the pictorial representation of the seven liberal arts, Capella presents a lengthy allegorical narrative on the marriage of Mercury and Philology. The seven liberal arts, among which "Rhetoric" is included, are represented as serving maids of the bride.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Ong, Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology, (Ithaca: Cornell P, 1971) 2.

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans. Rhys Roberts, Poetics, trans. Ingram Bywater, 2nd ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 1984) 3.

<sup>9</sup> In his essay "Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance," Dominic A. Larusso refers to Bernard Weinberg's systematic division of rhetoric into four main classifications: rhetoric as a system of figures and tropes, as a theory of style, as a theory of literary composition, and as persuasion. (Renaissance Eloquence, 41) The Weinberg analysis is useful as a concise yet comprehensive approach to the discipline. At various points in this inquiry we shall explore each of these four classifications. See Bernard Weinberg, Trattati di poetica del cinquecento, vol. 1. 546ff.

<sup>10</sup> American Heritage Dictionary, 1973 ed. 424.

<sup>11</sup> See Murphy, Renaissance Eloquence 61.

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (1956; Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978) 66, 74. Richard Mulcaster, the first head of the Merchant Taylor's School in London, was one of the exceptions among Renaissance educators. In his Positions of 1581 Mulcaster would allow female students "some Rhetoricke to brave." Nevertheless, he characterizes female studies as accessory and allows only one chapter out of forty-five to the education of young women.

Mulcaster explicitly gives male education precedence. According to his standards, males necessarily come first as naturally more worthy and more employed in public affairs. Women would thus be accorded only a smattering of rhetoric, not a comprehensive training in the discipline. See also Ong, Rhetoric, Romance 65-66.

<sup>13</sup> Rhetoric, Romance 120.

<sup>14</sup> See Anthony Grafton & Lisa Jardine, From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986) 56. Here is an excerpt from a letter written by More to Margaret after her marriage. The letter was of course written in Latin; I quote from the English translation: "But, my sweetest Margaret, you are all the more deserving of praise on this account. . . . Content with the profit and pleasure of your conscience, in your modesty you do not seek for the praise of the public, . . . but because of the great love you bear us, you regard us — your husband and myself — as a sufficiently large circle of readers for all that you write." Rogers, Correspondence, letter 128 (302), trans. Rogers, St. Thomas More; 155. This is the Latin text of the excerpt without ellipses: "Sed tu Margareta dulcissima, longe longe nomis eo nomine laudanda es, quod quum silidam laboris tui laudem sperare non potes, nihilo tamen minus pergis cum egregia ista virtute tua cultiores literas et bonarum artium studia coniungere; et conscientia tua fructu et voluptate contenta, a populo famam pro tua modestia nec aucuperis nec oblatam libenter velis amplecti, sed pro eximia pietate qua nos prosequeris satis amplum frequensque legenti tibi theatrum simus, maritus tuus et ego."

<sup>15</sup> Ong, Rhetoric, Romance 121.

<sup>16</sup> Ong, Rhetoric, Romance 66, 121.

<sup>17</sup> Juan Luis Vives, De institutione Christianae feminae [1523] trans. Richard Hyrd as A very frutefull and pleasant boke called the instruction of a Christen woman [1531] qtd. in Dennis Baron, Grammar and Gender (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986) 57.

<sup>18</sup> Vives, Institutione 03 verso-04 recto, qtd. in Baron 57.

<sup>19</sup> See Baron 57. Baron paraphrases Vives.

<sup>20</sup> The instruction of a Christen woman, Sig. E2, E2v, qtd. in Ferguson, Quilligan, Vickers 253.

<sup>21</sup> Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance, (1956; Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978) 72. Kelso does not cite the reference for her quotation.

<sup>22</sup> Kelso points out that in another treatise entitled Office of a Husband, Vives contends that these same classical female orators who received such praise for their eloquence had not mastered the art at all, but were "able to say a few things purely, without [the] pain and labor, [of formal learning] from listening to their fathers" (Doctrine 72-73). He adds that "Nowadays, women are called eloquent if they can entertain with a vayne confabulation," thus undermining even the idea of female eloquence by linking it to dissimulation.

<sup>23</sup> Lionardo Bruni, De Studies et litteris, trans. William Harrison Woodward, Vittorino da Feltre and other humanist educators (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 124-26, qtd. in Ferguson, Quilligan, and Vickers 253.

<sup>24</sup> Francesco Barbaro, On Wifely Duties, qtd. in Ferguson, Quilligan and Vickers 127.

<sup>25</sup> Francesco Barbaro, De re uxoria, The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society, trans. and ed. Benjamin Kohl, et al.

(Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1978) 203. qtd. in Ferguson, Quilligan, and Vickers 299-300.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, 1 Timothy 2: 11-12.

<sup>27</sup> The Instruction of a Christian Woman, sig. U2v. qtd. in Ferguson, Quilligan, and Vickers 253.

<sup>28</sup> We might question the sincerity of Puttenham's praises to Elizabeth when we come across his icon of her represented as "an Angel's face" on a "Serpent head" (250). Furthermore, Elizabeth's frequent allusions to herself as "your prince" suggest that she negotiated her power relations both with her subjects and her male ministers and advisers by simultaneously playing on the notions of her own exceptional position and of the masculine aspect of the power associated with her role as reigning monarch. In designating herself as "your prince" Elizabeth could discreetly imply male sequential and discursive precedence. One measure of her success in this strategy is revealed in a passage cited by Michael Bristol in Carnival and Theater: Plebian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England (London: Methuen, 1985). Bristol quotes John Nichols from The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, 3 vols (London: John Nichols & Son, 1823) 111, 220:

So that if a man should say well, he could not better term the city of London at that time, than a Stage wherein was shewed the wonderful spectacle of a noble hearted Princess towards her most loving people; and the people's exceeding comfort in beholding so worthy a Sovereign, and hearing *so prince-like a voice* (60; emphasis added).

<sup>29</sup> For more on this point see Parker, Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property (London: Methuen, 1987) 115-19, 150, 213.

<sup>30</sup> See Sir Philip Sidney, Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) 78.

<sup>31</sup> Duncan-Jones and Van Dorsten, Miscellaneous 78.

<sup>32</sup> See M. J. Doherty, The Mistress-Knowledge: Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesie and Literary Architectonics in the English Renaissance, (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1991) xv. Doherty also remarks on Sidney's feminine anthropomorphism of nature in the context of the familiar (for the Renaissance) terminology of *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*. The poet-maker who likens his art to the work of the divine maker works upon and improves the feminized *natura naturata*. In the process he becomes "the divine Maker's 'maker' or *natura naturans*" (9). See also Doherty, 78, 90, 154-56.

<sup>33</sup> See Richard Sherry, A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes (London, 1550) qtd. in Parker, Literary Fat Ladies 112.

<sup>34</sup> Cit. Baron 3.

<sup>35</sup> Such a disordering of proper speech falls under the general category of *hyperbaton* or "unusual word order." According to the particular rhetorician it might also fall under the classification of *bysteron proteron*, or the "preposterous." Puttenham refers to *bysteron proteron* as "setting the cart before the horse." In his discussion of auricular figures he makes it "a shift in time order" (180). He also includes it in his chapter on ornaments of speech as a "pardonable fault" (262). In this passage the shift occurs only in the ordering of words or clauses. Peacham, on the other hand, defines "a preposterous order of words" as *anastrophe*, and "a disordering of time" as *bysteron proteron*. Whether the figure represents a pardonable vice in word order or a disruption of time order, however, it always connotes a transgression of the "natural" (patriarchal) order in

rhetorical arrangement. See Sister Marian Joseph, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Hafner, 1966) 54. Sister Marian Joseph, citing Angel Day, The English Secreterie: with a Declaration of Tropes, Figures, Schemes (1592; London, 1635) classifies *hysteron proteron* as a disorder of time. She notes Puttenham's diverging definitions of the term, however (295).

<sup>36</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, Cicero on Oratory and Orators, ed. and trans. J. S. Watson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1986) 172.

<sup>37</sup> See note 6: Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, ed James Willis.

<sup>38</sup> As Willis notes, "Pericles was nicknamed 'the Olympian' and had a reputation for oratory with the force of a thunderbolt" 156, n.14. Capella's allusion thus links his icon to Greek, as well as Roman, oratory.

<sup>39</sup> Wilbur Samuel Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700 (1956; New York: Russell, 1961).

<sup>40</sup> See Stephen Hawes, The Pastime of Pleasure, ed. William Edward Mead, Early English Text Society Original Series 173 (London, 1928) 56, text 1357; also Whitney Wells, "Stephen Hawes and the Court of Sapience," Review of English Studies 6 (1930): 284-94 (qtd. in Howell, 46-47).

<sup>41</sup> The well-known formulation of the curriculum into the seven liberal arts in medieval and Renaissance schools was a division into the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The first represent the three Latin arts, the second, the four Greek arts.

<sup>42</sup> As Howell points out in Logic and Rhetoric in England, Hawes's poem is an important document both as an "early vernacular history of English logic



and an attempt . . . to write poetical theory in terms of Ciceronian rhetoric" (81). The attempt to convert Ciceronian rhetoric to poetical theory had been initiated earlier, by, among others, Geoffrey of Vinsauf in the thirteenth century (119-20), but texts on rhetoric and logic were written in Latin until the sixteenth century. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Cicero. Howell places him as the authority behind all English rhetoric in the period preceding 1573 (64). He holds that Cicero formulated from Aristotle "and other sources a rhetorical system to which all rhetorical instruction in western Europe during the period under discussion must be referred" (65). The fundamental Ciceronian thesis established in his first work on rhetoric, De Inventione, is the five-part rhetorical division into invention, disposition or arrangement, elocution or style, delivery, and memory (72-73). Quintilian adheres to the Ciceronian division in the Institution Oratoria as does the anonymous writer of the Rhetorica ad herennium, a text previously ascribed to Cicero. I am using the term *Ciceronian rhetoric* as Howell uses it, to designate Cicero's five-part conception with its primary stress on the importance of invention and secondary emphasis on style (72-73).

The doctrine of stylistic rhetoric as it developed in England as a "recognizable and distinctive pattern of rhetorical theory" was heavily influenced by Cicero's Orator and De Oratoria, both works with a principal emphasis on style (118). Other sources were the Rhetorica Ad herennium and Quintilian's Institutio oratoria. The theory, as it developed over the years 700-1573, is based on the premise that good style is achieved through stylistic devices: schemes and tropes, or "word orders that stand opposed to the patterns of common speech" (116-17). An elegant speech style is "speech . . . dressed up

and adorned" (Venerable Bede, Liber in Halms Rhetores Latini minores 607, qtd.in Howell, 117).

<sup>43</sup> The Court of Sapience Spat-Mittelenglisches Allegorisch-Didaktisches Visiongedicht, ed. Dr. Robert Spindler, Beitrage zur Englischen Philologie 6 (Leipzig, 1927) 198-200, qtd. in Howell 47, 120-21. In his analysis of the quoted sections of the poem Howell maintains that the first stanza, in its emphasis on eloquence and musical sound, "represents a main tenet of the program of a rhetoric limited predominantly to style" (121). The second stanza stresses disposition or arrangement, including the observance of proper distinctions between the various parts of speech. As Howell notes, it begins with a discussion of how best to avoid stylistic vices, then moves to a consideration of figural schemes and tropes (the colours of rhetoric), and word pictures (*ekphrases*) or vivid description (*enargia*). The last points to be considered, use of the comma, colon, and period, could be construed, as Howell acknowledges, to refer to the issue of rhythm in style as well as to punctuation (121). In effect, Howell's distinction between arrangement and style notwithstanding, the second stanza as well as the first could be said to emphasize rhetorical stylistics. The problem is due, at least in part, to the difficulty of separating disposition or arrangement from style.

This latter difficulty is compounded in Ramist rhetoric with its historical attempt to attenuate rhetoric from the five-part classical division and to limit it to elocution and delivery. Renaissance scholars are familiar with Ramist rhetoric first published in the Talon Rhetoric of 1548 by Peter Ramus's close collaborator, Omer Talon. The main thrust of the text was an endeavour to separate rhetoric and logic in order to reassign invention and arrangement exclusively to logic and

dialectic. Although an in-depth examination of Ramist rhetoric is not possible in the current inquiry, the tendency to focus on style as the essence of rhetoric is pertinent to the issues that I shall explore. Further, it seems to me that at least passing mention must be made of this important development in Renaissance rhetoric. For an extensive coverage of the topic of Ramist rhetoric see Ong, Rhetoric, Romance 142-90.

<sup>44</sup> Qtd. in Howell 49.

<sup>45</sup> Mead, Pastime 33.701, 37.821, 40.904, 50.1189, 52.1240, qtd. in Howell 82.

<sup>46</sup> In Rhetorik der Affekte: Englische Wirkungsathetik im Zeitaler der Renaissance, Studien zur Englischen Philologie n.s. 18 (Tubingen, 1975) Heinrich Plett also notes the iconographic portrayal of Rhetorica (145), which I have discovered elsewhere in my own research. See George Plimpton, The Education of Shakespeare (London: Oxford UP, 1833) 6.

<sup>47</sup> Murphy 53. G. G. Ladner, "Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism: A Comparison," Speculum 54 (1979): 223-56, serves as a good source for basic ideas in this direction (53).

<sup>48</sup> Murphy, 368.

<sup>49</sup> Murphy 367-68.

<sup>50</sup> Plett, Rhetorik der Affekte, 144.

<sup>51</sup> Duncan-Jones and Van Dorsten, Miscellaneous 93. I have added to the Plett excerpt of the Sidney quotation, which ends at the word "affectation."

<sup>52</sup> For an illuminating and exhaustive analysis of Sidney's deployment of another gendered trope see Doherty, Mistress-Knowledge. Doherty meticulously develops and argues her thesis that Sidney appropriated and

allegorized the metaphorical figure of the mistress-knowledge, which derives from the Greek Sophia (the feminine trope for the mistress-knowledge), and reconstructed it through the myth of Platonic inspiration into a Renaissance Protestant doctrine of gnosis (xiii-iv). She contends that Sidney's invention of a feminized allegorical figure unifies various strands of architectonic philosophical tradition (xv). Sidney's rhetorical strategy of converting the gender of this figure to androgyny "constitutes in Renaissance poetics the appropriation of a power gendered as feminine, and Sidney's Defense of Poesie is, among other things, an imaginative defense of male power in an historically specific form" (xv). Doherty's excellent work succeeds in restoring the gendered trope of the mistress-knowledge as "the organizing principle par excellence of the Defence" (xv). While I cannot possibly duplicate Doherty's extensive research on Sidney's poetics in relation to his appropriation and deployment of a feminized trope for his own purposes, I find her ideas pertinent to my brief analysis of Sidney's gender play with the metaphor of feminized rhetoric. In the latter instance too, he suppresses feminized linguistic power in order to glorify and celebrate the linguistic power of the male poet.

<sup>53</sup> Cicero 41.

<sup>54</sup> Whether or not the trope is accidental the effect is the same: duplicitous language is identified with a feminized anthropomorphization.

<sup>55</sup> Wilson, Reason.

<sup>56</sup> Doherty, Mistress-Knowledge, 196.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, Reason, (London, 1551) sig. B3r, qtd. in Doherty 196. While Wilson does not elaborate here on the dubious connotations for female chastity in

his association of cosmetic 'paintings' with the feminized personification of rhetoric, Sidney does in the passage discussed earlier.

<sup>58</sup> Doherty 196.

<sup>59</sup> See page 1.

<sup>60</sup> Wilson, Reason.

<sup>61</sup> Parker, Literary Fat Ladies 102.

<sup>62</sup> Puttenham 299.

<sup>63</sup> Ferguson, Quilligan, and Vickers, 123-42.

<sup>64</sup> See Howell, 57.

<sup>65</sup> Parker, Literary Fat Ladies, 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Throughout his treatise, Puttenham uses Anglicizations to make the Latin terms more intelligible to his English readers.

*In Utramque Partem: The Formal Controversy over Women*

## I

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries formal attacks and defenses were a part of the established English literary tradition. Philip Sidney's defense of poetry is one of the hallmark documents in the canon of English Renaissance literature. The defense, which was published under the titles The Defense of Poesy and An Apology for Poetry, was written in response to Stephen Gosson's attack on poets and stage actors, The School of Abuse.<sup>1</sup> Such literary polemics reflect a Renaissance phenomenon to which Joel Altman draws attention in The Tudor Play of Mind (2-8).<sup>2</sup> Altman holds that the influence of a formal training in the dialectical method of argument used in legal disputation is central to much Elizabethan literature. The technique, to which I have referred elsewhere as *in utramque partem*, is an explorative mode articulated in a debate or argument on both sides of a question. It has its origins in classical rhetoric, specifically in the genre of forensic oratory (3-8). Gosson's attack and Sidney's defense were thus informed and structured by a long-standing rhetorical tradition that owes much to Quintilian and to the Ciceronian dialogue (64-69). Sir Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus were other notable Renaissance practitioners of the method (65-67). I have briefly discussed Sidney's defense in the preceding chapter; in the following chapters I shall explore the relation of the debate platform to the dramatic structure of specific Jacobean plays. First, we

shall examine a related if less familiar rhetorical genre which proliferated during the Renaissance—the numerous attack and defense pamphlets circulated in the formal controversy over women.

While Sidney's celebrated apologia has, until recently, received significantly more critical scrutiny, the feminine controversy documents are currently attracting scholarly interest. Our renewed interest in the genre is indebted in large measure to the critiques of contemporary feminist theorists, who focus on gender as an object of inquiry. The redefinition of history as a site of social and cultural conflict adumbrated by Frederic Jameson, and taken up by the new-historicist critics, is another factor.<sup>3</sup> The methodologies and queries that both groups bring to bear on historical periods suggest that the history of the English Renaissance, including the early Stuart period with which we are here concerned, deserves a careful re-evaluation. One aim of this investigation is to clarify some of the relations between the formal defenses and attacks and the rhetorical constraints on female apologists defending women in Jacobean drama, where the debate platform makes a transition to a more complex literary form. This study endeavours to make a small contribution toward the reinsertion of the attacks and defenses in a more central position in literary studies, if only for the insights that they afford some of the plays.<sup>4</sup>

In its own time the formal controversy generated considerable response. In England the debate, essentially a written and oral continuation of the ancient *querelle des femmes*,<sup>5</sup> was initiated in its written form by Sir Thomas Elyot's The Defense of Good Women in 1540. It reached its culmination as a written argument during the mid- to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-centuries.<sup>6</sup> I shall inspect some representative selections of attack and defense pamphlets and analyze some of their implications for the defense strategies of female speakers. Like the defenses of poetry, the controversy attacks and defenses function as the

medium for an *in utramque partem* argument. The nature of women is argued from opposite sides of the question as a rhetorical exercise in debate methodology. The rhetorical structure of the debate, however, continues the discourse of male rhetoricians, which figures woman's place in the order of language as defined by the tropes of male dominance and female submission.

Although the term *defense* implies an attack, the formal defenses were not necessarily written in response to specific attacks.<sup>7</sup> Elyot's, for example, was not; some were. We shall discuss two responses to the well-known attack by Joseph Swetnam in 1615. Edward Gosynhyll's attack, The Scole House for Women, conjecturally dated at 1541, and his defense, Mulierum Paen, circa 1542, are illustrations of the issue or thesis argued from both sides by the same writer. In her illuminating survey of the formal controversy, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620, Linda Woodbridge postulates that "the defense was the formal controversy's basic format, the attack a variant" (44). On the evidence of the numerous samples that she has read, Woodbridge argues that the defenses of women were, in fact, used as literary models for the formats of attacks. She notes that literary defenses of women outnumber attacks in a four-to-one ratio (44). Woodbridge cites Lodowick Lloyd's The Choice of Jewels, published in 1607, as an example of a formal defense of women that does not even make the conventional reference to recent slanders of women as a motive for writing (74). We tend to be misled into assuming that the defenses are responses to attacks by the generic form of these documents: both sides are structured and argued like responses (76).<sup>8</sup>

The literary form of the historical controversy occurs in two modes: the classical judicial oration and the Platonic or Ciceronian dialogue.<sup>9</sup> Elyot's defense is a prime example of the latter;<sup>10</sup> Gosynhyll's attack and defense are instances of the former. The form of judicial oration with its links to forensic



oratory seems especially suited to the genre, and perhaps for that reason was more prevalent than the dialogue mode. In both literary models the writers, beginning with Elyot, established the convention of representing the defense point of view by a reliable speaker, and the attack or opposition by a speaker of manifestly unreliable judgement. Elyot's defender of woman, Candidus, sets the precedent of presenting the defense point of view in a character of integrity and sound reason. The attacker, Caninus, typifies the vitriolic detractor. Woodbridge attests that these types represent "a paradigm for the genre" (44-46, 74-76). She holds that the defenses of women were inclined to be theoretical and philosophical and that the attacks were more carelessly structured composites of jest and anecdote (44). Another convention, common to defenses and attacks, is the use of classical and Biblical exempla. Elyot's Zenobia, a classical paragon of womanhood, stands in sharp contrast to such negative examples as Gosynhyll's Eve and Helen of Troy, attacked for enticing men toward evil.

The generic conventions to which we have just alluded foreground the formulaic cast of the debate and the contrived nature of the argument. It is important to state at the outset that both sides of the so-called woman question are defined and rhetorically framed by the male writers who established the genre. The pretext that the historical debate is an explorative inquiry is merely a rationale for the imposition of male perspectives and aesthetic standards. Taken as a whole, the controversy evades the very question that it proposes to examine. Although the platform of the debate centers on the nature of women, it encodes female nature within a pre-established network of signification. Women are constricted by male discourse; they are defended for fitting into male symbolic constructs of femininity and attacked for not meeting these prescribed standards. As we shall see, even the women writers who took part in the controversy followed the guidelines set by men, thus offering affirmation for masculine

linguistic and syntactic precedence. Further, whether male or female, both the defenders and detractors of women express patriarchal values of normative women. An individual woman apologist in the formal debate neither speaks nor writes for herself; she is ventriloquistically spoken through by, and writes according to the dictates of, male proprietors of the symbolic order. Any characteristics suggesting feminine individuality, singularity, or heterogeneity are firmly repressed in the interest of generic woman, who is positioned in dual polarities of good and evil on the fringes of male categories. The techniques of this rhetorical exercise <sup>11</sup> in dialectics operate to disempower women and women's speech in relation to language and meaning. Since we shall discuss some connections between the formal debate, the representation of women in Jacobean drama, and the standards by which female dramatic characters are attacked or defended, we shall briefly examine some of the distinguishing features of the genre.

## II

In its written format of attacks and defenses the formal Renaissance controversy over women would seem, at first glance, to represent a historical site of conflict at the intersection of the sexual and the symbolic. It is, on the contrary, a reinforcement of the status quo in the relationship of woman to the symbolic order; a containing strategy whereby woman is positioned on the extreme thresholds of language through the rhetorical framing context of the generic conventions. While the debate is grounded on the issue of woman's nature it refers, as we have seen, to woman in the abstract, not to woman in

reality. Each of the various pamphlets that I shall discuss presents and argues a thesis on the question of woman, and supports the argument with the resources of rhetoric and (sometimes questionable) logic. But the arguments on both sides of the issue hinge on static stereotypes, finished products of the male imagination, not on the variable and dynamic nature in process of real women. The convention of using biblical or classical models of hyperbolically good or evil womanhood is a key technique used in this genre to contain women within the preset rhetorical frame.

Given the conventions to which I have just alluded, it is evident that the female subject of the controversy treatises is not a subject at all but a topos of rhetorical discourse. Like the passive female of the Petrarchan blazon she is the object of male oratory. Although she is not represented in fragmentary bodily parts, as in the case of conventional Petrarchan poetics, she is used as a type or model by the male originators of the generic tradition to illustrate patriarchally defined virtues or vices. This is the case even in the defenses ostensibly written by women,<sup>12</sup> as we shall observe in our analyses of Esther Sowernam's Esther Hath Hanged Haman and Constantia Munda's The Worming of a Mad Dog, both published in 1617. I shall quote from the annotated versions of these documents, which are reproduced in Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640 by Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus.<sup>13</sup> My analysis reveals that these writers, too, defend patriarchal constructs of femininity. Since silence is the sign of female chastity, and woman's speech, like her place in the order of language, is both problematic and subsequent to patriarchal discourse, which has priority in the symbolic order, the women who write in defense of women are in the equivocal position of supporting polarized extremes of generalized femininity rather than truly defending women.

The generic conventions of the formal debate thus sharply limit any potential for female exploration, transgression, or transformation of the symbolic code. Women writers, like the rhetorically constructed female topos of the formal debate, are positioned in the margins of patriarchally controlled discourse. Female discursive marginality is written into the symbolic contract in advance. At best, a particular woman may express, as *Hic Mulier* does, a limited critique of the prevailing conventions. She may resist her constraints briefly before the rhetorical frame in which she is inscribed reasserts closure, and repositions her in a properly subordinate and deferential place in the order of language. I shall show in my analyses of selected generic examples that the attacks are stylistically and logically less convincing than the corresponding defenses; yet both sides of the argument support male ideals of female nature. In the case of female speech the ideal put forth is that woman does not speak; she is spoken rhetorically by men. Obviously the reality is that women speak. In the formal controversy, however, as in some of the Jacobean plays that I shall explore in the next chapter, the speaking woman must first negotiate the impasse of injunctions against female speech. This is particularly true when the speech is a dispute or defense.

The *Haec Vir* and *Hic Mulier* pamphlets reveal that the conventions of the historical controversy fabricate a connection between female dress and speech.<sup>14</sup> In the rhetorical frame in which women are inscribed, female modesty in dress is linked to male-approved female reticence in speech and to female chastity. Female transvestism, on the other hand, is associated with corruption in the symbolic order. The transgression of the containing frame of the dress code disrupts both male and female symbolic positions. *Haec Vir* places women who dress in men's clothing entirely outside the order of language; signifying "neither men nor women, [they] are good for nothing."<sup>15</sup> As I shall demonstrate, the stress on appropriate attire as a sign of distinction between the

sexes reflects linguistic as well as sociosymbolic decorum; reversals of dress signal grammatical as well as gender confusion. Here, too, there is a connection between dress and speech styles. Women in male dress are likely to adopt, like *Hic Mulier* in the earlier part of her oration, a more forceful masculine speaking style. The *Swetnam* play,<sup>16</sup> which is a part of the formal controversy, makes this association in reverse when a strong male character, Lorenzo, disguises himself as a woman and speaks in the apologetic, self-abasing style recommended for a woman.

Gender confusion caused by cross-dressing can be highly amusing, as it is, both in the opening lines of *Haec Vir* and in the *Swetnam* play. Indeed, despite its serious main plot the play has many humorous aspects. *Swetnam* is a comic figure; his misogynistic dialogue and his attempt to seduce Lorenzo, in disguise as the Amazon *Arlanta*, are obviously intended to elicit laughter. This linkage of humour and misogyny in the context of a feminine defense in this play, so closely related to the formal controversy, raises the question of a relationship between the formal debate over women, misogyny, and comic intent on the part of the writers of the *Swetnam* series. While the issue is finally undecidable for lack of documented evidence, *Swetnam's* speeches in the play, as, for example, his pose as a languishing Petrarchan lover, support such a relationship. Indeed, the possibility of comic intent frequently arises in the genre as a whole. Constance Jordan remarks that even the attacks seem characterized by "a rhetorical playfulness, almost a *sprezzatura* effect" (10).

The *Swetnam* play moves the debate platform to the stage and the judicial oration to the courtroom for which it was originally designed. The debate within the play shifts first, from the particularized characters of *Leonida* and *Lisandro* to the abstract issue of the relative culpability of both sexes. In the arguments by *Swetnam* as prosecutor, it returns to the debate over the nature of women.

However, the serious potential of the courtroom drama in which the death penalty is imposed on Leonida is sabotaged by the humorous dialogue and characterizations. The comic tone of this play, indeed, of the entire Swetnam series, suggests that gender polemics are not material for serious reflection, debate, or drama, but matter for comedy. As I shall discuss, this tone pervades the formal debate as a whole.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the debate pamphlets is the exaggerated tone of vituperation or praise, depending on whether the document is an attack or defense. Particularly in the attacks, but also in the defenses, the tone is so hyperbolic that the effect borders on farce. In the Swetnam controversy the tone of raillery and humorous ridicule with which Constantia Munda exposes Joseph Swetnam's literary vices and logical fallacies might lead the reader to suspect that she is enjoying her critical enterprise. For that matter, Swetnam's overstated invectives tend to make his earnestness suspect. We might even be inclined to think that all of the writers who engage in this debate are presenting their arguments with tongue in cheek. The pamphlets seem designed as much to entertain their readers with the topos of woman as an object of rhetorical play as they are to persuade. The consequences, however, are the same whether or not the authors are serious in their claims; woman is positioned within a pre-established network of signification that validates patriarchal constructs of femininity as excessively good or hyperbolically evil.

The rhetorical context, established by the male originators of the genre, affirms masculine appropriation of discursive and sequential precedence and patriarchal control of female speech. It also places the gender debate and male misogyny in the realm of comedy.<sup>17</sup> For woman speaking in defense of woman this rhetorical frame limits the options of her defense strategy. First she is forced to speak ventriloquistically in support of male generalizations of binary feminine

oppositions. Next she must come to terms with the patriarchal assignment of silence as the sign of female chastity. Given these conventions, female speech is necessarily apologetic; otherwise the speaker risks identification with wanton, wordy women. Without authentic speech, or even license to speak at all, and without either an authentic subject position in the order of language or an authentic subject to defend, the female defenders of women in the formal controversy are severely constrained. At best, they may express resistance to the prevailing symbolic conventions in this debate by using the terms of patriarchally regulated discourse. In the final analysis, even if a female defense is logically successful, it is undermined by the rhetorical playfulness of the attacks, which suggest that the nature of women is not material for serious *in utramque partem* debate, but for comical literary games.

### III

The general tendencies that I have just observed are illustrated in three of the key early Stuart documents of the formal controversy: Joseph Swetnam's attack, The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women, published in 1615; Esther Sowernam and Constantia Munda's defenses, Esther Hath Hanged Haman, and The Worming of a Mad Dog,<sup>18</sup> respectively, both published in 1617.<sup>19</sup> All three are cast in the form of the judicial oration with overtones of forensic oratory. As the titles indicate, the authors frame their arguments within the rhetorical context and idiom of courtroom drama. Swetnam is the prosecutor who arraigns generalized women of equally generalized vices. Sowernam and Munda represent the defense; they present models of good

women as paragons of virtue. In keeping with the generic convention that positions the female within dichotomous extremes, both sides draw on classical and biblical exempla to typify excesses of evil or rectitude.

In accordance with the rhetorical frame of the controversy which assigns centrality and precedence to male speakers, Swetnam assumes a bold speaking position. He makes no apology for his vituperative accusations and invectives against women. On the contrary, he uses the figure of *surclose* to prevent women from responding to his argument by invoking the code of female eloquence and wantonness. Swetnam warns women not to speak out or in any manner defend their sex against his misogynistic point of view: "whatsoever you think privately, I wish you to conceal it with silence . . . lest you prove yourselves guilty of these monstrous accusations which are here following against some women" (191). The rhetorical frame in which Swetnam places women leaves them no position from which to speak in their own defense. Swetnam appropriates not only the central discursive position but all speech. Women are strategically disempowered by the linkage of female silence and chastity. Swetnam claims that his homilectic diatribe is directed toward the general reformation of women; he is "hoping to better the good by the naughty examples of the bad, for there is no woman so good but hath one idle part or other in her which may be amended" (191). This is consistent with the traditional Renaissance conceptions of rhetoric as "reformatory or reclamatory," <sup>20</sup> as an instrument of persuasion, and as an epideictic device of praise or blame. But while Swetnam's rhetorical approach repeats the familiar homilectic pattern of reformation through persuasion and praise or blame, the effect of his coarse analogies is incongruous and jarring rather than persuasive.

Swetnam's emphatic stance and his figurative language colour his prose and give it a certain energy and emphasis. Yet his attack is stylistically and



structurally inferior to the defenses with which we shall compare it. Simon Shepherd describes the attack as "a vicious, cliché-ridden piece of work."<sup>21</sup> The loose and rambling catalogue of accusations and aphorisms is, as I have stated elsewhere, typical of the generic conventions, as is the inconsistent logic of his arguments.<sup>22</sup> The weakness of the adversary's position emphasizes both his unreliability as a witness and the reliability of the defender's arguments. This is in accordance with the convention established by Elyot of assigning more credence to the defense. The following is an extended example of Swetnam's prose:

That great Giant Pamphimapho, who had bears waiting on him like Dogs, and he could make tame any wild beast, yet a wanton woman he could never rule nor turn to his will.

Solomon was the wisest Prince that ever was, yet he lusted after so many women that they made him quickly forsake his God which did always guide his steps so long as he lived godly.

....

Did not Jezebel for her wicked lust cause her husband's life to be given to dogs?

....

Agamemnon's wife, for a small injury that her husband did her, she first committed adultery and afterward consented to his death.

It is said that an old Dog and a hungry flea bite sore, but in my mind a froward woman biteth more sorer; and if thou go about to master a woman in hope

to bring her to humility there is no way to make her good with stripes except thou beat her to death. For do what thou wilt, yet a froward woman in her frantic mood will pull, haul, swerve, scratch and tear all that stands in her way. (198-99)

And so the list goes, linking examples of women whose actions were indefensible with women whose actions were motivated by extenuating circumstances. The allusion to Clytemnestra, the wife of Agamemnon, who consented to his murder because he had sacrificed the life of their daughter, Iphigenia, does little to advance Swetnam's argument: an opponent could counter that Clytemnestra had suffered no small injury. The final example in the catalogue makes a series of hasty transitions. The "froward woman" is first compared to "an old Dog and a hungry flea." She is represented next, "in her frantic mood," in the animal imagery of a beast of burden, a horse or mule who "will pull, haul, swerve." In the same comparison she is then metamorphosed into a woman (a wildly disturbed one), or, at least, a different type of animal with claws to "scratch and tear." Swetnam's violent solution for the reform of this woman; to bring her to humility by beating her to death seems more hyperbolic than serious. While some of the excesses and hyperbole of the attack are in all likelihood simply intended to attract attention, they do little to advance his argument logically.

The disempowerment of the female is a striking motif in Swetnam's tirade. Another conspicuous theme is the linkage of women to wild animals who require taming or mastery. The rationale on which the first example hinges is that women, like bears or dogs or other wild beasts, must be trained to submit to male rule or will. The last example is an extension of this logic carried to the ultimate extreme. In the Solomon example it is consistent with the rhetorical framing

context in which women are placed in the formal debate as a whole, that women are held responsible for the concupiscence that caused Solomon to "forsake his God." In this instance, Solomon himself is represented as the active agent who "lusted after . . . women" and the women who are blamed, are figured as passive objects of his desire. Even Clytemnestra who has some agency is described in a passive context as Agamemnon's wife; and the implication is that she should have maintained her proper place as a patient and submissive wife. To protest or seek revenge for even so extreme a form of patriarchal tyranny as the murder of a daughter is to violate the prescribed model of good femininity. Jezebel, the other active agent in the list, is a generalized vice figure. The careless arguments and loose logical development are liberties that Swetnam seems to feel entitled to take as a male writer defining woman's place in the debate over feminine nature. If there is an informing structural principle in this section it is precisely the arbitrariness with which Swetnam can construct his female examples to fit into an *a priori* patriarchally defined signifying system.

The second chapter continues the same logic and generalities with a graphic catalogue of deceitful women:

some [men] they keep in hand with promises, and some they feed with flattery, and some they delay with dalliances, and some they please with kisses. They lay out the folds of their hair to entangle men into their love; . . . Eagles eat not men until they are dead, but women devour them alive. For a woman will pick thy pocket and empty thy purse, laugh in thy face and cut thy throat. They are ungrateful, perjured, full of fraud, flouting and deceitful, unconstant, waspish, . . . sullen, proud, discourteous, and cruel. . . . (204)

The chapter ends with the pronouncement paraphrased by Henderson and McManus: "Woman is nothing else but a contrary unto man," and all the pens in the world would not enable men to catalogue all her deceits" (205). Whether or not Swetnam is serious in this rhetorical exercise coloured by hyperbole is entirely beside the point. The exaggeration in the attack is typical of the containing frame.

The question of his sincerity notwithstanding, Swetnam's central argument is entirely in accord with the general tradition of the Renaissance controversy and with the orientation of the rhetorical handbooks that we have examined. Women's place in the symbolic order is subordinate, excessive, and rhetorically framed by man. The contention that woman is "nothing else but a contrary unto man" is the familiar patriarchal construction of woman as other and dichotomously opposed to man. The rhetorical strategy which places women at one pole or the other of hyperbolic extremes is an extension of the binary logic in which man is represented at the privileged pole and woman at the undesirable one. When in the third chapter Swetnam introduces some examples of good women who are exempted from his general condemnation, it is apparent that as exceptions, these women are marginalized even from their own sex. They are indeed opposites of the women represented in the preceding chapters, but their chief common virtue lies in an emphasis on female subordination to males who in one way or another shape and regulate their lives. They are figured as valuable material commodities, or as male possessions, "Pearl[s]" and "Diamonds" found among "hard rocks" (211). The Virgin Mary and Sarah, the obedient wife of Abraham, are traditional Biblical models put forth by Swetnam. Lucretia or Lucrece, is one of his classical examples of female virtue (211). Lucretia is simultaneously an example of feminine subjugation to male desire as a victim of rape, and, of obedience to male standards of value, which would perceive her as

damaged goods, in her suicide. Swetnam's interlude of good women is both brief and stereotypical; his few good women are abstractions of the quintessential patriarchal values: female chastity, obedience, and silence.

The argument for female silence is made in the third chapter. It begins with a generality: "It is said . . . of women that they have two faults; that is to say they can neither say well nor do well" (207). The bulk of his pamphlet has already argued that women's actions are flawed. They have been represented as disruptive, often monstrous forces, requiring male restraint and domination. Swetnam's proposition accentuates women's speech faults: women cannot "say well." According to his formulation feminine speech is bound in advance to failure. The argument concurs with the pre-established rhetorical framing context of the formal controversy, which denies women heterogeneity and authentic speech. It is a strategy of containment designed to silence women. If, according to the male definition of women's discourse, all female speech is defective and any attempt on the part of women to speak a predetermined failure, female silence would appear the only successful defense strategy.

We cannot know how most of Swetnam's readers responded; Sowerham and Munda found him less than a reliable witness. Yet if, as I argue, the purpose of the formal controversy is the framing of women and women's speech within patriarchal stereotypes in order to constrain female discourse, the discrediting of Swetnam as an opponent is precisely within the range of expectations that we bring to this rhetorical genre. As we shall see, the defenders of women also comply with male-established generic conventions. In fact, the entire query into the nature of women is located in the context of predetermined patterns of linguistic, historical, and rhetorical signification. Within this limiting epistemic frame the issue of women's nature is rhetorically figured as sequential to masculine nature, which precedes, defines, and sets the symbolic standards of

female value. In constraining the heterogeneous nature of women in this debate to hyperbolized and nonindividuated abstractions of good and evil the male regulators of the genre confine female speech within the same limits. As we scrutinize the arguments of feminine defenses we do not hear women speaking in defense of specifically feminine nature, but men speaking through women in defense of male constructs of femininity.

#### IV

Esther Sowernam's defense is a model of Quintilian structure and judicious reasoning. She states her thesis clearly in a two-part division of her *exordium*.<sup>23</sup> In response to Swetnam's attack she will define women as worthy of respect first by reference to biblical examples, and then by recourse to classical authorities. Finally, she will answer all material allegations against women and will arraign<sup>24</sup> such ill-disposed men as Swetnam in order to take them to task for their slander against women. She invokes the nobility of women: "You are women: in Creation noble . . ." (220) and sustains this attitude to her subject throughout the treatise. Sowernam approaches her refutation of Swetnam's attack with relish; she criticizes his pamphlet on a number of grounds, but chiefly on the basis of its faulty logic and poor style. In her narratio section (chapter 1), for example, after pointing to some striking inconsistencies<sup>25</sup> in her opponent's arguments, Sowernam draws attention to his loose generalizations. She asks her readers to consider the dishonesty of an author "who undertaking a particular, prosecuteth and persecuteth a general, under the cloak and color of lewd, idle, and froward women to rage and rail against all women in general" (223). This

charge is repeated later in Sovernam's defense when she concedes that if Swetnam had directed his accusations to specific women no one would have challenged him. Sovernam uses particular examples in her response to Swetnam's charges and she illustrates them with appropriate Latin quotations.

While she generally follows the male-ordained conventions of the debate, Sovernam appropriates and revises one of these conventions by calling on a female authority, Rachel Speght, the woman writer who published the first response to Swetnam, A Muzzle for Melastomus: "It is further to be considered as the maid in her Muzzle for Melastomus hath observed, that God intended to honour woman in a more excellent degree in that he created her out of a subject refined, as out of a quintessence."<sup>26</sup> She follows her invocation of a female authority to challenge Swetnam's negative definition of womankind with her own orderly arguments against Swetnam's attack. Sovernam uses the rhetorical technique of partitioning to structure her argument. In order to dispute Swetnam's literary constitution of women she divides her scriptural evidence for female worthiness into three categories: prerogatives bestowed upon women by God; women as instruments for the work of God; graces given to women by God.

In the first category Sovernam makes an argument that is based on the second kind of rhetorical order described in Henry Peacham's The Garden of Eloquence:<sup>27</sup> in rhetorical amplification the most significant word or person is placed last. Puttenham, we recall, also refers to this definition of rhetorical order,<sup>28</sup> using the example of Queen Elizabeth as last in his recital, but first in importance. Sovernam alludes to this type of ordering as proof of women's excellence in creation. She argues that as the last creature created by God, woman "is therefore the most excellent work of creation" (223). Her architectonic trope of God, the master builder creating in man an "imperfect building" to which woman supplies that which "was unperfected in man" (224),

is actually an argument for female complementarity. Her argument that God "made [women] to add perfection to the end of all creation" (224) may even hint at female superiority, but she does not directly make such a claim. She returns, however, to this argument in her summary at the end of chapter 4. While she declares that she dare not say that woman is "the best" work of creation, she argues that woman "was created out of the chosen and best refined substance," flesh and bone rather than clay like Adam (227). Sowernam supports her second and third categories of scriptural evidence with biblical exempla: seventeen biblical women for the second group, and the Virgin Mary and several female Christian martyrs for the third (226-27). Her *confirmatio* section ends with chapter 4,<sup>29</sup> which focuses on historical and classical examples of outstanding women, for example, the nine muses as inventors of the liberal arts and sciences,<sup>30</sup> and Boadicea, who led a victorious British revolt against the Romans in the first century A.D. The historical female models culminate in Elizabeth I, who is "a pattern for the best men to imitate" (231).

Sowernam's *refutatio* section is also divided into concise rhetorical partitions. In her sixth and final chapter she brings superior scholarship, wit, and logic into play as she responds to Swetnam's material objections. She displays her own scholarly credentials and draws attention to Swetnam's lack of erudition when she chides him for plagiarizing misogynistic statements made by such contemporary writers as Lyly and Painter, rather than alluding to the more vehement and renowned classical misogynists as, for example, Euripedes,<sup>31</sup> Menander, Semonides, and Juvenal (235). This strategy helps to establish Sowernam as a more qualified witness than her adversary. In a witty refutation of Swetnam's catalogue of women who have lured men into ruin, Sowernam asks "Is holiness, wisdom and strength so slightly seated in your Masculine gender as to be stained, blemished, and subdued by women?" (237). She then brings in a



logical argument to refute Swetnam's key proposition: women are by nature evil, and by their evil nature they bring men to ruin. She reverses the thesis and proposes that women are by nature good, and that any evil befalling men in their relationships with women is caused either by accidental or remote causes <sup>32</sup> or by causes that originate in the men themselves: "Do not say and rail at women to be the cause of men's overthrow, when the original root and cause is in yourselves" (238).

Despite her superior organization and arguments Sowernam essentially follows the same generic conventions in her representation of women that Swetnam does. She is more precise logically, structurally, and stylistically; her defense is stronger than his attack. Nevertheless, while Sowernam discredits her opponent, she too represents women as biblical or classical models. <sup>33</sup> Elizabeth I is the only recent example. As part of her refutation she claims that Swetnam was indicted before two female judges, Reason and Experience (232), <sup>34</sup> clearly allegorical figures rather than living women. While she challenges Swetnam's stereotypical categorization of accusing women, including herself, as "railing scold[s]" by pointing to the distinction between "an honest accuser" and the former, she hastens to add that it has not been her "desire to speak so much" (242). She defends her outspokenness on the grounds of Swetnam's extreme provocation and the justness of her cause, thus deferring, at least partially, to the code of silence for women. In any case she could be claimed, on the basis of her extensive learning and skills in logic and composition, as an exception to the rule, but such exceptional status is in itself a form of marginalization. The most telling aspect of Sowernam's complicity with the pre-established rhetorical structures of the formal controversy is her acceptance of the rhetorical framing of women into extremes of good and evil rather than heterogeneous individuals. Not only does she base her argument on scriptural and mythological models, she makes a

key concession to Swetnam in one of her strongest arguments for the worthiness of women. Sovernam refers to her argument that as the last of God's creation women are made of more refined substance than men:

If I do grant that women degenerating from the true  
end of woman hood prove the greatest offenders, yet  
in granting that I do hereby prove that women in their  
creation are the most excellent creatures. For  
corruption *boni pessima*, the best thing corrupted,  
proveth the worst. . . . " (232)

In conceding that fallen women are worse offenders than comparable men, and, in the section immediately following the quoted one, making an analogy between degenerate women and the fallen angel Lucifer (232), Sovernam follows the patriarchal logic that positions women as either angelic representatives of a higher order or demonic outsiders. This rhetorical frame contains women and feminine discourse within the limits of patriarchal constructs of femininity. No less than Swetnam does Sovernam evade the issues of the heterogeneous nature of women and the variable and dynamic possibilities for feminine speech. Her Latin quotation here is appropriate to her argument, and her logic effective, but she places women and women's discourse within the same strategies of containment that her opponent does, categories that formulate and frame female speech within a pre-established dialogic context.<sup>35</sup>

Constantia Munda also structures her argument on the Quintilian model. The title of her defense, The Worming of a Mad Dog or: A Sop for Cerberus, the Jailor of Hell, sets the tone of invective, derision, and insult, verging on the burlesque, with which she approaches the task of defending her sex from Swetnam's attack. Notwithstanding the elements of parody and farce that she uses, Munda couches her defense in sophisticated, scholarly terms. She reveals

an extensive knowledge of Latin and Greek literature in her frequent and always appropriate quotations. Her own Latin pseudonym translates as elegant constancy,<sup>36</sup> an implication of her stable speaking position as a credible witness, as well as a repudiation of Swetnam's title and his principal charge against women. Munda's name anticipates also the classical allusions in the original Greek or Latin that are interspersed throughout her treatise.

Her repartees to Swetnam's loose and disjointed aphorisms and quotations are quite obviously intended to put Swetnam at a disadvantage. In one response she mocks the discretion as well as the credibility of her opponent, while implying that he taxes the patience of his readers: "Is it not irksome to a wise and discreet judgement to hear a book stuffed with suchlike sense as this: The world is not made of oatmeal"? I have heard of some that have thought the world to be composed of atoms; never any that thought it made of oatmeal" (256). Henderson and McManus point out that she offers Democritus's atomic theory "only as a less ridiculous alternative to the "oatmeal" reference" (257). She probably presents the theory also as an instance of her own judgemental expertise and scholarly superiority to Swetnam. Munda's Latin and Greek quotations are effective, often witty, critiques of elements of Swetnam's structure, style and logic. She uses, for example, a Latin quotation to disparage Swetnam's inept plagiarisms, among which are included Aesop's fables: "Furtivis nudato coloribus moveat cornicula risum," which translates as "Let every bird take his own feather, and you would be as naked as Aesop's jay" (256).

Although she does not make an explicit reference to the traditional Ciceronian five-part division of rhetoric, Munda's critique of Swetnam's pamphlet falls into this schema. In a derisive agricultural metaphor she scoffs at her opponent's skills in *inventio* or "invention" and suggests that the barren soil of Swetnam's imagination has produced a poor and incongruous yield.

How you have cudgeled your brains in gleaning  
 multitudes of similes as 'twere in the field of many  
 writers, and threshed them together in the floor of  
 your deviser, and all to make a poor confused  
 miscellany, whereas thine own barren-soiled soil is  
 not able to yield the least congruity of speech. (255)

Munda's critique continues in this passage with the implication that Swetnam fails to meet the requirements for the second part of rhetoric, *dispositio* or arrangement. She alludes to his tendency to plagiarize indiscriminately and to throw together a medley of confused comparisons. The "Aesop's jay" simile is contained in this section. Munda uses an architectural metaphor to comment on the structural deficiencies of Swetnam's composition:

Your indiscretion is as great in the laying together and  
 compiling of your stolen ware as your blockishness in  
 stealing, for your sentences hang together like sand  
 without lime. You bring a great heap of stony rubbish  
 comparisons one upon the neck of another, but they  
 concur no more to sense than a company of stones to a  
 building without mortar. And 'tis a familiar Italian  
 Proverb, "duro e duro non fa muro" ("hard and hard  
 makes no wall"). (256)

In other words, Swetnam's plagiarisms have been strung together so poorly that he has created a written construction that has no logical or structural symmetry and solidity; neither his analogies nor his sentences hold together.

Throughout her defense Munda derides her adversary's neglect of the third part of rhetoric—his stylistic faults. For example, in a rejoinder to one of Swetnam's doggerel verses <sup>37</sup> she attests,

I stand not to descant on your plain-song, but surely if  
 you can make ballads no better, you must be fain' to  
 give over that profession; for your Muse is  
 wonderfully deficient in the bandoleers, and you may  
 safely swear with the Poet,

Nec fonte labra prolui caballino,

Nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnas

Memirini. (257)

Henderson and McManus gloss some of the musical terms. "Descant," in this context, means to comment at length on Swetnam's poor poetry; it is also a musical pun that signifies the singing of an ornamental melody above a musical melody. "Plain-song" is a type of monodic liturgical chant (257). I would add here that the main feature of plain-song, relevant to Munda's critique, is that it refers to music without strict meter and without accompaniment. "Fain" is defined as "obliged," and "bandoleer" suggested as a misprint for "bandore," a stringed musical instrument (257). The Latin verse is attributed to the Roman satirist Persius and is paraphrased to express Persius's intentionally satirical references to poetic inspiration: he does not remember dreaming on Mount Parnassus, or drinking from the "nag's fountain," the spring of Hippocrene, which purportedly gushed up at the touch of the winged horse Pegasus's hoof (257). Munda's lampoon of Swetnam as a stylist combines with ridicule of his skill in invention in the Latin excerpt.

Nor does Munda neglect to take Swetnam to task for his flaws in the fourth and fifth parts of rhetoric, delivery and memory. She berates him for profaning and misinterpreting the Scriptures and the classical philosophers through the ignorance and perverted distortions of his "illiterate and clownish Muse" (261). In a number of passages she chides him for his mnemonic lapses, such as his

history of Theodora, according to Swetnam, "a strumpet in Socrates' time" (261). Munda recalls only "a glorious Martyr of this name," whose "persuasive oratory" saved her from rape and imprisonment during the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian (261).

Like Sowerham before her, however, Munda constructs the female in the terms established by male rhetorical discourse. She follows the generic convention of representing women as hyperbolized abstractions of virtue or vice. In her *exordium*, which begins with a poem dedicated to her mother, Prudentia Munda, she describes her parent as the "true pattern of [female] Piety and Virtue" (245). She portrays generalized "Woman" as "the second edition of that goodly volume compiled by that great God of heaven and earth, . . . the consummation of his blessed week's work, the end, crown, and perfection of the never sufficiently glorified creation" (248). Whereas Swetnam had addressed his treatise to stereotypical negative feminine constructs, Munda refers to such idealized versions of normative woman as "our glorious sex," whose untainted purity she is compelled to defend (253). The difference lies only in the positioning of woman as a binary term; in Swetnam's representation the feminine abstraction is at the negative pole, in Munda's at the corresponding positive pole. In both she is constituted and framed as a predetermined, excessive stereotype. The women for whom this defense is so effectively composed are the women who fulfil patriarchal constructs of good femininity; they are static abstractions, not heterogeneous subjects in process.

Thus, despite her well-organized arguments Munda lacks an authoritative discourse position based on a rationally coherent point of view. She confesses as much in her Greek quotation of Sophocles, Ajax's line that silence brings honour to women.<sup>38</sup> While she demonstrates her scholarly expertise in the appropriate usage and accurate translation of the Greek quotation, Munda also expresses

complicity with the patriarchal code of silence as a becoming attribute for women. She even praises the "feminine modesty" that has extolled silence as "our greatest ornament" (249). She finds it necessary to apologize for her own exception from this rule by explaining that only the extremity of responding to Swetnam's attack had prompted her to write. The fact that Munda confines her response to print is a lesser transgression of the sociosymbolic code than a public speech would have been. Still, the fact that she does respond is a violation of patriarchal proprietorship of language, and she can only justify her defense on the grounds of extreme necessity, which allow her to consider herself an exception to the norm of silent femininity. What she does not add is that in functioning as an exception to her sex, and in generally following the conventions of the socio-symbolic code, she is an accomplice to her own marginalization, and to the suppression of woman in general. In holding that it is permissible for a woman to break the code of public silence only on unusual occasions, and only through the medium of print, all the while echoing male patterns of thought, Munda weakens her speaking position. Rather than expressing an individual female point of view, her rhetorical and logical skills are used to support patriarchal definitions of femininity. We are reminded of Toril Moi's remark on "the ventriloquism of patriarchy" (68), and of Bakhtin's formulation of rhetoric as the contextualized dialogic framing of another's speech (340). Munda implies that she accepts the generic limitations for woman's speech and that she subscribes to the status quo of feminine discursive relations on the fringes of the symbolic order.

## V

The Swetnam series made a transition from the debate platform of the formal controversy to the stage and to a courtroom setting in an anonymous play Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women published circa 1618.<sup>39</sup> There have been speculations that the author might have been Thomas Dekker or Thomas Heywood, but neither has been confirmed conclusively.<sup>40</sup> The main plot, which is not the title plot, is based on an English version of a Juan de Flores novelette, Historia de Aurelio et Isabella, written around 1495. The original Spanish title was Grisel Y Mirabella.<sup>41</sup> The original work is a tragedy, ending with the death of the two young lover-protagonists. The Swetnam variation, especially in its subplot, gives the play an entirely different tone. Coryl Crandall classifies Swetnam as “a good and entertaining tragi-comedy” (1). Indeed, the antic spirit of the play lends even the more serious moments of the potentially tragic main plot a comic gloss.

To take Crandall’s observation a step further, I would place the Swetnam play in the context of the Swetnam controversy, which it culminates, as an illustration of Altman’s thesis of a relationship between Renaissance debate forms and the structure of dramatic comedy (8-9, 107-75). In his chapter “The Method Staged: Debate Plays by Heywood and Rastell,” Altman traces the intellectual pattern of an *in utramque* exploration of alternative terms such as *learning* and *love*, which are both tested, found inadequate, and subsumed into a third term, which completes and unites them. He postulates that “[t]his pattern is apparently the archetype of a comedy derived from dialogic thinking which refuses to abandon either of its original terms, and seeks a *tertium quid* that will fuse and complete them” (112). In the following chapters Altman develops this connection in some



detail; he relates it to specific Elizabethan comedies including Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors (164-73).

While in the Swernam play the pattern that Altman describes tends to be obscured by complications within the potentially tragic main plot, the archetypal elements of dialogic thinking inform the dramatic structure and infuse it with a comic spirit. The terms explored and tested in Swernam in the form of a thesis and antithesis are male or female culpability in relation to adultery. The general question is particularized in the characters of two young lovers, Leonida and Lisandro. In the courtroom trial of the main plot each of the lovers pleads guilty in order to save the other. The plot complications hinge on a third term, which eventually subsumes the other two; that is, patriarchal absolutism. Although the alleged adultery has not in fact occurred, Leonida is guilty of disobeying the orders of her father, King Articus, in allowing Lisandro into her room. Articus is the presiding judge of the trial in which the lovers are tried by the prosecutor Misogynous, alias Joseph Swernam. As in the attacks and defenses of the formal controversy, the argument on which the courtroom drama centers becomes abstract rather than concrete and particular. The specific hypothesis regarding the individual guilt of Leonida or Lisandro in tempting the other to adultery is converted back by Swernam and by Leonida's defender Atlanta/Lorenzo into a generalized thesis relating to the collective guilt of men or women. Both sexes are found equally guilty of enticing the other in cases of sexual seduction. At the play's end the thesis again becomes hypothesized in relation to the particular characters of Leonida and Lisandro as Articus's patriarchal absolutism becomes its own antithesis, transforming tyranny toward the two lovers into magnanimity. Yet as we shall discuss, although Articus finally relents and rescinds the death penalty for his daughter, Leonida (who is innocent) is found guilty by the court.

While there are scenes in which the main plot links dialogic debate with comedy, much of the comic tone of the play is provided by the Swetnam subplot. As the title indicates, Swetnam himself is tried and ultimately condemned for his misogynist attacks on women. His arraignment occurs in the second and least important of the play's two trials, which is contained in a single scene in this five act work. Through all five acts Swetnam's incorrigible persona is a source of humour. As in the pamphlets he is blustering and roguish. He is amusing in his messianic fervor to convert other men to his point of view, as he does Nicanor's servant, Scanfardo. His inability to refrain from insulting women even at his own arraignment, when the female presiding officer asks for quiet in the court, and his attempted seduction of the female defense lawyer, who is actually a man in disguise, are other sources of comedy. In fact, the play so frequently verges on farce that it stresses even more than the pamphlets the comic potential of the Swetnam controversy.

The first and main trial in which Swetnam prosecutes Leonida focuses on the central issues of the formal debate; the nature of women, and the patriarchal surveillance and control of male-defined female nature. Leonida's character is described by her father, Articus, in terms similar to the rhetorical framing context of the formal controversy. In keeping with the hyperbolic extremes of the latter genre she is characterized as extravagantly beautiful. But she is also "wanton, coy and fickle too," and has, according to her father's account, caused much dissension among the young princes competing for her hand (1.1.162-64). The suicide of some of these suitors is attributed to Leonida's "disdaine" (3.1.82-83). Yet she is also chaste and entirely faithful to Lisandro, and she offers her life to save his. Leonida's problem is that she has transgressed the code of patriarchal surveillance and thus disrupted the order of Articus' state. As Articus attests, in his state "A King is like a Starre, / By which each *Subject* as a Mariner, / Must

steer *his* course . . . " (3.1.276-77; emphasis added). In steering her own course and disobeying her father's orders in a state where, as the pronoun "his" suggests, the mariner/subjects are gendered as male and women are not even figured as subjects in the order of language, Leonida violates linguistic as well as patriarchal order. She disrupts the basic structure of patriarchal absolutist authority, which informs the rhetorical framing context of the main plot.

Leonida's defense lawyer also challenges the traditional hierarchical absolutist structures. She/he is actually Leonida's brother disguised as the Amazon Atlanta. In his female disguise, Lorenzo plays out the relationship between speech, gender, and dress. When he takes on a female persona Lorenzo also adopts the female ethos of apology for breaking the code of female silence. As Leonida's defense advocate, Lorenzo is a patriarchal authority figure who temporarily strips himself of power and assumes the disempowered symbolic position of a female speaker. Yet although he is as benevolent as his father Atticus is tyrannical, Lorenzo represents the patriarchy; he is heir to his father's throne. Lorenzo also has a reputation as a military hero. He has returned home incognito after being reported missing in a military mission in order to observe privately the political temper of the state. The incongruity between his timid lines in the opening of the courtroom drama and the bold speech that we would expect from a courageous military man is one instance of the linkage between dialogic debate and comedy. Indeed the comic aspects of this representation of a heroic masculine character in transvestite disguise, pleading for permission to speak, subverts the otherwise serious courtroom scene.

Atlanta/Lorenzo begins Leonida's defense from an explicitly subordinate and self-abasing position. As we have already discussed at some length, this is precisely the ethos that the male authors of rhetorical treatises and handbooks conventionally prescribe for women. In the opening statements she/he pleads

extreme mortification simply for speaking in a patriarchal court of law. Lorenzo in female dress, speaking as a woman, expends twelve lines of apology for presenting the case as "but a woman" who is stricken "by dumbe feare and bashfulnesse" before "Bold Orators of State, men, graue and wise, / That can at eury breathing pause, correct / The slipp'ry passages of a woman's speech" (3.3.45-52). This speech concludes with a plea for leniency for speech "defects in me a silly woman" (3.1.55-58).

Atlanta/Lorenzo's opening speech recapitulates in dramatic dialogue the familiar rhetorical pattern of male precedence and female subordination that constrains female defenses and forces woman to speak from the margins or interstices of patriarchally inflected discourse. She/he articulates the terms of the rhetorical order that defines woman's speech as subject to patriarchal regulation. According to this standard, woman's speech is figured as transgressive and potentially out of control in its "slipp'ry passages," which require the correction and guidance of "Bold Orators of State, men graue and wise." In the courtroom of the patriarchal state, which is the setting of the *Swetnam* play, men are authorized to speak and women are allowed to submit their reticent, apologetic speech to male surveillance and control. Given this rhetorical framing context, it is not too surprising that despite Atlanta/Lorenzo's best efforts to provide a strong defense, Leonida's case is lost. *Swetnam* wins the legal victory, and the happy ending of the play is achieved only through the subterfuge of Leonida's feigned execution.

Within the terms of the *Swetnam* play no rhetorical strategy on the part of a female, or ostensibly female, advocate would suffice to defend Leonida against the false charges of seduction and adultery. In the legitimate courtroom, authorized and controlled by men, male speech prevails. The fact of her innocence of all aspects of the accusations, except for the disobedience of her

father's orders in allowing Lisandro into her chamber, carries no weight in Leonida's defense. Although one of the witnesses to the trial reports that the legal arguments on both sides were equally balanced, Swetnam was successful:

The aduocates both used their utmost skill,  
To iustifie and quit the sex they stood for,  
With arguments and reasons so profound  
On eyther side, that it was hard to say,  
Which way the scale of justice would incline. (3.1.6-10)

It appears that within this court, within the legitimate space of patriarchal law, the "scale of justice" is inclined to tip in one direction only.<sup>42</sup> Any feminine subversion of patriarchal authority can only occur in an area outside the margins of legal discourse. This is precisely what occurs in the second trial.

The second trial, in which Swetnam is arraigned and successfully prosecuted for his misogyny by the women of the play, takes place in a makeshift court outside the official courtroom, outside patriarchal law, and outside the margins of legitimate legal discourse. Here we are in a world governed, authorized, and judged by women,<sup>43</sup> whereas in the first trial we were in the world of the legitimate court, governed, authorized, and judged by men. While the second area is outside patriarchal order and control, it is also in a marginal, nonlegitimated space. In this liberated but unofficial theatrical space, we are closer to the world of farce and to the implication that misogyny is comic material. While the mood in the first trial is often lightened by the humorous dialogue and burlesque actions of Swetnam and some of the minor characters, it entails serious issues with grave consequences. The penalty for Leonida's transgression of patriarchal order is death; a fake execution has to be devised to save her life for the happy ending. In the second trial the issues are treated less seriously and the consequences are less severe. Swetnam is found guilty of

misogyny; his sentence involves humiliation and physical punishment. He will be muzzled and led to a public place where he will be bound and baited by women. He is also threatened with the possibilities of whipping and being stuck by women's hat pins (5.2.164-65). Finally his book will be burned, and he will be sent to live among infidels (5.2.330-58). The women's victory, like the women's court and the issue of misogyny, is placed in the context of comedy albeit, rather black comedy. The women's defense of Leonida and of women in general is not given priority in the dramatic structure or in the rhetorical context of male precedence and the legitimacy of patriarchal order. At the end of the play a benevolent male absolutism replaces tyrannical patriarchal abuse of power, but women and women's speech are still assigned a subordinate linguistic and legal position in the symbolic order.

The Swetnam play continues to figure women within the rhetorical frame of the formal debate, as generalized binary oppositions of good and evil. In the main trial Swetnam attacks, and Atlanta defends, the same patriarchal constructs of women that we have observed in the controversy genre. Leonida is not defended as herself but as an abstraction of femininity; depending on the speaker she is either a figuration of angelic grace and goodness or of seductive evil. One of Misogynous's feminine representations is "the wanton Morning Sunne," that attracts men's eyes as beautiful women do (3.3.163-64). Misogynous uses a rhetorical technique here similar to the one that Swetnam employs in his attack in the example discussed earlier of the women for whom Solomon lusted. The rhetorical structure of his misogynistic discourse perfectly demonstrates the technique whereby a controlling male speaker manipulates language to define woman for his own discursive ends. There is nothing innately "wanton" in the phenomenon of the morning sun or in the nature of beautiful women. Misogynous rhetorically frames them as wanton through the device of an unstated

and false syllogism: the beautiful morning sun that attracts men's eyes is wanton because Swetnam defines it as wanton. Beautiful women attract men's eyes. Within the rhetorical context in which beautiful women are associated with the morning sun, beautiful women are wanton. He follows this bit of casuistry with a catalogue of adulterous women including Cleopatra and Helen of Troy.

Atlanta counters Misogynous' list of classical examples of seductive women by offering to name "a thousand women" who have been chaste and honourable (3.3.221). Neither mentions Leonida. Atlanta/Lorenzo's defense as well as Misogynous' attack inscribes Leonida as an emblematic figure rather than an individual woman with a distinctive nature and identity. Like the formal controversy the play functions as a containing strategy, arbitrarily fitting women into a class or category of male-defined femininity.

## VI

Two of the more noteworthy documents that followed the Swetnam controversy focused on the issue of transvestism. Hic Mulier and Haec Vir were published in 1620, near the end of James's reign. The first treatise, attacking women who adopted a masculine style of dress, was cast in the form of a judicial oration; the second, chastising both sexes for wearing apparel that blurred the gender boundaries, was composed in the dialogue mode. The speaker of Hic Mulier strongly emphasizes dress as a means of preserving the sociosymbolic order but indicts women only in the dispute.<sup>44</sup> In Haec Vir both sexes are reproved for the confusion of the dress code, but by far the greater burden of defense falls on the woman. The gender polemic in the Hic Mulier and Haec

Vir pamphlets focuses on the interrelations between feminine dress and speech. In the dialogic context of this argument, woman's clothing signifies her place in the symbolic order; her dress should reinforce the male discourse by which she is defined and coded. Female modesty and appropriateness in attire are associated with feminine speech decorum, proper signification in the order of language, and in extension with the ethos by which woman's actions are directed. The writers of the treatises suggest that female violation of the dress code threatens disorder in the system of oppositions in which both sexes are inscribed. Dress is a sign of distinction between the sexes. For a woman to reverse, even temporarily, that marker of sexual difference is to signal degradation in speech, manners, and actions. As usual the reference to female action reflects the male preoccupation with female chastity. According to the male speakers in both pamphlets, female transvestism is the sign of a fallen woman who speaks a fallen language.

The debate in Hic Mulier hinges on the question of appropriate dress for Hic Mulier, the mannish woman.<sup>45</sup> Haec Vir the male speaker initiates the attack with a play on language in his exordium. In a series of puns on the deliberately incorrect Latin of Hic Mulier's name, a joining of the masculine form of the adjective with the feminine noun, he links female adoption of male attire to reversals and unnatural joinings in grammatical declension and these grammatical violations to feminine monstrosity and to impudent liberties in speech and action:

But I will maintain, if it be not the truest Latin in the kingdom, yet it is the commonest. For since the days of Adam women were never so Masculine: Masculine in case, even from the head to the foot; Masculine in Mood, from bold speech to impudent action; and



Masculine in tense, for without redress they were,  
are, and will be the most Masculine, most mankind,  
and most monstrous. (265) <sup>46</sup>

According to the argument in the quoted passage, women's repudiation of the dress code signifies chaos in the symbolic order as well as a deformity of female nature. The author continues along the same line of logic to put forth the premise that female transvestism is a corruption of both nature and language. After a brief digression in which he praises good women, who are presumably true to their natures, "full of holy thought, modest carriage, and severe chastity," he turns to the women who are the subject of his attack. In the long and vehement passage that follows he describes women who cross-dress as an antithesis to nature. He correlates the practice with "monstrous deformity . . . the impudence of Harlots . . . baseness, bastardy, . . . indignity . . . deceitfulness . . . [and] barbar[ity] among other negative attributes (266-68). <sup>47</sup> The incidence of women dressing in male attire

offends man in the example and God in the most unnatural use; barbarous in that it is exorbitant from Nature and an Antithesis to kind, going astray with ill-favored affectation both in attire, in speech and manners, and it is to be feared, in the whole courses and stories of their actions. What can be more barbarous than with the gloss of mumming Art to disguise the beauty of their creations? (268; emphasis added)

Haec Vir defines female transvestism as an unnatural reversal that implies a perversion of originally good feminine nature and of female language, speech, and manners. The practice is not only degrading and a sign of barbarism in its

digression from both human and external nature, it is also duplicitous. The stress on affectation in speech and manners in the rhetorical context of "mumming Art" and "disguise" conveys notions of deceit and inauthenticity in the character and language of the female persona. The reference to "mumming" also suggests actors in costumes and masks, an occupation for males only in the Jacobean period in England. This association also implies counterfeiting, unnatural artifice, and a transgression of the proper boundaries in which women are carefully contained. Women who adopt male apparel ruin and disguise the beauty of the patriarchally constructed stereotypes by which they are defined. But the thesis that underlies Haec Vir's argument is that women in male dress mar the beauty of a natural order in language and in nature.

For Haec Vir the reversal of the dress code by women entails a semiotic shift as well as reversals in grammar, nature, speech, and manners. Their transgression of gender boundaries converts female transvestites from "signs deceitless" to representatives of total degradation: "the gilt dirt which embroiders Playhouses, . . . the perfumed Carrion that bad men feed on in Brothels . . . " and so forth (266). Through "the monstrosity of [their] deformity in apparel" they are transformed into "disguised deformities" (267, 273) with the connotations of deceit, aberration, and degradation just discussed. Like Sidney's anthropomorphized female rhetoric, discussed in the previous chapter, women in male attire have fallen from their original state of grace in which they are inscribed in the symbolic order as superlatives of excellence: "You, oh you, . . . good women . . . that are the fullness of perfection, the crowns of nature's work, the complements of men's excellences . . . " (265). Once again, woman is defined by the rhetorical framing context of hyperbolic oppositions.

In the preceding passage good women are "the complements of men's excellences." As in the rhetorical handbooks where gender difference is figured

by male linguistic precedence, female complementarity is represented as intrinsic to the order of nature. For *Haec Vir*, female violation of the dress code signifies a transgression of this natural order. The link between attire, speech, and manners forged in the *Haec Vir* pamphlet thus suggests that women who defy the decorum of gender distinction in dress transgress the boundaries of language. The speech of such "deformed" women subverts the natural order of male precedence and blurs the gender differences that position women as silent, or at least, reticent speakers. Women who have "cast off the ornaments of [their] sexes to put on the garments of Shame . . . have buried silence to revive slander . . ." (266). It seems that the woman's guide to proper dress is informed by her guide to proper speech. In both areas she is placed at the positive pole of the symbolic order when she reinforces masculine precedence and proprietorship, at the negative pole when she reverses or disturbs male priority. Decorum of dress is linked to decorum of place in a rhetorical context that identifies female transvestites with public women or courtesans in public places. In the passage that follows, female chastity is associated with proper female dress. Women are urged to avoid the exposure of such parts of their bodies as "breasts . . . and arms" (271).

Oh, hide them, for shame hide them in the closest prisons of your strictest government! Shield them with modest and comely garments, such as are warm and wholesome, having every window closed with a strong Casement and every Loophole furnished with such strong Ordinance that no unchaste eye may come near to assail them. . . . Guard them . . . not with Antic disguise and Mimic fantasticalness, where every window stands open like the *Subura*,<sup>48</sup> and

every window a Courtesan with an instrument, like so many Sirens, to enchant the weak passenger to shipwreck and destruction. (271-72)

The interrelations between the decorum of dress, speech, and place are revealed in *Haec Vir*'s strict warning to women to conceal themselves in modest garments appropriate to their sex and to confine themselves to the domestic sphere, lest they be mistaken for prostitutes or, at least, seductresses.

While it is difficult to believe that the author of *Hic Mulier* is entirely serious in his strident condemnation of female transvestism, his arguments follow the generic conventions of the formal controversy. Woman's clothing is a part of the rhetorical context in which she is framed; female modesty in dress is linked to patriarchally approved female verbal reticence and by extension to female chastity. Female transgression of the containing frame of the dress code subverts the system of meaning in which men and women are inscribed in the symbolic order. Indeed, *Haec Vir* denies meaning to transvestite women, who are "so much man in all things that they are neither men nor women, but . . . nothing" (270).

*Hic Mulier* is silent throughout the attack. Her silence conforms to the literary form being used—the judicial oration is a monologic composition—but it is also typical of the rhetorical tradition in which women do not speak but are used as passive examples by male authors. It is consistent with this tradition that the literary form is one that offers no space for a female speaker. Even the pamphlet sequence followed the rhetorical convention of male precedence: both *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* were published in the same year, 1620, but the former was printed first, the latter acknowledging in its subtitle that it was "an Answer to a late Book entitled *Hic Mulier* . . ." (278). In one respect it departs from the other attacks and defenses that we have just scrutinized. While in the *Swetnam*

series all three treatises were judicial orations, in the Haec Vir pamphlet Hic Mulier's defense is presented in the Platonic dialogue form. Haec Vir has an opportunity to speak at the beginning and end of the dialogue, and his words affect the resolution of the debate.

The deliberate grammatical confusion continues in the comic opening of Haec Vir. As in the first pamphlet, Haec Vir is an effeminate man, and Hic Mulier a mannish woman. Here, however, the exchange of dress styles leads to gender confusion. Haec Vir addresses Hic Mulier as "Most redoubted and worthy Sir," and Hic Mulier greets him as "Most rare and excellent Lady" (278). In humorous asides Hic Mulier queries, "Is she mad or doth she mock me?" and Haec Vir inquires, "Pity of patience, what doth he behold in me to take me for a woman?" (278). Once the confusion is cleared they agree to a debate in which, once again, Haec Vir speaks first. He presents his attack in the familiar vituperative style, a rambling delivery of derogatory adjectives and comparisons, again with an emphasis on the deformity implied by Hic Mulier's masculine attire (279). She refers to his disjointed style and delivery as "lightning and thunder" and presses him for the point or proposition of his argument: "come roundly to the matter; draw mine accusation into heads, and then let me answer" (280). When he organizes his case into specific charges that Hic Mulier is guilty of "Baseness [in her bondage to novelty], Unnaturalness, Shamefulness, Foolishness," his choice of diction is coarse and his analogies crude (281). He compares, for example, women who break the dress code to "untamed heifers" (280).

Hic Mulier, on the other hand, begins her argument in a logical, orderly fashion. She does not rail but responds to each of Haec Vir's accusations with a challenge to, and a critique of, the conventional patriarchal gender distinctions. She argues for a more heterogeneous position for women in the sociosymbolic

order, and insists on the right to choose her fashion of clothing according to her personal tastes rather than accept the constraints of custom and convention. In responding to the charge of bondage to novelty she asks, "What slavery can there be in freedom of election . . . with those pleasures . . . most suitable to mine affections? Hic Mulier defines bondage as perform[ing] the intents and purposes of another's disposition . . . by the force of authority and the strength of compulsion. Static feminine stereotypes, including dress codes, are metaphorically rejected: "And will you have poor woman such a fixed Star that she shall not so much as move or twinkle in her own Sphere?" (281). Hic Mulier plays here on a dynamic, plural signification for women; she subverts the "fixed" patriarchal constructs of femininity in favour of a potential for variety. In language evoking the poetry of the familiar third chapter of Ecclesiastes she declares:

Nature to every thing she hath created hath given a  
singular delight in change: as to Herbs, Plants and  
Trees a time to wither and shed their leaves, a time to  
bud and bring forth their leaves, and a time for their  
Fruits and Flowers. . . . (281)

The authority of the biblical allusion strengthens Hic Mulier's defense of the possibilities for multiplicity and heterogeneity in feminine meaning and freedom in woman's position in the sociosymbolic order. Her argument disrupts the boundaries of the containing frame of the dress code that, like the generic conventions of the Renaissance controversy, provides formal closure and unity to the signification of the feminine. This is a point that I shall explore more fully in the discussion of Moll Cutpurse in Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl, specifically in the context of the outrage incurred by Moll's male attire. In both instances a female character revises her meaning in the symbolic order and argues

for a more flexible position. In her defense of heterogeneity against the charge of "[u]naturalness in forsaking [her] creation and [scorning] custom," *Hic Mulier* declares, "I was created free, born free, and live free; what lets me then so to spin out my time that I may die free?" (282). She concludes her refutation of the charge of unnaturalness with the contention that only custom, and not reason, is violated, adding that "Custom is an Idiot" (284).

*Hic Mulier* continues her spirited defense, refuting *Haec Vir*'s accusations of shamefulness and foolishness with consistently unified arguments that reflect her individual point of view. Until *Haec Vir* invokes the combined authority of church and Bible to support his position she appears to be winning the debate and to be able to transcend the constraining limitations for feminine individuality that the dress code represents. Then she begins to waver from her strong speaking position. *Haec Vir* refers to church sanctions against the wearing of masculine dress for women except for the purpose of avoiding persecution. He calls on patriarchal figures of authority, male divines who interpret and represent the will of a male God who ordains that women shall be subjected to men. The traditional justification for masculine control of authority originates in a biblical passage in Genesis,<sup>49</sup> although it recurs in various other passages, for example, the Pauline injunction: "the head of the woman is the man" (Corinthians 1. 11).<sup>50</sup> In the Genesis passage the male Jehovah ordains obedience to men as a moral obligation for women.

The weight of the biblical confirmation of male hegemony in this, as in other matters, imposes an ideological closure on *Hic Mulier*'s arguments. In deference to the patriarchal construction of femininity as modest and obedient, she adjusts her point of view regarding women's liberty to dress according to their personal preferences. She has already associated the latter with freedom of speech, decision, and action; now she submits to the male absolutist standards

that demand obedience from good women. Although technically she does not lose the debate, she loses her verbal empowerment, her claim to freedom of dress, and the right to speak out publicly on this issue. Indeed, the topic of female transvestism quickly becomes a closed issue. When *Hic Mulier* contends, as part of her modified defense, that women have adopted male dress because men have been dressing effeminately, she may be making a reference to the historical context of the Jacobean period,<sup>51</sup> but she is surely making a concession to patriarchal absolutism. The next step in this direction is a promise that when men revert to dressing like men, women will desist from masculine dress and will return to modest and subservient behavior toward men (282).

*Hic Mulier* links the reversal of dress style to a reversal of speech style. In her charge that men have arrogated feminine dress and manners, she notes that they have "even ravished from us our speech, . . . I have . . . heard a Man court his Mistress with the same words that Venus did Adonis, or as near as the Book could instruct him" (286)<sup>52</sup>. She urges *Haec Vir* and his contemporaries to become "men in words" as well as in other respects (288). Near the end of the debate, when she concurs that "it is necessary that there be a distinct and special difference between Man and Woman [as decreed] by the Laws of Nature, by the rules of Religion, and the Customs of all civil Nations" (287), she vows that when men become men distinctions in speech will again be observed; men will speak and women will listen:

Cast then from you our ornaments and put on your  
own armor; be men in shape, men in show, men in  
words. . . . Then will we love and serve you; then  
will we hear and obey you; then will we like rich  
Jewels hang at your ears to take our Instructions. . . .  
(288)



Hic Mulier's freely expressed defense of her right to dress as she chooses is stifled in her capitulation to patriarchal ventriloquism. As the debate draws to a close, she echoes male standards of value and accepts the patriarchal terms of the symbolic contract that define woman as other than and different from man, by whom she is defined. The jewel metaphor defines women as complementary to men and as male material possessions. As in the case of the rhetorical treatises, the figuration of women as valuable properties pertains only to good women who speak submissively, and therefore defensibly, within the patriarchal code. Women are property categories; they have no legitimate speaking position except to give voice to patriarchal instructions and to signify male complementarity.

Grammatical confusion and unnatural reversals and joinings are cleared when Hic Mulier and Haec Vir revert to their conventional gender distinctions in dress. Haec Vir announces that they will change their names with their attires. The adjectives and nouns that comprise their names will agree: "[He] will no more be Haec Vir, but Hic Vir; nor [she] Hic Mulier, but Haec Mulier" (288). With the reinstatement of correct grammatical inflection both speakers in the dialogue will return to their pre-established network of signification within the symbolic order. Transformed from Hic Mulier, the female speaker, Haec Mulier, will not question her place in the symbolic contract nor argue for a freer, more heterogeneous conception of woman. By the end of the treatise she speaks in defense of patriarchal standards of femininity. Both speakers observe the traditional male syntactic and sequential precedence. Haec Vir, the male speaker, had the first speech; as Hic Vir he also has the last word.<sup>53</sup> In keeping with the force of the invocation of biblical and church sanctions against Hic Mulier's earlier arguments and with the containing frame implied by this rhetorical strategy, he closes with a religious poem, thus giving ideological closure to her abortive critiques and attempts to revise the sociosymbolic

contract. The shift back to proper attire and proper grammar has led back to the woman's guide to proper speech.

## VII

As a rhetorical debate genre the formal Renaissance controversy over women functions as a containing strategy for women speakers. The generic conventions defined by male writers and rhetoricians who control the genre allow the female no autonomous or authentic speech. In the discourse of the debate pamphlets as in the rhetorical handbooks male authors designate female meaning in and through language. Women speakers are inscribed in the rhetorical structures of the arguments for and against women as complementary and subordinate adjuncts to male speakers. The female is figured as an either/or representative of two antithetical constructs; she is transcendently good or excessively evil, possessing no potential for heterogeneity. The male-imposed link between female silence and chastity strategically disempowers the female speaker. The genre, indeed, seems expressly designed to silence women. As I shall demonstrate, these conventions carry over to the drama, and are reflected in the verbal defenses of female characters.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> My quotations are taken from Duncan-Jones, Van Dorsten, Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney. See ch.1, n.12.

<sup>2</sup> Joel B. Altman, The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Frederic Jameson's The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) has been an extremely useful resource in this context. Jameson's Marxist-historical interpretations make this work an important precursor text to much of the new-historicist school of thought. In The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) Christopher Hill anticipates the direction of our current historical perspective in his claim for the perennial preoccupation with the past and with our changing conceptions of history: "History has to be rewritten every generation, because although history does not change the present does; each generation asks new questions of the past and finds new areas of sympathy as it relives different aspects of the experiences of its predecessors" (15).

<sup>4</sup> Two particularly well-researched and useful recent texts that make significant contributions to this project are Linda Woodbridge's ground-breaking survey, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984); and Constance Jordan, Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990). Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, eds., Half

Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640 (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1985) is also very useful.

<sup>5</sup> Christine de Pizan's The Book of the City of Ladies was written and published in France in 1405. The work was translated into English in 1521 by Bryan Ansley (The Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes). For a recent translation see The Book of the City of Ladies, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982). Christine conceived of, and wrote, her vindication of women as an objection to the treatment of women generally, and to crude, sexually explicit speeches attributed to Lady Reason in The Romance of the Rose by Jean de Meung specifically. (The first part of this well-known French work was written by Guillaume de Loris ca. 1225. De Meung wrote a seventeen-thousand line continuation approximately fifty years later). La Querelle de la Rose, interestingly enough, was simultaneously an attack on the misogyny of a male poet (Christine reverses the epideictic praise of Meung to negative criticism) and a defense of women. She turns the argument that the poem represents an example of correct moral life for men of all classes into an accusation that the poem is an exhortation to vice — specifically to the seduction of a defenseless young woman. (See "Epistre au dieu d'amours," in Euvres poetiques de Christine de Pisan, ed. Maurice Roy [SATF 24] 1886; New York: Johnson Reprint, 1965) 11, 10-14. I am indebted to Ann Jones' translation of excerpts from this work, which was among the reading materials of the spring 1992 Folger Seminar "The Polemics of Gender," which she directed. See also The Epistles on the Romance of the Rose and Other Documents in the Debate, ed. Charles Frederick Ward (Chicago, 1911) 17-28. While an in-depth consideration of this fifteenth-century work is outside the range of my study, it is certainly relevant and entirely fascinating that the

genre of women's literary defenses in connection with negative literary criticism of a male poet, instituted in France by a female writer, was transformed in England into a pamphlet war of defenses of and attacks on women. In England women were latecomers to the genre. Although Christine herself was extremely successful as France's first professional woman of letters, one of the strong arguments in her poem "Epistre au dieu d'Amours," which preceded the debate, is the contention that a primary cause of women's defenselessness against male literary attacks lies in their exclusion from the literary canon ("Epistre" 416-26). Her concern with male slanders against the linguistic sexual propriety of a female poetic persona emphasizes the preoccupation with female chastity as a central issue of the debate on both sides of the continent.

<sup>6</sup> See Suzanne W. Hull, Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640 (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982) 107. For more detailed material on the formal controversy see Woodbridge, Women; Henderson and McManus, Half Humankind. While both of the latter works provide illuminating coverage of the formal controversy, the orientation of each is different. Woodbridge offers a comprehensive survey and genre definition with a discussion of the surrounding issues, whereas Henderson and McManus present selected documents and their specific historical context. The latter is the first study to afford modernized and annotated editions of some of the key documents of the genre. I shall refer to the Henderson and McManus edition of a number of these pamphlets, including the Swetnam series and those dealing with the Hic Mulier Haec Vir controversy.

<sup>7</sup> In Women and the English Renaissance, Woodbridge attests that we need not assume that a defense is necessarily a response to anything (44).

<sup>8</sup> In Renaissance Feminism, her excellent scholarly analysis of the Renaissance gender polemic within a multi-generic and pan-European context, Constance Jordan also places the pro- and contra- women arguments within the rhetorical frame of literary defenses (3).

<sup>9</sup> The judicial oration was usually divided into five parts: the *exordium* or "introduction," *narratio* or "statement of facts," *confirmatio* or "proof," *refutatio* or "refutation of opposing arguments," and *peroratio* or "conclusion." Some rhetoricians combined *confirmatio* with *refutatio*; some added further parts such as the *partitio*, a "forecast of structure," the *propositio*, a "statement of theses to be demonstrated," and the *digressio*, a "digression." Even the most apparently *extempore* oratorical effusions followed some elements of Quintilian structure (Woodbridge 25). Woodbridge holds that the form of the Platonic dialogue is particularly suitable "as a literary forum for debate and . . . a method for discrediting erroneous opinion by embodying it in a speaker of questionable integrity" (18).

<sup>10</sup> Foster Watson places it among "the group of books in praise of women, based on historical examples." See Educational Classics. ed. J. W. Adamson (New York: Longmans, 1912) 212.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Shepherd, like Woodbridge, describes the formal debate as a rhetorical exercise. See Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama (New York: St. Martin's P, 1981) 205.

<sup>12</sup> See Henderson and McManus 20-24. The editors concede that there is no definite proof that the defense writers who used female pseudonyms, as Esther Sowernam and Constantia Munda did, actually were women. They contend however, that there is no evidence against the claims, and no advantage

to be gained by men writing under such pseudonyms. Further, they argue that the consistency of tone and convincing female perspective of the defense pamphlets support the authors' claims to be women. Henderson and McManus conclude that

since nothing in the tradition of the literary controversy indicates that men would write under female names . . . and since the internal evidence of the pamphlets themselves point to female authorship, it seems reasonable to take these women at their word. . . . (24)

Woodbridge also raises this question, but finds no evidence against the claims of female authorship (93).

<sup>13</sup> See note 4.

<sup>14</sup> My quotations from these pamphlets are taken from Henderson and McManus's text.

<sup>15</sup> Henderson, McManus, 270.

<sup>16</sup> See Coryl Crandall, ed., Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women in Swetnam the Woman-Hater: The Controversy and the Play. (Lafayette: Purdue University Studies, 1969) 3.3.117-23, 5.2.82-89.

<sup>17</sup> As I shall discuss, in my analysis of Othello, misogyny can easily be converted from a comic topos of gender-play to an effective rhetorical weapon of attack. Iago's sly attacks on Desdemona are examples par excellence of the negative latent power of ostensibly amusing and harmless misogynistic discourse.

<sup>18</sup> The Swetnam quotations, like the Sowernam and Munda excerpts are taken from Henderson and McManus's Half Humankind.

<sup>19</sup> Although I quote throughout this chapter primarily from the Henderson, McManus edition of these documents, I also refer to Simon Shepherd's Amazons and Warrior Women for material not included in the first source.

<sup>20</sup> Viviana Comensoli, "Gender and Eloquence in Dekker's The Honest Whore, Part II," English Studies in Canada 5. 3, (1989) 249.

<sup>21</sup> See Shepherd, Amazons 203.

<sup>22</sup> See also Woodbridge, 18-22.

<sup>23</sup> The Latin terminology for this division of a proposition is *partitio*. Judicious partitioning is an optional additional part of the conventional Quintilian five parts of the judicial oration. It is typical of Sowernam's organized structure and expertise in the art of logical disputation. The purpose of this technique is the rhetorical amplification of a discourse. By "dividing a matter or *materia* into its parts [the writer] . . . make[s] it increase and multiply." See Parker. Literary Fat Ladies, 128.

<sup>24</sup> If the Swetnam pro- and contra- women debate represents a collaboration between the pamphlet writers and the printer and distributor, as it might, it is relevant that Sowernam here seems to anticipate the anonymous play Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women. She entitles the sixth chapter of her defense Joseph Swetnam His Indictment and continues the forensic vocabulary in the opening sentence of this section: "Joseph Swetnam, thou art indicted by the name of Joseph Swetnam of Bedlammore (an allusion to Bedlam), in the county of Onopoly. For that thou in the twentieth day of December in the year etc. did'st most wickedly, blasphemously (as we have noted, Swetnam too refers to his work as blasphemy), falsely and scandalously publish a lewd



pamphlet entitled The Arraignment of Women." This is an issue discussed at the Folger Seminar "The Polemics of Gender," which I attended. Simon Shepherd also raises the question (Amazons 27-28). Indeed, Swetnam does show an interest in promoting a second book that he plans to write. See The Women's Sharp Revenge: Five Women's Pamphlets from the Renaissance, ed. Simon Shepherd (New York: St. Martin's P, 1989) 62.

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in Swetnam's attack is the passage in his preface in which he accuses himself of "the blasphemy of this infamous book against [women]" and declares that after writing the piece he cut his pen into fragments and considered cutting off his fingers (Shepherd, Women's Sharp Revenge 60). He then promises to make amends for his offense, thus implying that the attack is part of a series and leaving his seriousness suspect. Two wittier, more polished examples of this type of single-author literary attack and defense are Nathan Field's comedies, Woman is a Weathercock and Amends for Ladies.

<sup>26</sup> Shepherd, The Woman's Sharp Revenge 93.

<sup>27</sup> Peacham, 120.

<sup>28</sup> See my chapter 1.

<sup>29</sup> There are two successive chapters numbered four. This is perhaps a misprint.

<sup>30</sup> See Henderson and McManus, 228.

<sup>31</sup> Henderson and McManus point out that in the Renaissance and earlier, Euripides had an undeserved reputation as a misogynist (226, n. 15).

<sup>32</sup> Henderson and McManus gloss the term, "accidental cause," which Munda explains as "a cause as Philosophers say, *causa sine qua non*." They offer

the English translation: "A cause without which no definite effect takes place" (239). In Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language Sister Marian Joseph draws attention to the four major categories into which the term, *cause*, was placed in classical rhetoric and logic; efficient, formal, material, and final causes. Renaissance scholars would have been familiar with the several connotations of the term (120).

<sup>33</sup> Sowernam and Swetnam of course both follow almost universal Renaissance debate convention in arguing from biblical and classical exempla as authorities for their pro- and contra- women arguments. Yet if Sowernam actually was a woman she would have received a different education than a man, and might thus have been bound less closely to rhetorical conventions. As a woman writing in defense of women, she might well have constructed her arguments differently.

<sup>34</sup> This rhetorical strategy may be informed by a feminist subtext. Sowernam's judicial *prosopopoeas* may allude to Christine de Pizan's The Book of the City of Ladies in which the narrator is guided in her defense of women by three crowned ladies: Reason, Rectitude, and Justice.

<sup>35</sup> I am using the term "*dialogic*" here as Bakhtin does in The Dialogic Imagination to refer to his formulation of dialogism. See my n.3, Introduction.

<sup>36</sup> See Henderson and McManus, 245.

<sup>37</sup> This is the Swetnam ditty on which Munda comments:

Man must be at all the cost  
And yet live by the loss.  
A man must take all the pains,  
And women spend all the gains.

.....

And yet she thinks she keeps herself blameless,  
 And in all vices she would go nameless.  
 But if she carry it never so clean,  
 Yet in the end she will be counted for a coney-  
 catching quean.  
 And yet she will swear that she will thrive  
 As long as she can find one man alive. (257)

38 Qtd. in Henderson and McManus, 249, n.22.

39 See Crandall, Swetnam.

40 Crandall, 28-29.

41 Crandall, 21-22.

42 If we look back for a moment to the Swetnam attack, which begins the Swetnam controversy, Swetnam himself disdains female judges, declaring that he "meane[s] not to make [women his] judges" (Shepherd, The Woman's Revenge 61).

43 Simon Shepherd also remarks on the exclusion of women from the court. He observes that in acting "as a *group* outside male structures," women are effective in rectifying the erroneous justice of the male court (Amazons 216).

44 In his *narratio* the speaker defines the issue as pertaining to women only: "Come then you Masculine women, for you are my Subject" (266).

45 See Henderson and McManus, 265.

46 The editors observe that the Jacobean definition of *case* could denote clothing.

<sup>47</sup> As shall be noted in the discussion of Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl in chapter 4, cross-dressing is perceived by authoritative males as a sign of monstrosity. Constance Jordan points out in her analysis of the Hic Mulier and Haec Vir pamphlets that it is politically interpreted as signifying anarchy. (See Renaissance Feminism 305). See also Mary Beth Rose, The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) 64-92; Valerie Lucas, "Hic Mulier: The Female Transvestite in Early Modern England," Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme 24. 1 (1988): 65-84.

<sup>48</sup> Henderson and McManus, 272, n. 34. The term, subura, refers to "[a] poor district abounding in prostitutes in ancient Rome."

<sup>49</sup> The Genesis (King James version) text reads: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. . . ." (2.22-3). Women's subordination and subsequence is stressed also in I Timothy 2.11.14:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For

Adam was first formed, then Eve . . . (2.11.14).

These biblical quotations are cited in Parker's Literary Fat Ladies, 180. In The Renaissance Notion of Women (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980), Ian Maclean refers to the subordination of Eve to Adam inscribed in Genesis 3.16.

<sup>50</sup> This passage is cited in Parker, Literary Fat Ladies 111.

<sup>51</sup> The Haec Vir and Hic Mulier pamphlets may well point to their historical context. They were published at a time when James I had observed

with displeasure that a number of women were wearing male dress in public. James had ordered his ministers to preach against this practice, and a number of clergy had done so. James, however, requested no public comment on the issue of male foppishness, although quite a few men, including some of his own courtiers, wore elaborately effeminate dress. The speaker of Hic Mulier reflects James's bias.

<sup>52</sup> Henderson and McManus attest that the book is "doubtless Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis, a popular narrative poem which had been reprinted in nine successive quartos by 1616 (286, n. 36).

<sup>53</sup> See Puttenham on the rhetorical conventions for male syntactic and sequential precedence (250).

## Female Defendants and Male Judges in Two Jacobean Tragedies

### I

This chapter analyzes the discourse of drama to examine relations between, and resonances of, the conventions of Renaissance rhetoric and the formal Renaissance debate in the rhetorical structures of defenses by female dramatic characters. The plays selected for scrutiny are Shakespeare's Orhello (ca. 1604) and King Lear<sup>1</sup> (ca. 1605). Given the complexity of these works and the enormous range of critical approaches that they offer, a definitive and comprehensive reading that engages all or even most of the major issues, is beyond the purview of my research. I shall limit my analysis to the specific issues of this inquiry. My focus is on the specific ways in which the conventions of the nondramatic genres either operate in the drama as constraints against authentic female speech or present impasses the female speakers must negotiate. As we shall discuss, Desdemona and Cordelia are the central female characters who challenge but eventually are undone by male abuses of the authority to determine and control women's place, meaning, and discourse in the symbolic order.

Orhello is of particular interest in juxtaposition with Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedie of Mariam, discussed in the next chapter. Orhello and Mariam have verbal and structural parallels that illuminate the rhetorical construction of women as material constituted by male discourse and subjected to semantic shifts

by male speakers. While both plays offer an alternate spiritual depiction of women that potentially allows some female agency and effective defense strategies, Desdemona and Mariam are ultimately represented in stereotypical Petrarchan conceits that control and reify them as passive subjects of male discourse. Notwithstanding their differences, these dramas are both domestic tragedies among highly placed individuals; <sup>2</sup> in both, the tragic consequences arise from male abuse of the power to control female place and meaning in the order of language. The unique relevance of King Lear to this study lies in its representation of women in relation to rhetoric. In her inclination for silence in the oratorical contest that Lear forces upon the three sisters as the play opens, Cordelia illustrates the Renaissance figuration of a good, and, therefore defensible, woman. She speaks only at Lear's insistence, and then reluctantly, briefly, and simply. Her verbal reticence contrasts with her sisters' rhetorical facility, perfectly demonstrating the logic of the male attackers of verbally powerful women. Cordelia is represented as good and chaste; Goneril and Regan are both evil and unchaste. The three women are judged and praised or condemned by Lear and by the men who restore order by the end of the play, within the traditional gender standards that value and link female silence and chastity.

The judicial and forensic associations surrounding the formal controversy treatises are intensified in Shakespeare's female dramatic defenses as women are directly subjected to patriarchal judgement. Whereas in the formal debate male and female authors represent women on trial as a class, presumably subject to female as well as to male judges, Shakespeare presents individual female characters, subject to the decisions of specific male characters. In these plays the female defendants are closely related to their male arbiters as wives or daughters. This close relation notwithstanding, the convention established in the rhetorical

handbooks and treatises and the Renaissance debate pamphlets, of constituting and evaluating the female as a subject for attack or defense by constrictive male standards, obtains in the drama as well. While Desdemona and Cordelia initially promise more individuation and complexity as dramatic characters, by the end of the tragedies they are reduced to the patriarchally defined constructs for good women. In Orhello the standard is female chastity, and marriage is the tribunal over which the husband-judge presides. In the opening scene of King Lear, father and judge merge in the person of Lear, and both merge in the royal persona of Lear the absolute ruler. In this scene Lear adjudicates a public hearing of speeches by his three daughters, ostensibly on the question of female filial love, but actually on female homage to absolute patriarchal authority and to the principle that female speech is given charter only through the patriarchy.

The stress on male authority and female subordination in the order of language is the most recurrent transgeneric feature and the most constraining factor for the discourse of female defense. In accordance with the rhetorical and formal debate conventions, the premise of male dominance is figured as patriarchal disposition of a female subject, and it is predicated on the dual logic of male priority in all areas <sup>3</sup> (but especially in the *artes sermocinales*) and of the female and female speech as male property categories. In Shakespeare's tragedies, these male prerogatives are exercised on both state and domestic levels. In King Lear, Lear represents both levels in his double status as father and monarch. In Orhello the institution of marriage, on which the drama focuses, reflects the unequal political and legal relationship between male and female that resembles the relation between monarch and subjects; it is "contractual rather than consensual," and sacrificial for the generic female and for female speakers. <sup>4</sup> Like the female subjects of the male-authored treatises discussed in the preceding chapters, <sup>5</sup> the speech and meaning of female dramatic characters is subject to, and



contingent upon, male authorization. Desdemona and Cordelia display considerable verbal power, but they lack the authority, vested exclusively in males or in the patriarchally governed state, to legitimate such empowerment. This is why Desdemona's forceful self-defense fails and why Lear disdains Cordelia's defense of her fit and proper filial affection. Only male discourse carries the weight of legitimate authority.

The distinction between power and authority as constituted power that carries some title or charter to legitimate enforced obedience or conformity <sup>6</sup> is critical to the discourses of female defense in Othello and Lear. The most powerful justification for this rationale lies in the context of Christian theology generally and early Stuart theodicy specifically: the originary moment in Genesis when, in the archetype of an inviolable law reflecting the pattern of its divine source, God delegates authority over Eve to Adam. The position of woman in this typology is always "the quintessential political subject, forever bound to honor divine law . . . and obey her human superior." <sup>7</sup> In Othello vested authority and an authoritative discourse are located in the state and are extended to the characters who best serve the interests of the state. For most of the play this authority is given to Othello, and in lesser degrees to Cassio and Iago. It is only briefly loaned to Desdemona in her capacity to verbally complement Othello in the courtroom scenes early in the play. <sup>8</sup> When she speaks to Othello in Cassio's defense, not as an adjunct but as a self-authorized subject, Desdemona loses this entitlement. <sup>9</sup> Male possession of verbal authority as a constituted power enables Iago to falsely accuse Desdemona and at the same time prevents her from delivering an authoritative self-defense.

In keeping with the structures of authority in the order of language, the male characters who perform as judges in the dramas receive little external scrutiny of their speech or conduct. Othello, for example, is privileged to

sentence himself; he commits suicide for the murder of Desdemona, rather than be subjected to the legal indictment of his peers.<sup>10</sup> In what might seem an exception to this standard, Kent declares Lear as first “fall[en] to folly” and finally as committing “evil” (1.1.166). The fool, too, passes judgement on Lear’s flawed powers of discernment: “That such a king should . . . go the [fools] among” (1.1.177-78). But Kent and the fool remain loyal to Lear, and for the rest of the play the suffering and degradation of the dispossessed king at the hands of his two unkind daughters invite only sympathy from characters and audience. Indeed it would be impossible to withhold sympathy, or to do other than accept Lear’s anguished lament that he is “[a] man more sinned against than sinning” (3.2.58-59). Although in the recognition scene he confesses to Cordelia that she has “some cause” to condemn him, she too absolves him: “No cause, no cause” (4..7.74-75). At the play’s end Edgar and Albany, who represent the patriarchal succession, judge Goneril and Regan’s misdeeds, but make no reference to Lear’s flawed decision on which much of the action of the drama turns—his miscarriage of justice to Cordelia and his rejection of her defense.<sup>11</sup>

## II

The documentation of Shakespeare’s sources is an industry in itself. I shall therefore confine my remarks on this topic to a few brief notations. The plot of *Othello* is based on “a *novella* by Giraldi Cinthio, the seventeenth of the third decade of his *Hecatommithi*, published in Venice in 1565.”<sup>12</sup> Although the play was officially published in 1622 and 1623, it is held, on the evidence of an entry in the Revels accounts, to have been performed at court in 1604. An

alternate dating of the play is given as 1603. In his introduction to the Riverside edition of Othello, Frank Kermode contends that one of the major divergences between Shakespeare's and Cinthio's exploitations of the themes of love, jealousy, and revenge lies in the authors' treatments of the issue of Othello's race and religion. Cinthio uses it as the rationale for the tragedy: "Desdemona made an unhappy choice in marrying a man . . . unsuitable by reason of race, creed and education".<sup>13</sup> In his adaptation of the original narrative, Shakespeare makes Othello a Christian and limits the expression of Cinthio's moral to such unreliable or prejudiced witnesses as Brabantio and Iago.

Shakespeare's compression of time both intensifies the dramatic tension and reduces the plausibility of the plot by which Iago persuades Othello of Desdemona's infidelity. The short space of time in which the plot unfolds provides no literal opportunity for Desdemona and Cassio to have enjoyed the "stol'n hours of lust" that Iago describes in his charge (1199). Kermode holds that Elizabethan dramatic conventions overcome the difficulty (1199). I propose that the familiar discourse of the Renaissance debate over women, specifically the stereotypical antithetical female constructs, further Iago's ends. In her essay "Historical Differences," in The Matter of Difference, Valerie Wayne relates Cassio's courteous praises of Desdemona and Iago's misogynistic discourse on women in general to the formal debate (160-67). The conventions of Renaissance rhetoric, which facilitate male disposition of female discourse, place, and meaning, also make Iago's narrative plotting plausible to Othello. In any case Othello is driven by Iago into such a jealous frenzy that he is hardly rational.

The earlier discussion of the rhetorical strategy whereby Thomas Wilson displaces the potential for duplicity in figurative language onto the meaning he assigns his nameless female example illuminates the rhetorical structures of the transformative discourse by which Iago recreates Desdemona negatively in

Othello.<sup>14</sup> Desdemona's position as a topic of discourse controlled by Iago reveals the same vulnerabilities as the Wilson example. In the play, as in the Wilson preface, we see a specific example of the strategy by which the female may be constituted and controlled by male rhetorical techniques. Iago's skillful manipulation of dialogue in conjunction with the constraints on female speech prescribed by the rhetorical and formal debate treatises make Desdemona's defense against his defamatory discourse almost a rhetorical impossibility. In Renaissance Self-Fashioning, Stephen Greenblatt convincingly argues that Iago "[c]onstructs a narrative into which he inscribes . . . those around him" (234).<sup>15</sup> As his artful narrative gradually guides Othello into a murderous rage, Iago refashions Desdemona into her own antithesis, as an adultress, and Othello into his, as a betrayed husband. In order to achieve control of this misrepresentation, Iago inscribes himself in the role of trusted confidant, and to conceal his own intervention, he carefully controls his subjects. The conventions of Renaissance rhetoric that facilitate male appropriation of female discourse, place and meaning make Iago's narrative plotting plausible to Othello. The familiar discourse of the Renaissance debate over women with its stereotypical constructions of the female also furthers Iago's ends.

Like the female subject of male discourse in Wilson's attack Desdemona is not present to defend herself against either the innuendoes of Iago's initially covert accusations or his later overt incriminations. Iago uses his control of the dialogue with Othello to turn it into a sly *in utramque partem* debate over Desdemona's chastity. In a masterful display of rhetorical sleight of hand Iago manipulates the conversation in the third act so that Othello himself makes Desdemona a topic of their conversation. His insinuating remark "Hah? I like not that" prompts Othello to cast about in his own mind for the subject of Iago's veiled inference (3,3.34). The highly successful indirect approach allows Iago to

focus attention on Cassio's departure from Desdemona and on the knowledge of the latter's private conversation with her. Although a few lines later Desdemona makes a frank disclosure of the conversation to Othello (3.3.52-54), Iago's prior rhetorical frame of the incident puts her at a disadvantage. He has already shifted the meaning of the innocent meeting between Desdemona and Cassio to raise Othello's suspicions.

Unlike Wilson, whose intentions remain obscure, Iago declares in advance that he intends to reconstitute his female subject of discourse and to transform her angelic figuration in Othello's mind to its opposite demonic figuration. In an earlier private monologue he vows that he will "turn [Desdemona's] virtue into pitch" (2.3.360). He schemes to turn Desdemona's innocence against her;<sup>16</sup> indeed to "... out of her own goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all" (2.3.361-62). I will not add here to the numerous critical arguments focusing on Iago's motives or his misogyny.<sup>17</sup> I am primarily interested in him as an example of that disputatious and rhetorical cast of mind that Altman and Ong, among others, typify as characteristic of the Renaissance mind-set and of male education in the study of classical rhetoric. Indeed, as Iago declares his intentions to "turn" Desdemona's goodness into its opposite through his "net" of words (2.3.360-61), he sounds rather like a scholar preparing for a rhetorical exercise in the formal debate over women. The rhetorical frame within which women are contained in this dramatic tragedy echoes the conventions of the treatises and handbooks on rhetoric and the formal controversy. The epistemic limit imposed on female representation by dichotomous constructs is crucial to Iago's plot and to his success in convincing Othello of Desdemona's unfaithfulness. Iago plays on the extremes of good and evil that male writers and rhetoricians employ in their definitions of women. He effectively uses the conventional female antitheses to influence Othello and to redefine Desdemona's

meaning and place in the symbolic order. The divine Desdemona (2.1.73), praised by Cassio as

... a maid  
 That paragon's description and wild fame;  
 One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,  
 And in th' essential vesture of creation  
 Doth tire the [ingener] (2.1.61-65)

is the epitome of the Renaissance patriarchal construct of a good woman.<sup>18</sup> Cassio observes the proper rhetorical decorum in avoiding the Petrarchan blazon of Desdemona's bodily parts. Although proper rhetorical etiquette forbids any public praise of a married woman, particularly the wife of one's superior, Cassio's tribute to a transcendently good representative of a higher nature is appropriate to the role of intercessor with Othello, which he will shortly ask of her. The request, prompted by Iago, is part of the latter's design to blacken Desdemona's name and to turn her meaning in Othello's mind into "whore." Cassio's petition to Desdemona to speak on his behalf puts her in jeopardy on two counts. If she speaks independently against her husband's decision, she transgresses both the patriarchal code of female silence and the alternative of patriarchal ventriloquism. She must also engage in private conversation with Cassio before making the plea for him, a risky negotiation for any woman, particularly within the context of Iago's plot.

The rhetorical tradition that denies women ownership of authentic speech facilitates Iago's scheme while it hampers Desdemona's defense. The negative valuation of the female word and the inordinately high premium on male discourse further prejudice her defense before it even begins. Other critical elements that contribute to the problems of her defense are the force of male constructs of femininity and the overweening male concern with female chastity.

The strong injunctions against female speech, particularly in public or private conversation with a man other than her husband, make Desdemona susceptible to Iago's attack on her reputation. Indeed, the radical shift in Othello's signification of her from his "soul's joy" (2.1.184) to "public commoner . . . impudent strumpet . . . [and] cunning whore of Venice . . . [who] keeps the gates of hell" (4.2.73, 81, 89, 92) is precisely the kind of shift a male would make whenever any question regarding the character of a female (in this instance, of a female dramatic character) arises.

Other key factors in Iago's success lie in Desdemona's absence at critical moments in the dialogue and in Iago's deviously indirect strategy. By the time she is allowed to speak in her own defense it is too late; Iago has already convinced Othello of her guilt. Desdemona has lost both her power to persuade Othello of her innocence and her power to move him on Cassio's behalf; she is merely a disempowered subject of male conversation. By the end of the third act Iago is free to accuse her openly to Othello. Yet Desdemona is never made aware that Iago is her accuser. Nor is Othello cognizant of the steps whereby the dialogue turns from the question of Cassio's honesty (3.2.104-30) to that ineluctable standard of female honesty, chastity. Iago has been shrewd enough to observe the proper rhetorical decorum in terms of the deference due his commander's wife until, through his successful machinations, he tricks Othello himself into questioning her behavior. Up to this point Iago's accusation has been covert and unspoken but all the more keenly sensed by Othello.

In her essay "Shakespeare and Rhetoric: 'dilation' and 'delation' in Othello," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, Patricia Parker elucidates the rhetorical process whereby Iago ensnares Othello in the position of jealous husband. She argues that the enigmatic and frequently glossed Folio phrase "close dilations working from the heart" (3.2.123) is critical to Iago's verbal

strategy (54, 74). In this connection Parker considers several of the more frequently adduced interpretations of the term "dilations." She refers to Steevens' observation that "dilations" signified delays in ancient literature, a connotation relevant to Iago's tortuous drawing out of the suspicions which he raises in Othello's mind. Parker also notes Malone's citation of the Minshew 1617 dictionary gloss of "delate," a variant spelling of "dilate": "to speak at large of anything" (55). The latter is in the familiar rhetorical tradition of the dilation or amplification of discourse, discussed earlier.<sup>19</sup> While I will not attempt to duplicate Parker's superb analysis of Iago's usage of the rhetorical structure of dilation (38-54), I would like to pause over her commentary on Samuel Johnson's reading of the phrase as "close delations" or "occult and secret accusations" (55-56). Although Johnson's reading is generally rejected, Parker points out that the link between judicial delation, and accusation looks back to Cicero and Quintilian (55). Given the variations of seventeenth century spelling, "close dilations" could therefore easily suggest amplification and accusation simultaneously. In the context of semantic crossings between the judicial and rhetorical she cites the OED's "dilatat of adultery" (1536) as an evocative example (55-56). Parker proposes that all three resonances; amplification, accusation, and delay are highly suggestive of Iago's rhetorical manipulations (56).

A brief analysis of Iago's discourse on the theme of reputation in the following passage suggests the several interpretations proposed by Parker:

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.  
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something; nothing;  
.....  
But he that filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,



And makes me poor indeed. (3.2.155-61)

Iago both amplifies the meaning of reputation or "good name," and delays the secret accusation that the phrase insinuates. When Othello is driven to exclaim "[By heaven,] I'll know thy thoughts" (3.2.162), Iago prepares him for the hitherto silent attack on Desdemona by moving from a warning to Othello to ("beware, my lord, of jealousy!") to a common cause of male jealousy, the fear of sexual betrayal by the female beloved. The veiled and delayed accusation is implicit in Iago's reference to cuckoldry:

. . . That cuckold lives in bliss  
 Who, certain of his fate loves not his wronger;  
 But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
 Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet [strongly] loves!  
 (3.2.167-70)

By dramatizing and drawing out in the third line the sense of tormenting suspense that a jealous lover would feel and intermingling terms of love and doubt in the last line, Iago heightens the jealous suspicion that he has raised in Othello's mind. At this point he delays an outright accusation, but his rhetorical subterfuges and his cunning allusion to the term "cuckold" both amplify the charge against Desdemona and force Othello into a tacit acknowledgement that adultery is implied.

It is not, however, Iago's skillful rhetoric alone that stands behind his success; his considerable powers of persuasion are enhanced by the resonances of the powerful male-controlled rhetorical tradition. Othello and Iago are male characters within a Renaissance play, and both reflect the rhetorical conventions of the period, which, in turn, look back to the rules of classical rhetoric and to the divergent constructions of women promulgated by the formal debate. It is in large measure the premise that the female is matter for male discursive

disposition that enables Iago to redefine Desdemona's meaning in Othello's imagination. He proceeds gradually; first through wary hints advanced, then retracted, as in his apology, "But pardon me I do not . . . [d]istinctly speak of her" (3.3.234-36), and then to a more overt accusation. The seeds of distrust planted by Iago in Othello's mind are grounded in the male constructs of femininity and the stereotypical and polarized oppositions into which women are categorized in this tradition. If women are primarily represented as either chaste paragons of virtue or whores, the slightest question regarding female conduct will naturally turn on the issue of female chastity. Considered in this light, the swift sequence in which Othello first defends Desdemona against Iago's "inference" (3.3.176-92), then privately questions whether it might indeed be true (3.3.260-77), and shortly finds himself imagining "her stolen hours of lust" appears almost inevitable (3.3.37).

As Iago predicts, his project is facilitated by Desdemona herself. Although the play contains not one shred of evidence that she has ever been unfaithful to Othello, she unwittingly places herself in a vulnerable position for Iago's attack through her own magnanimity. His shrewd assessment of her character allows him to devise a strategy whereby he can exploit then shift the apparent meaning of her innocent words and conduct. Iago's advice to Cassio, in the second act, to "importune [Desdemona's] help" (2.3.219) to restore him to Othello's favour after the drunken brawl that cost Cassio his position of lieutenant, is calculated to "undo her credit with [Othello]" and to make her goodness seem evil (2.3.259). Desdemona is represented as an innately virtuous woman who unhesitatingly supports patriarchal ideals of female chastity in her words and actions. Her conversation with Emilia and Iago in the fourth act attests to her revulsion toward even the idea of marital infidelity:

. . . I cannot say "whore."

It doth abhor me now I speak the word:  
To do the act that might the addition earn,  
Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

(4. 2. 161-64)

Yet Iago successfully mediates between Desdemona's characterization as a chaste and honourable woman and the meaning that he chooses to assign her as a blatantly unfaithful wife, a meaning that Othello amplifies to whore. Her willingness to speak out in defense of Cassio allows Iago to misrepresent her to Othello as the antithesis of her true nature, and to declare, "O, 'tis foul in her" (4.1.201).

Iago's successful strategy is thus furthered by the authority granted in this domestic drama to male discourse, male rhetorical constructs of women, and male appropriation of female speech and meaning. The licence that we have observed on the part of male writers of the handbooks and treatises on rhetoric and the formal controversy over women is reflected in Iago's reconstitution of Desdemona. This privileging of male discourse over female speech predisposes Othello to allow himself to be guided by Iago's slanders against Desdemona but to swiftly dismiss Emilia's staunch defense:

I durst my lord to wager she is honest;  
Lay down my soul at stake. If you think other;  
Remove your thought; it doth abuse your bosom.  
If any wretch have put this in your head,  
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!  
For if she be not honest, chaste and true,  
There's no man happy; the purest of their wives  
Is foul as slander. (4.1.12-18)

As her personal woman in waiting Emilia is in a much better position than Iago to have knowledge of Desdemona's conduct. Her defense is unwavering, her wager of her life absolute proof of her faith in Desdemona's integrity, but her word has little currency with Othello. So convinced is he by Iago's arguments that no defense by Emilia could be of any avail. Indeed, rather than accepting her defense, Othello condemns Emilia along with Desdemona. "She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd / That cannot say as much" (4. 2. 20-21). Othello reverses Emilia's role of loyal defender of his wife's reputation to a "bawd" and accomplice in Desdemona's alleged sexual misconduct. Through his reliance on Iago's word he authorizes Iago to recreate Desdemona negatively. She is a fit subject for Emilia's defense; Iago redefines her nature to make her a conventional target for male attack.

The play gives no rationale, other than his trust in Iago's word, and Iago's rhetorical skill, for Othello's capitulation to Iago's representation of Desdemona even before the handkerchief trick. It is evident, however, that his high regard for Iago's speech is in inverse relation to his degradation of Emilia's word and reputation. Emilia's defense carries no weight at all in this patriarchal mediation between female language and meaning. Female speech is devalued and marginalized in the interests of privileged male speech. According to the logic of male discursive precedence, which comes into play here, woman's speech is the less privileged term in a system of dichotomous oppositions, in this case, male and female speech. Male language—Iago's—is the positive term by which female speech—here Emilia's—is defined as negative, and lacking authenticity.

In sharp contrast to his dismissal of Emilia's defense of Desdemona, however, Othello authorizes Iago's attack as entirely authentic and coming from a man "full of love and honesty, / [Who] weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath" (3.2.118-19). The last part of Othello's estimate of Iago's word is

accurate enough, but not in the sense that Othello intends. Iago's words are carefully considered and calculated to control the dialogue for his own purposes: the false rhetorical construction of the relationship between Desdemona and Cassio in order to redefine Desdemona from Othello's chaste and virtuous wife to Cassio's paramour. To accomplish this end he reformulates and recontextualizes both his own conversation with Cassio regarding Bianca (4.1.74-145) and Cassio's conversation with her (4.1.146-161). He represents the former to Othello as a circumstantial <sup>20</sup> inquiry into Desdemona's infidelities with Cassio, the latter as the bestowing of Desdemona's handkerchief by Cassio to Bianca, whom Iago describes as Cassio's "whore" (4.1.177). Iago's reformulation of the conversation hinges on a technique of substitution of person and meaning; his fabrications shift Desdemona into Bianca's place and Desdemona's signification into Bianca's meaning.

The handkerchief too shifts its symbolism in Iago's careful recontextualization. Othello originally defines it as a love token. As Iago and Othello discuss it, the handkerchief becomes a symbol of Desdemona's fidelity. Since Iago has arranged to place it in Cassio's possession, he begins to convert the little piece of embroidered linen material into material proof of infidelity. He guides Othello's suspicions in this direction by feigning the argument that Desdemona has the right to "bestow't on any man" (4.1.13). Unaware that Iago has purloined his token of love, Othello also links it to Desdemona's chastity: "She is protectress of her honor too; / May she give that?" (4.1.14-15). In a later dialogue with Desdemona he will again alter the handkerchief symbolism; it becomes a charmed object, given to his mother by an Egyptian charmer to "subdue [Othello's] father / Entirely to her love" (3.4.59-60). Within the terms of Iago's false rhetorical frame, it becomes ultimately a sign of betrayal and a piece of material evidence against Desdemona. Like Desdemona the handkerchief is

simply matter for male oratory and disposition, assigned a symbolic value and position, first by Iago, then by Othello. Yet its power as material evidence has a legal basis that lends it weight in Iago's scheme. In Cinquecento Venice, male possession of the handkerchief of a married woman was considered proof of adultery, and was deemed a punishable crime.<sup>21</sup>

Iago's rhetorical recontextualization and reformulation of setting, scene, action, and dialogue first turns the initial discussion of Cassio's honesty into a debate with the unwitting Othello over Desdemona's chastity, then into an arraignment in which Desdemona is the absent and disempowered defendant. Not present at this trial in which she is surreptitiously charged by Iago and judged by her husband, Desdemona is at the mercy of her self-appointed male coadjudicators. Iago's control of her place in the symbolic order divests her of the power to defend herself against his covert strategy. After Iago's attack, Desdemona has no jurisdiction to speak in her own defense or Cassio's. Whereas in the first two acts she seems to have the autonomy to choose Othello as her husband freely and to defend her choice eloquently before the Venetian court, a close reading of the dialogue reveals that in the first defense her authority to speak with impunity is merely borrowed from the dominant patriarchy. Her marital choice, though free, is actually a transfer of allegiance to male authority from her father to Othello, rather than an assumption of self-governance. In challenging her father's claim to her obedience (1.3.179-189), she borrows Othello's verbal empowerment to argue that her duty as a wife supercedes her responsibility as a daughter:

And so much duty as my mother show'd  
 To you, preferring you before her father,  
 So much I challenge that I may profess  
 Due to the Moor, my lord. (1.3.186-89)

Desdemona's verbal empowerment in the first act is thus merely provisional. Her father's and Othello's speeches take precedence in the order of business in the council room in Venice, over which the duke of Venice presides. In her challenge to her father she reinforces Othello's testimony regarding the narrative of his life's adventures and hardships that won her love. She prefaces her bold request to accompany Othello on the military expedition to Cypress, which the state has assigned him, by asking for patriarchal approval. Desdemona seeks a charter in the Duke's voice "T'assist [her] simpleness" (1.3.245-46). This apologetic approach to public speech is consistent with the rhetorical conventions for women. Although most of Desdemona's speech in the following passage is a spirited defense of her marriage it focuses on her willing subjugation to Othello:

That I did love the Moor to live with him,  
 My downright violence, and storm of fortunes,  
 May trumpet to the world. My heart's subdu'd  
 Even to the very quality of my lord.  
 I saw Othello's visage in his mind  
 And to his honors and his valiant parts  
 Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate  
 So that dear lords, if I be left behind,  
 A moth of peace, and he go to the war,  
 The rites for which I love him are bereft me,  
 .....  
 . . . Let me go with him. (1.3.248-59)

While her petition to the Duke may appear to oppose Othello's prior suit for her "fit disposition" in an accommodation in Venice (1.3.236-39), Othello himself sanctions Desdemona's desire to accompany him to Cypress. He too asks

the Duke to "Let her have your voice" (3.1.260). Desdemona here is giving voice to Othello's desire as well as her own. Since they are of one mind, her speech represents no challenge to his authority. While she briefly reverses the sequence of male/female verbal precedence she reflects a point of view that perfectly coincides with Othello's, and thus does not disrupt patriarchal control of the symbolic order.

In undertaking Cassio's cause, however, Desdemona transgresses the boundaries of woman's place in the symbolic order. When she agrees to speak for Cassio, she violates the code of decorum in which female chastity is figured either in terms of silence or patriarchal ventriloquism. Her defense of Cassio and Othello's knowledge of a private conversation between the two is a double violation of the patriarchal figuration of a good female, which dictates that a chaste wife's mind and words, like her body, belong to her husband alone. Indeed, Desdemona's openness and freedom of conversation with others, including Cassio, is noted by Othello just before he begins to succumb to Iago's persuasion that she has been unfaithful to him. He concedes that his "wife is fair, . . . loves company, / Is free of speech" (3.1.184-85), but contends that she is also virtuous (3.1.186). Nevertheless, the figural link between female silence and chastity represents a liability for Desdemona; it is the private conversation between Desdemona and Cassio, which he himself has engineered, that provides an opening in the third act for Iago first to intimate a silent accusation, then to introduce the debate over her chastity.

Desdemona's vow to present Cassio's suit to Othello "to the last article," and to "watch [Othello] tame, and talk him out of patience; / [so that] [b]is bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift" (3.2.22-24) implies that her speech reflects her mind, and not Othello's, and further, that she intends to attempt to persuade Othello to adopt her point of view. While she does not use the strong military



metaphors that rhetoricians such as Peacham associate with the figures of rhetoric,<sup>22</sup> Desdemona's figurative language in the phrase "watch[ing Othello] tame," with its allusion to the training methods of falconry, verges on militancy.<sup>23</sup> Her figures of similitude for Othello's bed and board as a "school" and confessional "shrift," respectively, are also aggressive. Although she has Othello's best interests in mind, Desdemona's plan encroaches on male proprietorship of the arts of speech. The persuasive modes of speech, generally associated with rhetoric and male oratory, are off-limits for women. In her desire to plead Cassio's "cause," and to act as his "solicitor" (3.2.27-28), Desdemona disrupts the symbolic order in which male speech is figured as sequentially precedent to female speech and the latter is construed as complementary, apologetic, and hesitant. Her outspoken defense of a male in conjunction with her private conversation with him challenges, even if inadvertently, the inscription of silence as the sign of female chastity and the traditional subordination of the wife's speech to her husband's. Once Iago begins his plot to "pour this pestilence into [O]thello's ear- / That she repeals [Cassio] for her body's lust" (2.3.356-57), Desdemona's verbal liberties place her in a vulnerable position for Iago's verbal manoeuvres.

In her discussion with Emilia, Desdemona reveals an intuitive awareness of her disruption of the patriarchal order in which the argument or debate format is figured as a male enclave. For a female speaker to enter this arena is a subversion of the conventional symbolic order, and in the fourth act Desdemona retreats from her strong verbal position. Her confession that she is an "unhandsome warrior" recalls Peacham's martial metaphors for the figures of rhetoric (4.1.151). While at first she attributes Othello's anger with her to his concern with some important matters "of state" rather than to her advocacy of Cassio, she has already begun to desist from her arguments on the latter's behalf

(4.1.140). In response to a later plea by Cassio for intervention, she rues that her "advocation is not now in tune" (4.1.123). Desdemona attests that she has "spoken for [Cassio] all [her] best, / And stood within the blank of [Othello's] displeasure / For [her] free speech" (3.4.127-29). Her second use of military imagery in the metaphor of the "blank" or center of a shooting target, which represents Othello's displeasure at her "free speech," suggests both the sense of a straying onto strongly guarded male territory for which the transgressor risks a violent penalty and the association of this violation with speech. The metaphor of a shooting target is premonitory of her fate for the unauthorized defenses of Cassio. But her death by smothering, as Othello stifles all her words, is more directly connected to Desdemona's subversion of the speech code.

Within the rhetorical structures of the play, woman's word is always subject to the empowered male word. In any contest for verbal power the male word has precedence. Female speech may only borrow power from the dominant patriarchy and cannot contest male discursive authority without peril. Once Othello allows himself to be persuaded by his male ensign of Desdemona's sexual transgressions, she is stripped of the power to defend herself against the accusation. It is noteworthy in this context that Iago feels no danger that Desdemona could successfully refute his false charges, but discloses that he "stand[s] . . . in much peril" from Cassio should Othello "unfold me to him" (5.1.20-21). Notwithstanding his awareness of the rage and jealousy that he has inspired in Othello toward Cassio, Iago fears that his careful plotting could be undermined by Cassio if Othello were to confront the latter with a direct accusation. As we have discussed elsewhere, men are ascribed credibility under their own aegis in this drama; women are not. The traditional reinforcement of the male penchant for engaging in verbal contests would also lend weight to Cassio's refutation; this is perhaps Iago's key reason for concluding, after a little

hesitation, that Cassio "must die" (5.1.22). In any case, he appears to fear Cassio's authority as a male speaker.

The discouragement of any autonomous female engagement in debate against a male opponent in the tragedy rests in part on the familiar Petrarchan figuration of the female beloved as a material commodity. In the Venetian council room, when he concedes that Othello has won his daughter's affections fairly, Brabantio refers to Desdemona as a "jewel" (1.3.195). When Othello succumbs to Iago's persuasion that Desdemona is false to him, he rails that he "had rather be a toad / And live upon the vapor of a dungeon / Than keep a corner in the thing [he] love[s] / For others' uses." (3.3.271-73). The crucial term here is *thing*, and whether Othello refers to Desdemona herself or to one of her female *parts* with the latter term, a staple of Petrarchan discourse on women, he reifies the object of his description. She, whether in her person or as her *part*, is explicitly described as a commodity for male usage. Othello casts himself in the role of rightful proprietor. He continues to define Desdemona in terms of commodity discourse after her death, claiming

. . . [Nay,] had she been true,  
If heaven had made me such a world  
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,  
I'd not have sold her for it. (5.2.143-46)

In his final speech, Othello bitterly repents that in killing Desdemona he "(Like the base [Indian]) threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe" (5.2.346-48). Some editors accept "Judean" for "Indian" and suggest that the reference is to Herod the Great who like Othello killed his beloved wife (Mariamne) in a jealous rage (1240, n.347). It is certainly of interest in this context that Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedie of Mariam, represents Herod as referring to Mariam before and after her death in very similar Petrarchan terms.

Desdemona attempts to defend herself as both chaste and innocent, but her verbal defense, like Emilia's, is brushed aside by Othello. When he asks her "what art thou?" (4.1.32), she makes a strong effort to correct her general representation as a woman and assert her particular meaning as Othello's "true and loyal wife" (4.1.33-34). Her defense fails because she never has an opportunity to contest Othello's acceptance of Iago's word. Her response to Othello's accusation that she is a "whore" or "strumpet"—"By heaven you do me wrong"—(4.2.82) is ignored. Othello simply repeats the charge. Desdemona's refutation,

No, as I am a Christian.  
If to preserve this vessel for my lord  
From any other foul unlawful touch  
Be not to be a strumpet I am none. (4.2.84-87)

falls on deaf ears. Othello repeats the charge in the form of a rhetorical question, already answered in his own mind: "What, not a whore?" Her persistent defense of her innocence carries no weight at all in Othello's prejudgement of her guilt. Desdemona's word is never allowed to contest Iago's definition of her meaning; her death by smothering at Othello's hand is the ultimate stifling of her protest against male misrepresentation of her signification. Although Othello's questions ostensibly qualify as an *in utramque partem* hearing of both sides of the issue of Desdemona's chastity, they are not questions at all but corroborations of Iago's arguments. Her final plea for mercy and insistence on her own integrity is strong:

And have you mercy too! I never did  
Offend you in my life; never lov'd Cassio  
But with such general warranty of heaven  
As I might love. . . . (5.2.58-61)

But Othello has already acknowledged that even a denial under oath by Desdemona could "not remove nor choke [his] strong conception" (5.2.54-55). He counters her last defense with the material evidence of the handkerchief planted in Cassio's possession. Only after her death, when Emilia's defense of Desdemona finally prevails, does he realize the truth of Desdemona's argument that Cassio simply "found it then" (5.2.67).

Emilia's ultimately successful defense of Desdemona's innocence succeeds only at the cost of her initial wager of her life for the disruption of patriarchal order. Although she initially seeks authority from Montano, Gratiano, and the other male officials present at the scene of Desdemona's murder, to break the code of female silence and to speak freely, Emilia defies Iago's regulation of her speech. She refuses both his order to "charm [her] tongue" and his command to "hold [her] peace" (5.2.183, 219). Shortly before Iago stabs her, Emilia challenges all patriarchal control of the symbolic order:

. . . T'will out, t'will out! I peace?

No, I will speak as liberal as the north:

Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,

All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak. (5.2.219-22)

Emilia's successful verbal challenge to patriarchal authority in this passage represents the only moment in the play in which the unmediated defense of a woman by a female speaker is given credence. Female control of female speech and meaning, however, is too brief and too belated to prevent the tragedy of Desdemona's death. The first tragic action, which precipitates the final one of Othello's suicide, occurs while Desdemona's significance is mediated by male-controlled discourse.

Desdemona herself is a sacrifice to the disastrous consequences of male abuse of the authority to determine her place in the order of language and to the

two overly simplified and opposite female positions in this order. She is neither Cassio's "divine Desdemona," Othello's "soul's bliss," or his "cunning whore of Venice," but a spirited, generous young woman with more virtues than faults. The play represents her as impulsive in both her elopement and her quick assent to take on Cassio's cause; she is even a little scolding in her defense of Cassio to Othello. Like most women, she has a heterogeneous personality and some potential for change. After the third act, however, she has little opportunity to express variety as a speaking subject; she is forced into the narrow rhetorical frame that the discourse of men constructs for women and into the apologetically subordinate discourse that the tropes of male dominance and female submission define for women speakers. At the beginning of the play, although she only argues for the transfer of her obedience from one male to another, she defies the conventional paternal disposition of the female in choosing Othello the Moor as her husband against her father's wishes. Desdemona's transgression of paternal authority is doubled by her autonomous choice and by Othello's racial difference. Since Othello's military accomplishments support their interests, the dominant patriarchy supersedes her father's opposition to the match and sanctions her choice. But the charter for speech behind Desdemona's defense of her actions is patriarchal authority, not to be confused with female autonomy. Othello's violent abuse of the power invested in his domestic patriarchal authority as Desdemona's husband in the final scenes of the play decisively silences Desdemona and prevents any future transcendence of her oppression in the male-controlled order of language and female speech.

## III

Shakespeare's King Lear was entered in the stationer's register in 1607. While the actual date of composition is variously held to be 1603 to 1605, the latter date is more generally accepted. The single most important source for the play is an earlier anonymous chronicle entitled King Leir (1249). The narrative of King Leir is based on an old folktale that reappears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century History; John Higgins's 1574 and 1587 editions of A Mirror for Magistrates; Warner's Albion's England (1586); Holinshed's Chronicles (second edition, 1587); and book 2 of Spenser's The Faerie Queene (1590). The play is also indebted to Harsnett's Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1603); Montaigne's Essays (Florio translation, 1603) and Sidney's Arcadia (1590).

Although Shakespeare modifies the plot of the original tale in a number of ways, I shall remark only on the revisions that have some bearing on Lear's attempt to direct his daughters' speech. In the former "a daughter tells her father that she loves him as much as salt and dissipates his anger by demonstrating that this means he is essential to her" (1250). The anonymous chronicle of King Leir begins, like Shakespeare's King Lear, with an aging king who lacks a male heir calling his three daughters before him. In the first play, however, none of the daughters are married, and what the king desires is a promise from each that she will marry the suitor of his choice. The older daughters agree, but the youngest, Cordella, avoids the promise. Lear's angry division of his kingdom between the two older daughters and his abdication are Shakespeare's innovation of this part of the plot. In the Leir version the king is deposed and Cordella returns to save him but is not murdered. Kermode proposes that the happy ending of the first play in which the king and his youngest daughter survive represents the greatest

difference between the two works (1250). Another important difference is the stress on the chaos that follows Lear's refusal to accept Cordelia's candid interpretation of her personal view of filial obligations. The power and pervasiveness of the rhetorical structures that figure female discourse as subordinate to male discourse in the order of language is one of the numerous revelations of Shakespeare's drama.<sup>24</sup>

King Lear opens with what appears to be a release of the conventional strictures on female public speech, a contest in oratory between Lear's three daughters, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan. In this scene, however, Lear is in total command of vested authority, and he uses this power to direct his daughters' discourse. The speeches follow his announcement that he is about to abdicate his responsibilities as ruler and will delegate the privileges and burdens of state to his daughters and their husbands. Lacking a male heir, Lear will divide his kingdom among his daughters; the distribution will be made according to the degree of love they declare for him in formal speeches before a court audience. The highest prize will go to the daughter who, in Lear's judgement, makes the highest claim of filial love. Lear's criteria for the good female governor reiterate Renaissance patriarchal constructs of a good woman as one who frames her speech to patriarchal desires and pays absolute deference to patriarchal authority. Most of the play reflects the disastrous consequences of Lear's standard of evaluation and his choice of the daughters most fit to receive his inheritance and to govern his state.

While the summons to the three female characters to participate in a public debate in order to acquire property and political power appears to contradict the conventional figuration of women as silent property categories, we must note that Lear assumes control over both the topic and the tenor of their discourse. Even as he stages his own disempowerment Lear wields authority



over the daughters to whom he proclaims the transfer of that authority. Indeed, Goneril complains later in the same act that he continues to attempt to maintain a hold on this power: "Idle old man, / That still would manage those authorities / That he hath given away" (1.3.16-18). The debate itself is an exercise in male proprietorship of female speech in return for female ownership of land. The daughters are allowed, even forced, to speak, but in order to qualify for the rewards, they are constrained within the limits of Lear's rhetorical frame, and entirely subject to patriarchal ventriloquism.

With the exception of Cordelia, who is unmarried, the relation between female love of a patriarch and the material commodity of land in King Lear inverts the Petrarchan economy that represents the female as material to be blazoned or merchandised by male orators. In this instance the female speakers will presumably gain both proprietorship of the land and empowerment in the symbolic order through oratory; the proportion of delivery of praise and acquisition of property and power is in a direct ratio. In a proclamation that both resonates and varies the tradition of the bridal dowry, which markets eligible females, Lear declares "a constant will to publish / Our daughters' several dowers" (1.1.42-43). His command "Give me the map there. Know that we have divided / In three our kingdom" relates the symbolic figuration of the female as male property to the division of actual property: Lear's kingdom. He states that the princes of Burgundy and France who are rivals for his "youngest daughter's love . . . are to be answer'd" (1.1.46-48), and that she will have her portion of his estate. It is not simply the fact that the two elder sisters, Goneril and Regan, are already married and only the youngest, Cordelia, is a prospective bride, but the method of transferring the inheritance that departs from tradition. In a frank equation of filial affection with material reward and an obvious

inducement to precipitate a public verbal contest in patriarchal ventriloquism between his female children, Lear enquires:

. . . Tell me my daughters

.....

Which of you shall we say doth love us most,

That we our largest bounty may extend

Where nature doth with merit challenge? (1.1.48-53)

The entire context of the preceding passage explicitly relates "merit," not as one might assume, in the succession of a kingdom and monarchical authority, to magisterial skills, but to oratorical skills associated with the conventionally forbidden (to women) province of rhetoric. The orations, however, are to be directed by, and used in the service of Lear. He sets the stage for extravagant declamations of filial loyalty and praise, which he indeed receives from Goneril and Regan. The two sisters compete for the most flattering similitudes. Goneril's description of her love for her father as so absolute that it transcends words, is nevertheless artfully expressed in language abundant with well amplified similes:

Sir, I love you more than [words] can wield the matter,

Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty,

Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;

As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable:

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

(1.1.54-61)

Regan's rhetorical copia cleverly surpasses her sister's by first incorporating, then increasing it :

I am made of that self metal as my sister,  
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
 I find she names my very deed of love;  
 Only she comes too short, that I profess  
 Myself an enemy to all other joys  
 Which the most precious square of sense [possesses],  
 And find I am alone felicitate  
 In your dear Highness' love. (1.1.69-75)

Her self-figuration as a sibling whom Lear should "prize" at the same "worth" as Goneril and her allusion to a measurement of filial "love" in which her sister "comes too short" echoes the terms of Lear's commercial economy of love. Regan's final profession of herself as "an enemy to all other joys" but her father's "love" exemplifies usage of rhetorical *sinatbriomus* or *congeries*, Puttenham's heaping figure; the latter is also referred to by Puttenham as "the recapitulator" when it is used to recapitulate, as it is here, in a conclusion.<sup>25</sup> If we keep the metaphor of a measuring scale in mind the scale is heaped to overflowing, as is Regan's *laus*, or praise of her father. Lear measures out the reward for his daughters' verbal eloquence, which, not coincidentally, is exactly what he wishes to hear, in acres of land. To Goneril he allocates "shadow'y forests . . . with champains rich'd, / With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads" between two lines on the map to which he points (1.1. 63-65). He assigns Regan an "ample third" of [his] . . . kingdom, / No less in space, validity, and pleasure, / Than that conferr'd on Goneril" (1.1.80-83).

Ostensibly, the two sisters' speeches are models of compliance with the symbolic order, in this instance authorized by Lear as titular and actual head prior to the relinquishment of his kingdom and his power. Yet their endorsement of Lear's command of their speech in the first act is empty of meaning; their

declamations of excessive love for their father reflect only patriarchal ventriloquism. Lear desires words of love from his children and he indeed receives the words that match his desires from the two elder daughters; but as the play reveals, their words do not reflect their minds and subsequent actions. Goneril's and Regan's love for Lear is in declamatory language alone, and like Iago they demonstrate that linguistic and rhetorical skills may be put to evil uses. Cicero's famous dictum notwithstanding, the good orator is not necessarily a good man, or, in this case, a good woman.

As their true attitudes toward Lear are revealed in their subsequent actions, the sister's speeches invoke Sidney's figure of the duplicitous "honey-flowing matron Eloquence appareled, or rather disguised, in a courtesan-like painted affectation" (see my chapter 1, notes 29 and 42). The Ciceronian convention of linking figurative language to clothing also is implied as Regan's rhetorical affectation is figured in her sumptuous dress, which she wears not for comfort but for appearance. As Lear later remarks: "If only to go warm were gorgeous, / Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st, / Which scarcely keeps thee warm" (2.4.268-70). Lear's allusion to her magnificent dress as more than "nature needs" may also suggest that Regan disrupts the order of nature. If so, the implication is not Lear's but Shakespeare's. Lear's insight is limited in this scene, which begins with his own reasoning that he requires a hundred knights because "man's life is cheap as beast's" if he does not have superfluities (2.4.267), as even the "basest beggars" in his kingdom do (2.4.264-65). In a later moment of recognition, Lear recants his unthinking statement:

... O, I have ta'en

Too little care of this! Take physic pomp,

Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,

That thou mayst shake the superflux to them.

(3.4.32-35)

The sisters' excesses and affectations are not entirely unrelated to Lear's own excesses while he is in a position of authority; both exceed nature's balance of needs, as does Lear's demand for absolute filial dedication. Their disruption of the order of nature is, however, far more violent than Lear's.

As the drama progresses, Lear begins to recognize the hollowness of Goneril's and Regan's rhetorical figurations of filial love. He reverses his opinion, situating the two women again at a dichotomous extreme in his affections, but at the opposite extreme, as demonic outcasts. In an ironic reversal they come to represent the negative opposites of their speeches in the opening scene. Their subsequent behavior, which initiates both Lear's suffering and the ensuing chaos in his kingdom, marks them, on the contrary, as embodiments of the abuses of rhetoric linked to females in the rhetorical handbooks, and to the type of evil, lustful, abusive women described in the male attacks of the formal debate. Yet while the daughters cannot be defended, it is Lear's misuse of the constituted power vested in him by his position as ruling monarch that is ultimately responsible for the havoc and destruction that follow his empowerment of them.<sup>26</sup> Lear's political error in preferring the rhetorically glib and vocal daughters to the silent one is not only a breach of rhetorical decorum but a moral lapse as well. In Still Harping on Daughters Lisa Jardine proposes that even Shakespeare's audience would interpret Lear's judgement, or rather misjudgement, of his three daughters' speeches "as a moral mistake on Lear's part. Silence=virtue; excessive speech=disorder" (108).

In contrast to her sisters' copious praise of their father, Cordelia's speech counters all of Lear's expectations. The brevity of her first response, the moderation of her discourse on filial love, and her implicit rejection of the terms

of the contest arouse paternal wrath rather than the promised prize. Yet while her aside after Goneril's speech "What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent" (1.1.62-63), reveals her resistance to participation in patriarchal ventriloquism and rhetorical hyperbole, it is consistent with patriarchal specifications for a good woman, and with the conventional linkage of female silence with chastity.<sup>27</sup> For once, however, the issue on which women are to be judged is not chastity, but filial love and obedience. Although her situation is different, Cordelia must, like Desdemona, defend herself against the charge of neglecting her responsibilities to her father. Her aside after Regan's declamation reveals that despite her repudiation of the oratorical contest with her sisters she is not lacking in affection for Lear, and she can defend her position. "[S]ure [that her] love is more ponderous than [her] tongue" (1.1.78-79), Cordelia refuses only to measure it out in words in exchange for land and power. When Lear asks her what she can say "to draw / A third more opulent than [her] sisters" (1.1.85-86), then orders her to "Speak," Cordelia startles him with "Nothing, my Lord" (1.1.87). In contrast to her sisters' rhetorical amplifications she employs the figure of *brackiepie*, expounding the matter more briefly than the hearer anticipates. Nor will she submit to Lear's urgings to expand or amplify her speech. Notwithstanding his injunction to "Mend your speech a little, / Lest you may mar your fortunes" (1.1.93-94), Cordelia assumes control of her discourse and speaks her mind straightforwardly. In contrast to her sisters' excessive claims she declares a genuine, but reasonable love for her father. She also attests that she cannot expound the love she bears to her father in words: "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth. / I love your Majesty according to my bond, no more nor less" (1.1.90-92).

In her reference to the "bond" between father and daughter, Cordelia defends her right to define her proper place in the symbolic contract and to

balance Lear's claims for filial affection and loyalty with other claims.<sup>28</sup> She expands upon her conception of familial ties and divided duties much as Desdemona does in the first act of Orhello:

... Good my Lord,  
 You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I  
 Return those duties back as are right fit,  
 Obey you, love you, and most honor you.  
 Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
 They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,  
 That lord whose hand shall take my plight shall carry  
 Half my love with him, half my care and duty.  
 Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,  
 [To love my father all]. (1.1.95-104)

In refusing to enter the declamatory contest and in defining limits that she will not exceed in filial love and obedience, Cordelia defends her right to examine, question, and transform her place from daughter to wife in the symbolic order. Lear, however, insists on absolute control of her discourse; he construes Cordelia's argument only as a challenge to his authority. Her resistance to his excessive demands moves him to shift her place in his esteem. Before her speech he "lov'd her most, and thought to set [his] rest / On her kind nursery" (1.1.123-24). The Riverside Shakespeare gloss on "nursery" as "loving care" (1256, n. 124) may be taken as an indication that Lear defines good women within the traditional patriarchal representation as ministering angels who nurture and protect the patriarchy.<sup>29</sup> Although, as I shall discuss, Lear later restores Cordelia to this position, after her speech he redefines her as an outcast and an outsider to the symbolic order, "banished [from his] dominions" (1.1.178); as a "new adopted" object of hatred, an alien "stranger'd by [his] oath" (1.1.203); and

as "a . . . wretch whom Nature is asham'd / Almost t'acknowledge hers" (1.1.212-13).

Lear also divests Cordelia of her rich dowry of property and places her instead in the general category of women who are themselves construed as property, in this case devalued property. In "dow'r'[ing her] with [his] curse," (1.1.203) and figuring her as a commodity of lessened material value, Lear attempts to disempower Cordelia entirely by depriving her of a husband in her enforced exile. He informs her suitors that "When she was dear to us, we did hold her so, / But now her price is fallen" (1.1.196-97). Lear's strategy, however, requires complicity, and only the prince of Burgundy complies with this linkage of love and property.<sup>30</sup> Cordelia herself regrets only the loss of her father's affections; she does not once allude to her material loss in her self-defense before her two suitors but focuses on her character and on the integrity of her words and actions. Although she rejects Lear's standards of value she begins the defense with a properly respectful paternal address:

I do beseech your Majesty-  
 If for I want that glib and oily art  
 To speak and purpose not, since what I [well] intend,  
 I'll do't before I speak—That you make known  
 It is no vicious blot, murther, or foulness,  
 No unchaste action, or dishonored step,  
 That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favor,  
 But even for want of that for which I am richer—  
 A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
 That I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
 Hath lost me in your liking. (1.1.223-33)



Cordelia's rejection of Lear's terms in the oratorical contest simultaneously refutes the marriage formula of the female as property to be disposed by her father to the husband of his choice, and allows her to substitute her own standards in place of Lear's. She defends her right to self-definition outside of Lear's value system by representing herself in spiritual rather than material terms.<sup>31</sup> Her defense is eloquent but free of rhetoric's ornament and hyperbole. In the opening line she defers to Lear's authority, acknowledges her own marginal position in the symbolic order, and in creating an opportunity for herself to speak before her suitors subverts these impasses. In the plea to Lear for an explanation of her fall from his favor, Cordelia inserts her marginalized discourse into the dominant discourse and effectively negotiates a method of defense. She herself insists on defining her character to her suitors and explaining the behavior for which Lear condemns her. In maintaining that her conduct entails "no vicious blot, murder, or foulness, / No unchaste action, or dishonored step," but something for lack of which she feels "richer," she reconstitutes herself and subverts Lear's misrepresentation and devaluation of her worth as an individual. Cordelia refigures herself as a good woman in terms of conventional constructs of femininity.

The art possessed by her sisters, which Cordelia lacks and rejects, "that glib and oily art" that enables them to declare deeds they do not intend to carry out: "[t]o speak and purpose not," is obviously the art of rhetoric. Cordelia's figure for Goneril's and Regan's studied speech obviously alludes to flattery and, more specifically, to the duplicitous and devious eloquence that Sidney condemns. Lacking, or at least declining to employ, the rhetorical expertise that would gain her such rich material reward, Cordelia bases her self-valuation on a more spiritual scale; she is "richer" because of her integrity in speech, intention, and action. In her metaphor of "a still-soliciting eye" for continual solicitation for

material reward,<sup>32</sup> she denounces her sisters' rhetorical delivery as well as the content and insincerity of their speeches. Her conclusion that she is "glad" that she has not "such a [deceitful] tongue" although it has cost her the paternal affection that she does value, recapitulates her rebuttal of Lear's terms of property in return for submission to patriarchal ventriloquism and affirms her autonomy as a female speaker. Cordelia's final words, "though not to have it [the tongue that will say what he commands] / Hath lost me in your liking," are expressed with simple dignity rather than in the richly figured words of praise demanded by Lear.

The king of France and the earl of Kent are entirely persuaded by Cordelia's defense of her integrity and of the love and proper respect that she bears to Lear. Kent's staunch defense of Cordelia results in his own banishment (1.1.144-54). The king of France offers to marry her for her virtues and her beauty, "dower'less" (1.1.256). Since, however, Burgundy mingles his love for Cordelia with her fortunes he is unmoved by her defense and unwilling to marry her without the promised rich dowry. The King of France, like Kent, accepts Cordelia on her own terms. He approves her nonmaterialistic self-valuation:

Fairest Cordelia, thou art most rich being poor,  
Most choice forsaken, and most lov'd despis'd,  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon,  
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their colds't neglect  
My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.  
Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.  
Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy  
Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.

Bid them farewell Cordelia,  
 Though unkind, thou los't here, a better where to  
 find. (1.1.248-61)

Male discourse in this scene, constitutes Cordelia in dichotomous oppositions. In contrast to Lear's denunciation and disinheritance, the king of France honours and endows her with his own and his country's riches, making her "queen of us, of ours, and our fair France." Cordelia's position thus shifts from dispossessed outcast of the symbolic order controlled by Lear to honored insider of a new and different order presided over by the king of France, who appraises her on her own terms. Although he alludes to her physical beauty in his address, ("Fairest Cordelia"), he gives no Petrarchan inventory of her bodily parts but emphasizes "respect" of her "virtues." The king is willing, as well, to accept Cordelia's individuality and autonomy as a speaking subject. He is unruffled by Lear's condemnation: "Is it but this—a tardiness in nature / Which often leaves the history unspoken / That it intends to do?" (1.1.235-37). Presumably, marriage will provide the occasion and the freedom for Cordelia to hold a less subordinate and constricted place in the symbolic order.

It is Cordelia who reinscribes herself in the old order and assumes the symbolic position earlier demanded by Lear. When she returns with her husband to defend Lear from her sisters' maltreatment she operates autonomously, but when she risks her life to stay with him upon the king of France's return to his country on urgent business, Cordelia begins to fulfill Lear's earlier expectations of a ministering, angelic, excessively loving daughter. Shortly before she encounters Lear she acknowledges that "[i]t is [her father's] business that [she] go[es] about" (4.3.23-24).<sup>33</sup> Cordelia's words, as she hovers over the sleeping Lear, bespeak a filial love more absolute than the natural bond that she affirms in the opening scene of the play:

O my dear father, restoration hang  
 Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss  
 Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
 Have in thy reverence made. (4.6.25-28)

While it is entirely natural that Cordelia should be strongly moved to assist Lear both by the pathos of his condition and by her sisters' abuse of him, she goes beyond the bonds of filial love and loyalty in her original vow and acquiesces to Lear's earlier demands for an unconditional and undivided loyalty and love. From this point on Cordelia makes no mention of that half of her "love . . . care and duty" that is due her husband (1.1.101-02); she concerns herself only with Lear. Thereafter she loses the more individualized and autonomous characterization that she appears to promise in her defense in the first act. For the rest of the play she fulfills the female ideals originally demanded by Lear as well as the generalized patriarchal constructs of good women.

Like the women defended in the formal debate, Cordelia represents an idealized version of femininity as she ministers to Lear. Even the other characters in the play describe her as an exception to her sex and a sublime representative of a higher nature. In his dialogue with Kent, the gentleman loyal to Lear compares Cordelia's tears for her father to "holy water from her heavenly eyes" (4.3.30). He affirms to Lear that "Thou hast one daughter / Who redeems nature from the general curse / Which twain have brought her to" (4.4.205-07). In his delirium Lear, too, attributes angelic qualities to the daughter he had earlier condemned. He mistakes her for "a soul in bliss" (4.7.45). Like Othello's appellation of Desdemona as his "soul's bliss," Lear's comparison is drawn from a lexicon of male constructs of women at the positive extreme, as divine or elevated beings, whose mission it is to support and protect the patriarchy and the symbolic order.

The negative extremes of male linguistic indexes of female identity are constituted by a lexis of devils, fiends, darkness, and various forms of corruption. Throughout the play, in his half-mad and feeble condition as well as in his original state of absolute empowerment, Lear construes women only according to these divisions. His view of women does not necessarily coincide with their representations at the time of his definition but with his state of mind. Although his description of Goneril and Regan's lechery in the context of his dialogue with Gloucester on adultery and female sexuality happens to be accurate in terms of their actions and character, at this point in the drama Lear is in no position to have direct knowledge of their conduct. Lear's figurations are extreme; he heightens and intensifies the familiar tropes of female abuse and he includes all women in his attack.<sup>34</sup> The attack also incorporates a short passage of conventional female defense, representing women as figures of the divine:

The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't  
With a more riotous appetite.  
Down from the waist they are Centaurs,  
Though women all above;  
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
Beneath is all the fiends'; there's hell, there's  
darkness,  
There is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding,  
Stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie! pah, pah! (4.6.122-28)

The lines "Though women all above; / But to the girdle do the gods inherit," are drawn from the familiar stock of tropes of female praise: woman as angelic, superhuman being. In the context of the surrounding passage, the lines represent a fragmented construct of the female, a split between the angelic and demonic. This fragmentation is in Lear's imagination, not in any female character within

the play. It is also in Lear's general conception of women; he is only able to imagine the female categorized within this frame. From Lear's point of view, when Cordelia returns to assist and care for him, she returns to her originally positive place in his affections and judgement as his favourite daughter. The only difference is that her virtues now are heightened and she stands in sharper contrast to the wicked sisters, fulfilling her role as angel of mercy sent to undo their evil. For that matter, the play itself limits the female characters to these antitheses; it contains no moderating female representation after Cordelia's original, short-lived attempt to reconstitute herself.

For the rest of the drama Cordelia serves as the female sacrifice who helps to restore and perpetuate the ruins of patriarchal order. When she is captured along with Lear by the soldiers of her sisters and Edmund she voices concern only for her father: "For thee oppressed king, I am cast down" (5.3.5). Lear follows his "Come let's away to prison" speech (5.3.8-18) with high commendation for her sacrifice: "Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, / The gods themselves throw incense" (5.3.20-21).<sup>35</sup> From this point on Cordelia is silent; Lear speaks for her and of her. After her murder in prison he describes her voice in terms expressing stereotypical patriarchal valuations of female discourse: "Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman" (5.3.273-74). Lear's emphasis here is not on the content but simply on the tone of Cordelia's speech. In the final scene, desperately seeking for a sign of breath stirring her still lips, Lear calls attention to her silence: "Look on her! Look her lips, / Look there, Look there!" (5.3.311-12). But Cordelia is permanently silenced; her self-sacrifice has helped to preserve the symbolic contract and to restore the patriarchy. Lear too ceases to speak or to wish the return of his power; his death quickly follows Cordelia's. Order will be restored by a new patriarchy headed by Edgar, who, chastened by his own vicissitudes and

saddened by the tragedies befallen Lear and Gloucester, counsels the survivors of the grim series of calamities to "[s]peak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (5.3.320). Edgar's admonition may be a belated male endorsement and authorization of Cordelia's original attempt to express herself in authentic discourse. If so, the play that begins with a contest in female oratory and Cordelia's banishment for her self-authorized speech, ends with a posthumous defense of her values and her verbal integrity. Even so, Cordelia is relegated to the margins of the drama; her defense of her right to challenge patriarchal order has shifted to a defense of that order and she remains contained within the narrow constructs of women defined by the rhetorical structures of the dominant patriarchal discourse.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> My Shakespeare quotations throughout this chapter are taken from The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Although the interest in domestic issues in both plays places them in the category of domestic tragedy, their emphasis on the political dilemmas of men, highly placed in public life distinguishes them from the popular English domestic dramas that also link marriage and murder. For an excellent analysis of the latter genre see Leanore Lieblein, "The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays, 1590-1610," Studies in English Literature 23 (1983): 181-96. Lieblein describes the domestic dramas set in England as a group of six plays that "examine conflicts and their consequences which arise in a middle-class family situation" (181). She notes that such plays emphasize a socioeconomic context, moral judgements and a providential pattern of sin, retribution, and repentance, usually in connection with the problem of adultery (181-82, 194, 196). As Lieblein concludes, the moral vision of the great Jacobean tragedies that followed the last of these popular London stage dramas, John Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness, is considerably more complex (196). Despite their differences from the popular domestic plays, and indeed, from each other, Othello (ca.1605) and Mariam (ca. 1603) share an interest in the domestic issues found in the earlier group of plays. While Othello, however, was composed for the stage, Mariam was written as a closet drama intended for a small audience of readers.



<sup>3</sup> One conflicted area of exception was the the putative spiritual equality of women in early seventeenth-century theodicy. See Ian Maclean, The Renaissance Notion of Women (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980) 13-14; and Constance Jordan, Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) 22-29.

<sup>4</sup> I have discussed elsewhere the correlation of this contractual relationship to what modern theorists like Kristeva designate the symbolic contract. For an illuminating development of this topic see Jordan, 3, 4, 47, 49, 124. See also Karen Newman, Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991) 87. For further reading see Robert Filmer, Patriarcha and Other Political Works; ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949); Jonathan Goldberg, James I and the Politics of Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983). As I shall discuss in the next chapter, this relationship is intensified, underscored, and questioned by Elizabeth Cary's play, The Tragedie of Mariam.

<sup>5</sup> This is also the case in other noncanonical texts that this inquiry does not include, such as the handbooks on marriage, educational treatises, and religious tracts.

<sup>6</sup> See Jordan, 4.

<sup>7</sup> See Jordan, 308.

<sup>8</sup> Constance Jordan remarks in her analysis of Renaissance humanism that women were considered admirable in the role of "faithful lieutenant to . . . male superiors" (35). The military frame of the courtroom scene would have only heightened the possibilities of Desdemona receiving authorization for performing this complementary role to Othello. Her speeches and her desires coincided

with the interests of the state and with the interests of Othello who was employed in the task of defending the state militarily.

<sup>9</sup> Although Desdemona insists that her defense of Cassio is in Othello's best interests (and the play demonstrates that it is), she authorizes herself to define those interests. Such female self-authorization transgresses the code of male command and female subordination.

<sup>10</sup> That is not to say that his peers exonerate him from responsibility for his actions. He is, however, spared the indignity of a legal trial, which would diminish his stature even more, and permitted by Shakespeare the traditional option (for a heroic military man) of taking his own life.

<sup>11</sup> In her essay "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: King Lear and Measure for Measure," Kathleen McLuskie observes that Lear's power over his daughters at the beginning of the play "is socially sanctioned, but its arbitrary and tyrannical character is clear from his treatment of Cordelia" (105). She holds that the power that he delegates to Goneril and Regan is the obverse of his own and that both are the result of a patriarchal model of family organisation which "affords no rights to the powerless within it" (105). McLuskie also remarks on "the material basis" of this power. She argues convincingly that Cordelia "introduce[s] a notion of love as a more individual and abstract concept, incompatible both with public declaration and with computation of forests, champains, rivers and meads" (104). It was obviously the latter notion of love that prompted Cordelia to return to Lear's assistance after her sisters' mistreatment of him. McLuskie's essay is in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, eds., Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 88-108.

<sup>12</sup> This information is taken from The Riverside Shakespeare, 1198. Other standard resources are Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, 8 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1957-75) vol.7; A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, 2nd ed. (1904; London: Macmillan, 1920); Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth-Century, 1600-1660 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

<sup>13</sup> See Riverside, 1198.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>15</sup> Greenblatt also draws attention to a passage in Kenneth Burke's A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: U of California P, 1969) 243. In the passage from which Greenblatt quotes, Burke observes that in order to arouse Othello to jealousy, Iago draws him into a specific type of language describing women, a language that Othello knows but does not normally use. Burke refers to the discourse of women as properties and the male ideal of love that represents the female beloved as a male possession. Neither Burke nor Greenblatt point to Petrarchan poetics as an informing principle in this view of women, however. Burke does remark on the degradation of women implied by such language. He notes that in revising Othello's conception of Desdemona as a spiritual possession to one of her as his private property, Iago's persuasive rhetorical machinations persuade Othello to see "Desdemona in terms of this greatly reduced idiom, wholly lacking in possibilities of idealization (44).

<sup>16</sup> In Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), Lisa Jardine points that a number of critics question Desdemona's "supposed 'innocence.'" She cites M.R. Ridley, the Arden editor of Othello. In a critique in his footnotes from which

Jardine quotes a passage, we find the statement that Ridley finds it "distasteful to watch [Desdemona] engaged in a long piece of cheap backchat with Iago, and so adept at it that one wonders how much time on the voyage was spent in the same way" (119-20). Ridley thus raises the issue of Desdemona's possible misconduct on the grounds of her free banter with Iago. It is quite fascinating to discover an authoritative twentieth-century male critic making the same connection between female eloquence and questionable chastity that Renaissance males did. As Jardine remarks, in the play "[t]he shadow of sexual frailty hovers over Desdemona, . . . " because female speech is linked to sexuality (185. See also 119, 20). However, as I have just noted in the play, Iago clearly acknowledges Desdemona's innocence, thus invalidating Ridley's position. In her essay, "Historical Differences: Misogyny and Othello," Valerie Wayne also addresses Ridley's quibble over Desdemona's repartees with Iago. See Valerie Wayne, ed. *The Matter of Difference* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 160-65.

<sup>17</sup> One of the more famous enquiries is A. C. Bradley's discussion in Shakespearean Tragedy of Coleridge's analysis of Iago's "motiveless malignancy," or a disinterested delight in the pain of others." (217) Bradley contends that this phrase is misleading. He finds Iago a remarkable dramatic character whose "powers of dissimulation and self-control [are] prodigious." (217) He adds that Iago, though selfish and unfeeling was "not by nature malignant" (217).

<sup>18</sup> Wayne observes that "the divergent constructions of women by Cassio and Iago parallel the praise and blame accorded to women in the Renaissance debate" (Matter of Difference 160).

<sup>19</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> The tradition of rhetorical dilation as the amplification of a matter through the detailing and examination of circumstances was the standard form of a legal indictment in the Renaissance. Examples of such circumstances are the persons who, and to whom, the time, the place, the intent, the manner, the consequences, etc. See Patricia Parker, Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property (London: Methuen, 1987) 56-57 for further elucidation.

<sup>21</sup> See Newman, 90.

<sup>22</sup> See chapter 1, n.19.

<sup>23</sup> See the Riverside gloss (1220). The taming figure is frequently used in connection with the taming of a female scold or shrew, although sometimes, as in the case of John Fletcher's The Woman's Prize, which is discussed in the next chapter, the term refers to the curing of male misogyny.

<sup>24</sup> As Peter Erikson points out, one of the tasks of contemporary feminist criticism is "the need for critics to resist the ideology of femininity that Shakespeare historically represents" ("Rewriting the Renaissance, rewriting ourselves," Shakespeare Quarterly 38 [1987] 327-37. Qtd. in Wayne, 126. See also McLuskie, in Dollimore and Sinfield, 106. While as critics we cannot quarrel with Shakespeare's artistic prerogative to define a subordinate place for Cordelia in the order of his dramatic discourse, we are entitled to discern and focus on her oppression and the constraints on her female defense dialogue in that discourse.

<sup>25</sup> Taken in the context of later events when it becomes evident that not only does Regan not love Lear but she is, in effect, an enemy to *his* joys, her figure could well be termed irony.

<sup>26</sup> McCluskie also makes this point. Although she concedes that we cannot withhold sympathy for Lear after the first act, she too, however, emphasizes his accountability in the disastrous aftermaths of his actions (Dollimore and Sinfield, 88-108).

<sup>27</sup> Jardine notes that Cordelia's silence is appropriate proof of her female virtue, and that in preferring the voluble speech of his two elder daughters Lear precipitates the misrule that follows (109). She cites a tale from Robert Greene's Penelope's Web in which another king, Ariamenes, confronted with a similar decision between three daughters-in-law, makes the correct choice of the silent female (108-09). See A. B. Grosart, ed., The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, MA, 4 vols. (New York, 1964 reissue), Vol. 4, 231-32.

<sup>28</sup> Other critics have a similar point. See for example Jardine, 108-10; Jordan, 1-10, 65-133, McCluskie in Dollimore and Sinfield, Political Shakespeare 104-05.

<sup>29</sup> See Coppélia Kahn, Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley: California UP, 1981) 11.

<sup>30</sup> Although the king of France declares that Cordelia is "herself a dowry" (1.1.241), the prince of Burgundy has a more material view of love and withdraws his offer of marriage.

<sup>31</sup> The issue of the theoretical spiritual equality of women will be more fully explored in Mariam. See also Jordan, 22-29, Maclean, 47-67.

<sup>32</sup> The Riverside gloss is "begging." See 1258, n.231.

<sup>33</sup> In the Riverside introduction to King Lear Kermode notes that Cordelia's role is particularly important to those critics who interpret her it and

this line in the play as allusions to Christian allegory (1254). While I would not argue for a Christian-allegorical reading of Lear, I suggest that in speaking the words of Christ, Cordelia identifies herself as a sacrificial figure who is prepared to put Lear's well-being before her own.

<sup>34</sup> Ironically, Lear's attack on women follows his pardon of Gloucester, who, in his madness, Lear does not recognize, for adultery; Lear's generalized tirade against women is precipitated by his recollection of his own two unkind daughters and of Gloucester's illegitimate son, Edmund, whom he mistakenly assumes has been kinder to his father than Lear's own "lawful" children. The irony in the scene is compounded by the fact that Edmund, the offspring of Gloucester's illicit liason, is the object of Goneril's and Regan's illicit love, and of Lear's double standard, which exonerates men but condemns women for the same offense. Some critics argue that the play as a whole condones this double standard. Indeed, Goneril and Regan are provided with no excuses or extenuating circumstances for their conduct. Marilyn French observes that "In the rhetoric of the play, no male is condemned as Goneril is condemned" (233). See Marilyn French, Shakespeare's Division of Experience (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982). However, we might also argue that the play exposes, rather than condones, the exoneration of men from accountability in such cases.

<sup>35</sup> The Riverside gloss on this passage suggests two interpretations: Lear may refer to Cordelia's sacrifice for him, or to their joint sacrifice in giving up the world. In my estimation, the lines "He that parts us shal' bring a brand from heaven, / And fire us hence like foxes" imply the first interpretation (5.3.23-24). Like Stanley Cavell I would argue that Lear's desire to be alone with Cordelia in prison is a "repetition of his strategy in the first scene" (152-53). See Stanley

Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say? (New York: Scribner, 1969). Although Lear is radically changed after his harsh experiences and has neither his former authority nor the desire to impose it on Cordelia, the prison imagery tellingly exposes his inclination to enclose Cordelia within the narrow circle of his affections, rather than to hope for her release to a presumably happy marriage with a considerable degree of liberty.



Chaste but Not Silent: Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam Tragedy*

I

In the powerful conclusion of King Lear Cordelia's death is appropriated by and presented primarily in relation to Lear. The ordering of the play follows the standard gender precedence of the rhetorical treatises in its title and content, which define Lear as subject and Cordelia as adjunct. Lear's priority is obviously appropriate in the tragedy in which he plays the leading role, and Cordelia, a supporting, one. Yet although in the two Shakespearean tragedies that include the names of female characters in their titles (Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra) the female protagonists play roles equal to those of the male heroes, male sequential precedence is followed in these titles as well.<sup>1</sup> Cary's The Tragedie of Mariam. The Faire Queene of Jewry (ca. 1603) reverses the sequence of male precedence in the ordering of plot, dialogue, and title.<sup>2</sup> *Mariam* is the leading character in the drama that bears her name and she displays the qualities befitting a heroine, conducting herself courageously and facing death with stoic dignity. While her death is both mandated by and, in the final scenes, presented in relation to the grieving Herod, *Mariam* alone commands our sympathy. No expression of regret, however hyperbolic, can defend Herod's part in her execution.

In his status as husband and ruling sovereign, Herod exercises the prerogatives of male authority over *Mariam* on state and domestic levels. As a

representative of patriarchal absolutist monarchy as well as males in the general populace, Cary's Herod emblemizes the mirroring and doubling of female subjection intrinsic to the marriage model.<sup>3</sup> However, Herod is a particularly problematic subject for the religious typology that provides a rationale for male proprietorship of authority over women. Although his secular power is absolute, he is guilty of abuses of authority that no theological rationale can support. In the final scenes, even he confesses his agency and culpability in Mariam's death, castigating himself as a "vile monster," an epithet with which we are inclined to agree. We are not invited to sympathize with Herod as we are with Othello and Lear, for all their faults. Even though the chorus voices only a mild reproof for his execution of Mariam, in emphasizing Mariam's integrity the play itself tacitly condemns Herod. He is, as well, strongly censured by the annals of history and the medieval tradition of Herod dramas, both of which present him as the notorious slaughterer of the innocents. Indeed Cary's particular choices of historical figures for the protagonists and historical material for the plot of her drama subverts the conventional theological and political justifications for male magistracy over women and for male control of female speech. The Mariam tragedy implicitly questions the linguistic power relations that inscribe male dominance and female subordination in the order of language.

While Cary's play, like Shakespeare's Othello and King Lear, was written during the early years of James's reign, (between 1603 and 1605), the latter two are highly acclaimed works of the traditional canon. They were composed by the world's most eminent English playwright at the height of his career and his creative powers. On the other hand Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedie of Mariam, a closet drama composed very early in Cary's literary career (about 1603) and published anonymously in 1613, has found no place in the canon.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it claims our attention as worthy of inclusion in this study on

several counts. As far as I have been able to determine, it is the first original play written and published by an English woman in the Renaissance. It is also the first English dramatization of the Herod and Mariam story. In addition, Cary's tragedy claims our attention as an inquiry into the problem of female speech in relation to rhetorical strategies for female defense and to the pro- and contra-woman arguments of the formal debate. Finally, the Mariam play claims our interest as a protest against the abuses of patriarchal absolutism as manifested in male appropriation of female speech. Although each of the plays contains a female protagonist who in some manner challenges male control of her speech, the issue is foregrounded in Mariam. The heroine's death is precipitated by and directly related to her attempt to constitute herself through self-authorized, authentic speech and to her resistance to Herod's attempt to appropriate and control her discourse; Mariam's laconic defense represents one instance of this resistance.

## II

Cary uses the device of a chorus to represent the conservative voice of the community as an arbiter of public opinion on Mariam's speeches and conduct throughout the play. Through subtle ambiguities in the choral pronouncements she fully vindicates Mariam on the spiritual plane. Mariam has however, crossed the boundaries set for the containment of female discourse and the play does not overtly condone her verbal freedom. The final chorus, which functions as an epilogue, concedes that Mariam's unorthodox habits of speech have compromised her reputation; "she did her name disgrace" (5.1.2223). But they do not justify

Herod's decision to have her put to death. Although they do not explicitly defend Mariam or accuse Herod, the allusion of the chorus to Herod's arbitrary capriciousness implicitly questions the allocation of absolutist power to such a fallible male magistrate: "Yet now againe so short do humors last, / He both repents her death and knows her chaste" (5.1.2224-25). The issue of Herod's betrayal of his authority simultaneously poses an ethical dilemma for Mariam as his female subject and mitigates her fault. Whereas Mariam's unrestrained speech reflects only on her reputation or "name," Herod's crimes stem from a spiritual failure that reflects on his essential character. Mariam receives some censure for her verbal improprieties, particularly for her outspoken protests to Herod, but the play as a whole stresses that she is spiritually above reproach.

Although the play contains little overt action,<sup>5</sup> Mariam and Salome's speeches function as subversive alternatives to the political action denied them as women and as subjects of the despotic Herod. Through their speeches in defiance of Herod's authority (although Salome's resistance is concealed and dissimulated), they tacitly challenge the oppressed state of the female subject in relation to male absolutism. Mariam does not, as Salome does, propose revolutionary solutions for the disadvantaged position of women in the contractual arrangements between the sexes or for the legal system that legislates the political subordination of women to men. Her chief concerns are private and individual—Herod's ruthless exploitation of his power for the purpose of murdering her brother and her grandfather and her right to speak publicly against his unwarranted violence and tyranny. In her opening speech Mariam also defies the domestic constraints that limit women to the confines of their homes.<sup>6</sup> While it might be argued that her defense of her right to protest and to speak in public places with persons other than Herod promotes a more constitutional model of domestic, if not also of state, government, Mariam's open but limited

resistance is politically conservative in comparison to the radical thought that Salome's feigned submission to her brother masks.

In accepting Herod's legal and political authority over her but assuming responsibility for her own conscience, Cary's Mariam touches on a conflicted doctrine in Renaissance theology. Within the terms of this doctrine the subject has a primary obligation to obey God and to resist whatever "his [or her] conscience determines to be an unlawful order."<sup>7</sup> The notion of the spiritual equality of both sexes, however, conflicts with the symbolic, legal, and political subjugation of women. Such equality would delegate the rights and responsibilities of conscience to women as well as men, and thus constitute a challenge to male governance. This conflict is central to the play; the problem of reconciling the political implications of the proposed spiritual equality of women with female symbolic and legal subordination is reflected in Cary's characterization of Mariam.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the play Mariam stresses her spiritual purity, and from this perspective her resistance to Herod's authority and control of her speech could be justified. Certainly Herod's atrocities are indefensible by Judaic and Christian standards. Within the context of Jacobean theology Herod's authority is entirely secular; his model of government cannot be sanctified as a figuration of a divine original; it is a profanation and corruption of the legitimized model. Further, in selecting the notorious Herod as an atavistic representative of patriarchal absolutism and in shifting the focus to Mariam's spiritual dilemma in her revision of an authorized male narrative, Cary not only reverses the sequence of male linguistic precedence, she questions the validity of male dominance and female submission in matters of conscience. If Cary presents a case for spiritual equality between husband and wife, subject and monarch in the Mariam tragedy—and I would argue that she does—she situates her argument in the clash

between the ideals of male legal and political governance of women and the female spiritual entitlement to protest an unlawful abuse of male power. The latter implies that a woman is in control of her mental life; in Mariam's case her speech directly reflects her mind, and both are identified with her integrity. Mariam's insistence on freedom of speech is thus a defense of her own virtue.

Her defiance of Herod's control and surveillance of her speech, however, transgresses the code that links female silence and/or patriarchal ventriloquism to chastity and places Mariam in a vulnerable position for the charge of adultery engineered by Salome. Herod interprets her self-authorized, brusque defense, which thwarts his desire for rhetorical amplification and defies his possession of her speech as part of his marital prerogatives, as female insubordination. In much the same manner in which Lear abruptly shifts the female oratorical contest to an arraignment of a forward woman when Cordelia makes her terse speech in response to his demands, Herod reacts to Mariam's brief self-defense by accusing her of Salome's charge. Indeed, he views her general resistance to his control, her propensity to talk to strangers, and her readiness to speak in public, as signs of guilt. Like Lear, Herod demands absolute female devotion to him, but he extends the terms of female self-sacrifice and subordination far beyond Lear's claim; Herod would deny Mariam's right to protest even the murder of her relatives, who became victims of his ruthless and suspicious guardianship of his title to power.

Mariam may be read as a defense of a woman's right to protest corrupt patriarchal tyranny. In its revision of female stereotypes and its subversive undermining of the conventional linguistic tropes of female submission that inscribe women and women's speech as male property categories, silence as the sign of female chastity, and the private domestic sphere as the proper place for women's speech, the play implicitly questions woman's place in the symbolic

order. Cary plays on the contradictions of male constructions of women, and she reverses the gendered dichotomies in her characterizations of Mariam and Salome. While the play does not directly contest the status quo, Cary's exploration of these reversals and contradictions indirectly challenges it. The heroine's death and the choric judgement suggest that women must negotiate linguistic conventions more discreetly than Mariam does, yet the play as a whole inquires into the validity of these conventions. The chorus imposes formal unity through its conservative stance, but it also exposes the injustice of Herod's absolutism and the justice of Mariam's cause.

Indeed, the Mariam play might be fruitfully analyzed as an extended trope of reversal. Through her semantic shifts of the ethos of silent female submission in the characterization of Mariam and Salome, Cary calls attention to woman's oppression in the symbolic order. She also subverts the status quo, including the conventional constraints against female speech. While seeming to advocate patriarchal proprietorship of the symbolic order and to condemn Mariam for her discursive improprieties, the play permits her the integrity of her word. While the chorus avers that Mariam should have restrained her speech within the established limits, the play itself argues against the arbitrary containing frame for female discourse and functions as an inquiry into the problems of women's speech. In the context of her own situation in time and place at the writing of *Mariam*, Cary was constrained from stating her case directly. She submitted to the decorum imposed upon her as a female author by society in recalling her work from publication. However, the internal evidence of the drama suggests that the work represents a subtle polemic against female subordination and male domination in the order of language. If Cary as female author adopts the indirect discursive strategy avoided by her leading female character, but exploited by her other key female character, the Mariam tragedy and Cary's role as author

represent two versions of female defense, one in art, one in life.<sup>9</sup> Both subvert the dominant structures of male rhetorical discourse on the female as a male construct.<sup>10</sup>

The precise date of composition of Mariam is uncertain, but it was written during the early years of Cary's marriage while her husband, Sir Henry Cary, later Viscount Falkland, was away on military service in the Low Countries.<sup>11</sup> When, approximately ten years later, the play was published, it bore only the initials E. C. to identify its author. Such concealment of feminine authorship from public attention was, of course, a feature of the Renaissance as a historical period. Not only was public reticence urged upon women in the rhetorical handbooks but, as I have discussed, it was also discreetly encouraged by the humanist patriarchs of education who essentially controlled women's education and literary ventures.

Cary's source for her tragedy was Josephus's The Antiquities of the Jews.<sup>12</sup> Although she followed Josephus rather closely, she represented events that had occurred over a time-span of two years in Josephus' chronicles within a single day in Herod's court of Judea. The effect of this strategy is a strict observance of the dramatic unities of time, place, and action. Like Josephus, Cary interweaves the histories of Mariam and Herod with the period immediately preceding the notorious massacre of the innocents. The temporal setting marks a departure from the Herod tradition of the medieval mystery plays, which, although they do not stage the infamous murders, are set in that slightly later period. The action of Cary's play occurs just after the battle of Actium, thus connecting it to the history of Antony and Cleopatra.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, for the first three acts Herod is offstage negotiating for peace with Augustus Caesar after the defeat of his (Herod's) ally Mark Antony. Herod's prolonged absence instigates a false rumour of his death. While in Cary's drama the character of



Herod is not the stereotypical villain of the mystery plays, the absolutism and repression attributed to his reign are salient. This aspect of Herod's characterization is consistent with Josephus' version.<sup>14</sup>

Cary's representation of Mariam is also close to her source. In both of Josephus's versions of the Mariam and Herod story, Mariam is characterized as chaste, beautiful, and beloved by Herod but lacking the restraint appropriate to female speech. In book 15 of The Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus records the history of Herod's execution of Mariam, for whom "the king's fondness was inexpressible" (459). In a somewhat later passage Josephus presents a rather ambivalent eulogy for the queen. The passage perfectly exemplifies the rhetorical narrative convention of male mediation between women and language:

a woman of excellent character, both for chastity and greatness of soul; but she wanted moderation, and had too much of contention in her nature; yet had she all that can be said in the beauty of her body, and her majestic appearance in conversation; and thence rose the greatest part of the occasions why she did not . . . live with [Herod] . . . pleasantly . . . she took too unbounded a liberty . . . she ventured to speak of all [that she] had suffered by him. (461)

Josephus further recounts that Mariam "was greatly displeased" that Herod had taken the lives of her brother and grandfather and twice ordered her own death to follow in case of his. The implication that female silence would have been more admirable than open displeasure is inscribed between the lines as Josephus twice reports that Mariam's resentment was "not concealed but open" (448-49, 458-59). He also notes that Mariam's awareness of the latter order had aroused Herod's suspicions that she must have had "a nearer conversation than ordinary"

with Sohemus, the priest to whom he had entrusted this charge (45). In an earlier passage Herod is described as wildly agitated because one of Mariam's revelations had given him "an evident demonstration that [she] had engaged in criminal conversation" with a male informant (450).

Mariam elicits ambivalence in The Antiquities chronicle because although she is characterized as chaste, excellent, and "great . . . of soul," she is also flawed by too much "contention" and too little "moderation." The male narrator suggests that in venturing to speak openly of her resentments toward Herod and to upbraid him for his evil conduct, Mariam has transgressed the proper limits of discourse and has taken "too great a liberty." Josephus apparently does not question the fact that Herod's suspicion of Mariam's loose conduct was based entirely on her unguarded speech. Although the crime to which the phrase "criminal conversation" alludes is not directly stated, adultery is implied. In fact, according to Josephus's report of events, the historical Mariam, notwithstanding her fidelity to Herod, was executed on exactly that charge. The history infers that Mariam's fatal flaw was a problem of speech and style.

The ambivalence in the Josephus eulogy for Mariam hinges on a perceived incongruity between Mariam's chaste and honourable persona and her unrestrained speech that disrupts the formal unity of the patriarchal order of static polarities in which female discourse is encoded. While Josephus does not condone Herod's actions, his critical commentary in the eulogy on Mariam's lack of moderation, contentious nature, and "unbounded" speech liberties, implies that he mingles praise with blame. In repudiating patriarchal control of her private and public speech Mariam positions herself in a dangerous interstice of the symbolic order; she does assert her autonomy as a female speaker and she subverts Herod's absolutist hegemony in the domestic sphere, but it costs her her life. The final tragedy of her death, Herod's instant remorse notwithstanding,

is the patriarchal silencing of a disruptive female heroine who challenges the rhetorical convention of male precedence and female subordination in the order of language.

### III

Cary's chorus in *Mariam* expresses a judgement very close to that of the narrator in *The Antiquities*. Like Josephus the chorus condemns the speech liberties that *Mariam* assumes. What was implicit in the Josephus narrative, however, is explicit in the drama: "Then she usurpes upon another's right, / That seekes to be by publike language grac't" (3.1243-44). The chorus argues for the conventional restriction of women's speech to the private domestic sphere: "That wife against her fame doth reare, / That more then to her/ Lord alone will give, / A private word to any seconde eare" (3.3.1231-33). According to this argument, any public speech by a wife constitutes "usurp[ation]" of a patriarchal prerogative:

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,  
Do they not wholly give themselves away?  
Or give they but their body not their mind,  
Reserving that though best, for others pray?  
No sure their thoughts no more can be their owne,  
And therefore should to none but one be knowne.  
(3.3.1237-42)

For the chorus, *Mariam's* liberties in speech signify a transgression of symbolic boundaries tantamount to prostitution: "And though her thoughts

reflect with purest light, / Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste" (3.3.1251-54). The chorus accepts and reinforces the convention of male proprietorship of women's language. A "peculiar" or individual woman, including her mind and words, is the exclusive property of her husband. Women's speech as well as women's bodies are figured as male property categories, and female chastity is signified by and inextricably bound to public silence. Herod's control of Mariam's speech is doubly sanctioned by his double roles: in his public role as ruling monarch of Judea, as well as his private role as husband, ownership is his privilege.

The problem of Mariam's resistance to Herod's discursive control in their domestic relations has public consequences crucial to the structure of the plot. In making her private criticism of their domestic problems public, Mariam violates one of the principal conventions that male rhetoricians and poets impose upon female discourse. Indeed, in the opening lines of the play Mariam herself regrets that she has spoken publicly to censure her "Lord," and she recants her hasty words. Although here, as in *The Antiquities*, she has just cause for her anger and ambivalence toward Herod, she relents at the news (false news that is revised in act 4) of his death:

How oft have I with publike voyce runne on?  
 To censure *Rome's* last *Hero* for deceit  
 .....  
 But now I do recant, and *Roman* Lord  
 Excuse too rash a judgement in a woman:  
 My Sexe pleads pardon, pardon then afford,  
 Mistaking is with us, but too too common. (1.1.1-10)

Mariam seems willing here to fit her speech, which she identifies with her judgement, into the approved frame for good women who are reticent if not

actually silent. According to this standard, talkative women are if not wicked at least foolish. We hear, perhaps, an echo of Erasmus's charming but flighty Folly asking pardon for any offense she may have given in her arguments: "If anything I have said seems sharp or gossipy, remember that it is Folly and a woman who has spoken."<sup>15</sup> Her retraction of her earlier public condemnation of Herod and her self-imposed verbal restraint imply that Mariam accepts the strictures placed by Herod and the chorus on women's speech.

The recantation passage, however, is part of a long soliloquy comprising the entire first scene, and the soliloquy is a running dialectic, almost an *in utramque partem* debate, between Mariam's "Rage and Scorne [that] had put [her] love to flight" and her grief at his death (1.1.21). She recollects his "true affection" to her and her own former "Love which on him was firmly set" (1.1.22). Mariam's argument with herself reveals that she is a more complex and dynamic character than the chorus could support in representing the status quo of the symbolic order. Even as she retracts her former publicly expressed criticism, she cannot reconcile herself to Herod's atrocities. Tears for her "truest lovers death" (1.1.68) conflict and mingle with memories of "The cruell Herod" who remorselessly murdered her brother and grandfather in order to remove them as possible rivals for his throne (1.1.39). To herself she frankly acknowledges that her words were justified and that they signified a protest against Herod's tyranny. Publicly she will stifle her protest after Herod's supposed death; privately she will continue to speak freely, if only in soliloquy. With the news of Herod's triumphal return from Rome in act 4, Mariam reverts immediately to open dissent. Publicly and privately Mariam is an autonomous speaking subject, unable and unwilling to confine herself within the limits for women's speech set by her society.

In The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama, Catherine Belsey makes a connection between Mariam's speaking position and the peril in which she finds herself. Belsey notes that Mariam takes a definite speaking position, uniting her meaning with her speech and her speech with her mind, and that it is Mariam's speech that puts her in danger (172-73). Mariam's staunch ally and confidant Sohemus warns her of the hazard early in the play. He pleads with her to soften and modify her speech upon Herod's return and laments that "unbridled speech is [guiltless] Mariam's worst disgrace" (2.2.1186). But knowing that Herod is alive, Mariam refuses to stifle her protest of his ruthless actions. She acknowledges that she could conciliate her powerful husband with a demonstrative homecoming welcome. She is also perfectly aware that she "could inchaine him with a smile: / And lead him captive with a gentle word" (2.2.1166-67). Mariam, however, will not contain her speech within the frame of Herod's desires, nor will she conform to the conventional limitations on women's speech adumbrated by the chorus and urged by Sohemus. Her response is unequivocal: "I scorne my looke should ever man beguile, / Or other speech then meaning to afford" (3.3.1169-60). In effect, Mariam shuns any strategy of verbal artifice that might compromise her freely spoken words, which she identifies with her integrity and her spiritual innocence: "I would not that my spirit were impure / Let my distressed state unpitied bee, / Mine innocence is hope enough for me" (3.3.1174-76). Twice in a slightly earlier passage she refers to her innocence in speech, mind, and spirit as her "faire defence" (3.3.1174-76). Sohemus regretfully predicts that Mariam will cause her own downfall solely through her verbal defiance of Herod and her refusal to modify her speech: "poore guiltless Queene. Oh that my wish might place / A little temper now about thy heart: / Unbridled speech . . . will indanger her without

desart" (3.3.1184-87). He fears that "ere long [he] will faire *Mariam* see / In wofull state, and by her selfe undonne" (3.3.1150-51).

In her insistence that her mind, speech, and meaning be unified, *Mariam* rejects the usage of language as an instrument of persuasion that may be used to create a specific rhetorical effect on a particular audience for the ends of the speaker. She knows perfectly well that Herod as audience, simultaneously her husband, lover, king, and judge, could easily be moved in her favour if she would only say what he wishes to hear. Such a compromise on her part would acquiesce, however unwillingly, to the point of view that language is a commodity and that her words are Herod's property. *Mariam* assumes full responsibility for her language; it is an essential part of her identity. On Herod's triumphant return from Rome, she refuses to give him the welcome that he so obviously desires. The epideictic praise that Herod anticipates reverses to vituperation as *Mariam* responds to his ecstatic greeting by reprehending him for her kinsmen's deaths (4.3.1356). When he pleads with her to stop her accusing speech and "smile my dearest *Mariam*, do but smile, / And I will all unkind conceits exile" (4.3.1407-08), *Mariam* refuses: "I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught my face a look dissenting from my thought" (1.3.1409-10). Like Cordelia, she abjures the easy eloquence that would preserve her privileged place in her patriarch's affections. Chaste, but not silent, *Mariam*'s insistence on the autonomy and personal integrity of her word thwarts Herod's symbolic ownership and control of her speech and feeds his suspicions of her infidelity. Ultimately, *Mariam*'s verbal insubordination in assuming possession of her own language leads him to order her death.

Even in raising the issue of a women's right to speak freely against patriarchal abuse of power, *Mariam* challenges female discourse limits. Her transgression places her outside the sociosymbolic contract defined by the

chorus, Sohemus, and Herod. The rejection of the linguistic strategies required by the conventional proprieties of female speech for a reconciliation with Herod, places Mariam on a dangerous and uncharted threshold of language. Since she will not adopt the ventriloquistic speaking position associated with silent, obedient, good, and therefore chaste women, she risks identification with her binary opposite: wordy, forward, wicked, and therefore unchaste women. The binary logic of patriarchal definitions of women allows no margin of flexibility.

Mariam's contention that her word is a direct revelation of her mind implies her belief in the truth of language; words mean what they say or point to. In her monologues she reveals private conflicts and ambivalences but her speeches to the other characters are unequivocal. She resists the slipperiness of linguistic indeterminacy as well as the arts of rhetorical persuasion that may be used to conceal the speaker's mind and purpose. In contrast to Herod's extravagant Petrarchan tropes, Mariam addresses him in plain, even severe, language. In spite of Herod's desire that she complement his exuberant language and adorn herself in courtly dress that enhances his, she resists both courtly language and courtly garments. Her speech and clothing are designed not to please him but to reflect her mind. When he points to the discrepancy between Mariam's "Duskey habits" and the "time so clear" of his triumph (1352-53), Mariam replies: "My Lord, I suit my garment to my minde, / And there no cheerful colours can I finde" (1354-55).<sup>16</sup>

Mariam does, however, on occasion use figurative speech. In her earlier dialogue with Sohemus she tropes on her emotions for Herod:

When I his death beleeu'd, compassion wrought,  
And was the stickler twixt my heart and him:  
But now that Curtaine's drawne from off my thought,  
Hate doth appeare againe with visage grim:



And paints the face of *Herod* in my heart,

In horred colours with detested looke. (3.3.1158-63)

When, earlier in the day, she “his death beleev’d,” her compassion was a “Curtain[e] obscuring her] thought.” With the news of his safe return, removing the “Curtain[e]” she introduces a personification of her emotion “Hate . . . with visage grim.” “Hate” is an artist who metaphorically “paints the face of Herod in [her] heart, / In horred colours with detested looke.” But Mariam’s rhetorical figures involve no verbal duplicity, ambiguity, or devious intent to persuade. They graphically depict her state of mind; the language is true to the emotion, the meaning transparent.

Although Mariam’s verbal integrity should be in itself a strong factor in her defense against Salome’s accusations later in the play, it is not. Her predilection for sharing her thoughts too freely with others works against her. In an overt linkage of female garrulity and sexual misconduct the chorus pronounces that “. . . in a wife it is no worse to finde, / A common body then a common minde” (3.3.1253-54). From this perspective even an innocent dialogue with other persons, particularly with men, renders her mind common as an adulteress’s body. The harsh analogy is consistent with the charge that Mariam and Sohemus have had an illicit relationship; she has, after all, carried on private conversations with him. It is Mariam’s public openness, however, and her insistence on venturing beyond the domestic threshold that weighs most heavily against her when she is falsely accused of adultery. Herod knows that Mariam speaks freely to strangers as well as to familiar acquaintances like Sohemus. While he wavers regarding the possible truth of Salome’s charges, he recalls her speech improprieties and decides that Mariam must be guilty: “It may be so: nay tis so: shее’s unchaste, / Her mouth will ope to ev’ry strangers eare” (4.7.1705-

06). Like the chorus Herod links female chastity to a husband's private possession of his wife's discourse.<sup>17</sup>

Herod's claim to proprietorship of Mariam's speech is strongly reinforced by the logic of Petrarchan poetics and the convention of the blazon, which reify the woman who is the passive object of the poet/rhetorician's praise or blame. Mariam stresses the connection between the reification of woman as matter to be praised or blamed by male oratory and female speech as a material commodity possessed and controlled by a male agent, in this instance Herod. This perspective is evidenced in Herod's rhetorical stance as well as in the choral commentary. Even in his agonized moments of indecision regarding Mariam's fate, Herod praises her to Salome. He begins with a comparison to "the flaming Sunne . . . [and] Moone" (4.7.1668-69). Then, like a Petrarchan merchant, Herod inventories some of her bodily parts. In an interesting revision of the traditional male blazon he invites Salome to participate in the convention by describing Mariam's cheek (4.7.1671-73). But Salome's blazon does not meet Herod's standards of hyperbole. Indeed, her hostility toward Mariam is contained in the jarring and bizarre image within her description: "A crimson bush, that ever limes / The soule whose foresight doth not much excell" (4.7.1673-74). Herod's response, "Her cheek a bush, / Nay, then I see indeed you markt it not" (4.7.1675-76), is followed by his praises in stereotypically conventional Petrarchan rhetoric. Whereas Salome's comparison is intentionally grotesque, Herod's is inadvertently so:

. . . on the brow of Mariam hangs a Fleece,  
Whose slenderest twine is strong enough to binde  
The hearts of Kings, the pride and shame of Greece,  
Troy flaming Helen's not so fairely shinde."  
(4.7.1685-88)

While Herod's blazon does not list many anatomical parts it includes, interestingly enough, Mariam's voice, to which he attributes the power of enchantment: "Then let the executioner make haste, / Lest she inchant him, if her words he heare / Let him be deaf . . . " (4.7.1706-08). His panegyric continues with the comparison of Mariam's eyes to "starres / That shine on eyther side of [her] face . . . " (4.7.1713-14).

It is curious, and yet consistent with Mariam's ultimate acceptance of her fate and with her self-condemnation for violating the standards of female virtue by speaking her mind freely, that she too appears to comply with the rhetorical tradition that reifies her. Herod refers to an earlier "small self-portraiture [which] she drew: / Her eyes like starres, her forehead like the skie . . ." (4.7.1722-23). In representing herself within the rhetorical structure of the Petrarchan poetic blazon Mariam implicitly accepts the conventions that figure women as male property categories. Yet she also subverts the tradition by withholding her speech from this figuration. Mariam sets her own limits; she will not allow herself to be entirely circumscribed by Petrarchan conventions or by Herod's will. As the tragedy demonstrates, it is extremely dangerous for a woman to disrupt the mercantile system of exchange in which her mind, speech and body are figured as male possessions.<sup>18</sup> Only in return for total subjection is she entitled to receive *laus* or praise of herself as a valuable material commodity.

The representation of women as male property is not of course unique to the Renaissance or to the late first-century B.C. period in which *Mariam* is set. It has a long history stretching back to prebiblical periods; Petrarchan poetics exemplifies only one version of the mercantile logic by which the female is defined. The long-standing tradition of the bridal dowry is another illustration. In his essay "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed" Peter Stallybrass discusses how Renaissance rhetorical techniques construct the feminine beloved

within the economic discourses of commodities and enclosures.<sup>19</sup> He alludes to the familiar Renaissance topos of woman as a treasure requiring male surveillance to be kept within the proper (property) boundaries (128). In the fifth act Herod defines Mariam in just these terms. Even as he mourns her death with all the emotions of a bereaved lover, he metaphorically materializes her into a treasured private asset: valuable but inert matter, a jewel and precious mirror to be displayed, enclosed, and reserved exclusively for his pleasure. He represents his beloved, but now forever silenced Mariam, as a gem and a rare work of art:

I had but one inestimable Jewell,  
 Yet one I had no monarch had the like,  
 .....  
 I gaz'd thereon and never thought me blest,  
 But when on it my dazzled eye might rest:  
 A pretious Mirror made by wondrous art,  
 I prizd it ten times dearer than my Crowne,  
 And laid it up fast foulded in my heart:  
 Yet I in suddaine choler cast it downe.  
 And pasht it all to pieces. . . . (5.1.2061-71)<sup>20</sup>

In typical Petrarchan rhetorical strategy the reified woman is compared to an exquisite piece of merchandise and a rare work of art and displayed to the male gaze. Slightly later in the same scene, Herod continues the earlier incomplete anatomical inventory in Petrarchan clichés. He praises Mariam's hand, "so white, / It did the whiteness of the snow impaire . . . " (5.1.2092-93).

The inventory of bodily parts is not completed in the play, however. In an ironic parallel, the heroine herself loses her most vital anatomical part in the final act: she is beheaded. Although Mariam's particular form of execution carries the economic logic of Petrarchan poetics to its extreme, the technique of

rhetorical partitioning necessarily entails dismemberment of the female body. In the quoted passage, Petrarchan fragmentation figured by the mirror metaphor is linked to artistic mimesis and to Herod's confession that as the controlling male and Petrarchan lover he has shattered the reified beloved "all to pieces." While the passage does not make an explicit connection between Petrarchan poetics and the reification and fragmentation of the female body, the troping of the broken mirror, which represents the dead Mariam, foregrounds the divisive effect of the male blazon.

Herod explicitly casts himself as the poet-orator whose prerogative it is to blazon Mariam. He addresses the messenger who brings him news of Mariam's last moments: "Thou dost usurpe my right, my tongue was fram'd / To be the instrument of *Mariam's* praise" (4.1.1971-72). But then he urges the messenger to repeat Mariam's last words. As the messenger narrates the scene of Mariam's dignified, courageous composure and her mild message to him, Herod pleads for each one of her words. He would enclose her language even after her death and materialize it into food for his love: ". . . each word she said / Shall be the food whereon my heart is fed" (4.1.2013-14). Mariam at this point is reduced to inert matter literally as well as poetically: the messenger reports that "Her body is divided from her head" (4.1.2032).

The mode of Mariam's execution graphically illustrates her problem. In contesting the figuration in which her mind and speech as well as her body were Herod's possessions, Mariam transgresses the boundaries that would enclose both for Herod's surveillance. The mind/body split thus figures both her discursive dilemma and her death. As we have discussed elsewhere, the chorus argues that a woman's mind and body should not be divided in the transaction that converts her into male property (3.3.1237-42). The choral judgement is reiterated at the end of act 4 in the contention that even when wronged, a woman should subdue

her mind as well as her body to a male adversary. Furthermore, the chorus argues that this unified apparent subjection is a kind of victory because the woman has proved herself more worthy than her foe:

Do we his body from our furie save,  
And let our hate prevaile against our minde?  
What can gainst him a greater vengeance bee,  
Then make his foe more worthy far then hee?  
(4.8.1930-33)

On close inspection, the chorus's counsel that a woman should prevail against her own emotions in order to achieve spiritual superiority over her male adversary is a subtle subversion of the mercantile economy of love so overtly expressed in Petrarchan poetics. There is a difference between passive female submission to male control of mind and body and the self-control that allows a woman to choose to be magnanimous and forgiving of the injuries inflicted on her by a despotic husband who speaks the language of a Petrarchan lover. Yet the admonition is also an argument for Mariam to assume her proper place in the symbolic order and to contain herself verbally within the rhetorical framing context of Herod's enclosure and surveillance. Spiritual victories do not disrupt a status quo in which love continues to be figured in the lexicon of an economic discourse.

The play leaves no doubt that only Mariam's speech and ideas escape Herod's enclosure and surveillance. During her long monologue early in act 1 she discloses that ". . . too chaste a Scholler was my hart, / To learn to love another then my Lord" (1.1.29-30). Salome is perfectly aware that she is instigating a false accusation in the adultery charge against her sister-in-law. She is also, however, aware of Herod's jealous, mistrustful nature and of the suspicions that Mariam's incautious speeches arouse. Indeed, the only truthful

charge that Salome makes is that Mariam's "tongue [is] quickly moved" (1.2.236). The problem is that Mariam's tongue, or speech, reflects her mind and desires, not Herod's. Her earlier outspoken public denunciation of him is only one instance of her verbal freedom and resistance to his limits for her discourse (1.1.1-2).

As the chorus points out, propriety dictates that Mariam cooperate in her own confinement "by her proper self restrained to be" (3.3.1224). It is not a matter of logic, except as a corollary of the irrational, economic logic of woman as male property. It is not even, as the chorus also makes clear, a matter of legality but strictly a matter of decorum: "'tis thankworthy if she will not take/ All lawful liberties for honour's sake" (3.3.1229-30). The restrictions on women's speech are not enforced by statutory laws but by the laws of etiquette and a concern for honour and "fame" (1231).<sup>21</sup> Whenever the latter terms are applied to women, they connote the association between female silence and chastity on which a woman's reputation is grounded. As in the case of writing, it is not actually illegal, only improper for a woman to seek public recognition. A rather ambiguous reference to a search for glory in connection with female speech in the same passage seems more applicable to the author of Mariam than to Mariam, the dramatic character:

And every mind (though free from thought of ill)  
That out of glory seeks a worth to show,  
When any's ears but one they fill,  
Doth (in a sort) her pureness overthrow. (3.3.127-128)

Yet, as in the context of female authorship, the passage might be glossed by the rhetorical figure of amplification. In either instance the concern is to amplify the male voice. In the first, the Renaissance humanist educators' agenda that women write only copies or translations of male works was an inducement to praise and

to amplify the voice of the selected male authors; in the second, Mariam's exercise of self-restraint in subjecting her speech to Herod's control would amplify and enhance his own proprietary Petrarchan discourse. If Mariam refrains from communication with persons other than Herod, avoids the expression of her own ideas, and subjects herself to Herod's discursive control and surveillance, so the argument goes, she adds to his glory just as a treasured material object does.

Confronted with Herod's question regarding the charge that Sohemus has been her lover, Mariam has a final opportunity just before her imprisonment to defend herself. She knows that Herod desires a rhetoric of Petrarchan ventriloquism: the dilation<sup>22</sup> and expansion of his Petrarchan love discourse. In order to make a persuasive appeal, Mariam should ornament her speech with dilated figures of praise and expansive protestations of her love and fidelity to him. Her defense should begin with a rhetorical amplification of Herod's speech, then follow with a declamatory refutation of the charge of adultery.<sup>23</sup> It is all part of the mercantile logic in which love is figured in terms of an economic system of exchange. Herod is entitled to and demands no less than the full payment of the debt of Mariam's love. The chorus expressly defines love within this mercantile economy: "Had *Mariam* scorned to leave a due unpaide, / She would to *Herod* then have paid her love" (4.8.1934-35). Mariam herself concedes in her opening soliloquy that she "kept [her] heart from paying him his debt" (1.1.24). She continues to refuse this obligation however; even when her life is in jeopardy, she will neither dilate on the theme of love and fidelity nor use the rhetorical model of refutation as her defense. Herod receives a response in flat, unadorned prose: "They can tell that say I loued him / *Mariam* saies not so" (4.4.1457). Instead of rhetorical expansion and dilation she uses a figure of *surclose* to end the conversation, a strategy that causes Herod to exclaim: "Oh cannot



impudence the coales expell, / That for thy love in Herod's bosom glowe . . . " (4.4.1459-60). Mariam is sent to prison for the "impudence" that prevents Herod from assuring ventriloquistic possession of her speech. Later she is condemned to death because her discursive intemperance and insubordination convince Herod that she is unchaste.

In prison Mariam blames herself as the cause of her own undoing: she has "[her] selfe against [her]self conspired" (4.8.1807). Her innocence, which she submits as her "faire defense" (3.3.1174-76) and "hope enough for me" (3.3.1183), has not proved an adequate defense, nor has the truth of her accusations against Herod's unjust murder of her kinsmen. In order to conduct a successful defense within the terms of the drama, a woman must observe the patriarchally imposed proprieties of speech. Mariam's tragic end is directly related to her refusal to engage in the rhetorical strategies and elaborate subterfuges to which women must resort if they wish to speak, particularly if they wish to dispute any point in a heterosexual relationship. Herod condemns her repudiation of his control of her discourse, and Mariam herself reflects that her liberties in speech suggest a lack of the proper womanly humility. According to the network of conventions in which she is situated, her chastity is an incomplete ideal without the added virtue of humility.<sup>24</sup>

Had I but with humilitie been grac'te,  
 As well as faire I might have prov'd me wife:  
 But I did think because I knew me chaste,  
 One virtue for a woman might suffice.  
 That mind for glory of our sexe might stand,  
 Wherein humilitie and chastity  
 Doth march with equall paces hand in hand,  
 But one if single seene, who setteth by? (4.8.1883-39)

Although in the quoted passage Mariam only implies that her lack of humility is betrayed by her speech, both the drama and the Josephus history stress that her conflicts with Herod stem from her disputatious cast of mind and her free expression of contentious ideas. In emphasizing that she has expressed her resentments openly rather than concealing them and that "she took too unbounded a liberty, in venturing to speak of them," Josephus implies, as Herod does, presumption on Mariam's part (448-49, 458-59, 461). It is not only the content of her speech that is so difficult to defend but the style and tone in which it is delivered. Mariam's forthright, outspoken delivery is an open challenge to patriarchal precedence, ownership, and control of the symbolic order in which good women are figured as chaste, silent, and humbly obedient to male authority. As she belatedly attests, her single virtue of chastity, lacking its complement, humility, is given little weight against the damaging evidence of her too intemperate speech: "But one if single seene, who setteth by?" (4.8.1839). The ethos of female humility, expressing female subordination in the order of language, is an essential element in a woman's defense, and without this attribute, Mariam is in a vulnerable position in her negotiations with Herod. Her indecorous speech undermines both her self-defense and her attempt to retain control of her own discourse. Of course Cary's sympathetic representation of Mariam gives the audience an opportunity to reject the point of view of both Josephus' and the chorus.

Salome, on the other hand, is a skillful verbal negotiator. In contrast to Mariam, who is silenced for her open resistance to patriarchal ownership of, and restrictions on, female discourse, Salome is successful in her covert strategies, or so, at least, it seems. Yet we should note that Cary is playing on the implications of the gendered chaste/unchaste, silent/verbose, private/public, antithetical female constructs. In the characters of Mariam and Salome, Cary ironically

reverses the symbolic correlations of female silence with chastity and female eloquence with wantonness. Whereas Mariam is chaste but neither silent nor properly deferential to patriarchal authority, Salome is unchaste but strategically silent and always deferential to Herod. She appears perfectly willing to allow Herod to assume possession and control of her speech. In his presence she defers entirely to his absolute sequential and discursive priority. Actually, her rhetorical strategy entails some subtle modifications of his ideas, but she conceals and disguises her intentions by her posture of deference. In her monologues, Salome reveals herself to be guilty of the adultery that she persuades intermediaries to attribute to Mariam, and she is in fact, considerably more outspoken and radical in her ideas than Mariam. Her deceptive rhetorical stance allows her to subvert the patriarchal symbolic order while seeming to uphold it. Though Salome's artful manipulation of language conceals her dissimulation; Mariam's open repudiation of all verbal artifice reveals her integrity but also weakens her case. The play tacitly implies that a woman speaking in her own defense needs rhetorical art to complement her integrity.

Salome confirms Erasmus's sly hypothesis that feigned female submission is more effective than open resistance.<sup>25</sup> Her wily discursive strategy plays on and exposes the fallacies of the dichotomous female stereotypes. Mariam is indisputably chaste, according to both the internal evidence of the drama and the external evidence of the TheAntiquities, but she arouses suspicion by her unrestrained speech. Salome, who secretly takes excessive sexual and discursive liberties, preserves her reputation, insofar as Herod is concerned, by guarding her speech and appearing to confine it to patriarchal limits. Although she has the kind of criminal conversation with her latest lover, Silleus, of which she indirectly accuses Mariam, these communications are not open and public but clandestine and private. Salome has already, through cunning indirection,

persuaded Herod to put away one husband so that she could be free to marry her second one, Constabarus. Now she plots a device whereby she may persuade him to execute Constabarus so that she will be legally free to marry Silleus. Salome only appears to fulfill the patriarchal model that links female public silence to chastity.

Only in soliloquy does Salome reveal the full extent of her rebellious subversion of the patriarchal code:

Had I upon my reputation stood,  
 .....  
*Josephus* vaines had still been stufte with blood,  
 And I to him had liv'd a sober wife.  
 Then had I never cast an eye of love,  
 On *Constabarus* now detested face,  
 Then had I kept my thought without remove:  
 And blusht at notion of the least disgrace:  
 But shame is gone, and honour wipt away,  
 And Impudencie on my forehead sits:  
 She bids me work my will without delay,  
 And for my will I will employ my wits.  
 He loves, I love: what then can be the cause,  
 Keeps me from being the *Arabian's* wife?  
 It is the principle of *Moses* laws,  
 For *Constabarus* still remains in life,  
 If he to me did beare as Earnest hate,  
 As I to him, for him there were an ease,  
 A separating bill might free his fate:  
 From such a yoke that did so much displease.

Why should such privilege to men be given?  
 Or given to them, why bar'd from women then?  
 Are men then we in greater grace with Heaven?  
 Or cannot women hate as well as men?  
 Ile be the custom-breaker: and beginne  
 To shew my sexe the way to freedoms doore,  
 And with an offering will I purge my sinne,  
 The lawe was made for none but who are poore.  
 (1.4.291-322)

Every line of this long excerpt from Salome's speech represents a revolutionary point of view. She totally repudiates male proprietorship and control of the symbolic code, rejects male legal and political governance of women, and disputes the gender bias in the Mosaic divorce laws. Salome frankly confesses to herself that she is inconstant, unchaste, murderous, and entirely ruled by her own will. She does not hesitate to challenge the logic of the laws of Moses: specifically the clause that allows a husband to file a separating bill if he wishes to be divorced from his wife, arguing that if such a privilege is given to men it should be given to women as well. Although she is an unlikely promoter of spiritual equality between the sexes, Salome contends that women are equal in Heaven's grace. She advances the spiritual argument, however, to defy the limits that Mosaic law sets for women and to promote her entirely secular concern of divesting herself of her legal husband, the "now detested" Constabarus. In her declaration of freedom from patriarchal law, Salome argues that the divorce law is not based on religious principle but merely on custom: "Ile be the custom-breaker: and beginne / To shew my sexe the way to freedoms doore. . . ." Her withering judgement on the fallibility of male law, which is "made for none but who are poore," is in marked contrast to the outward respect

and deference that she always shows to Herod, the ultimate and highly arbitrary arbiter of law in Judea.

Salome's soliloquy constitutes a feminist manifesto, although an incomplete one. She lacks a comprehensive program for reform; her concerns with testing the limits of patriarchal domination and female subjection are, on the whole, restricted to her constantly changing desires for new lovers. It is interesting, however, that as a dramatic character in a play written by a woman, Salome represents the negative female stereotypes set up for attack in the formal controversy. In her exploration and rejection of conventional gender constraints, she epitomizes the exaggerated type of lewd, idle, forward, inconstant female that pamphleteers like Swetnam represent in their attacks on women. Further, the play contains a lengthy attack, in which is enclosed a very brief defense of women; the main speaker is Constabarus, although the sons of Babu join in. Neither Constabarus nor the sons of Babu could be faulted for their vituperation of Salome, who has organized the plot to have Herod send them to their deaths. The condemnation, aside from a four-line defense of Mariam, who is also to be executed, reads like a classic checklist from a Renaissance attack pamphlet:

But now farewell faire citie, never more  
 Shall I behold your beautie shining bright:  
 Farewell of *Jewish* men the worthy store,  
 But no farewell to any female wight.  
 You wavering crue: my curse to you I leave,  
 You had but one to give you any grace:  
 And you your selves will *Mariam's* life bereave,  
 Your common-wealth doth innocencie chase.  
 You creatures made to be the human curse,  
 You Tygers Lyonesses, hungry Bares,

Tear massacring *Hienas*: nay far worse,

.....

You were the Angels cast from heav'n for pride,

And still do keep your Angels outward show,

But none of you are inly beautifide,

.....

But since a flood once more the world must purge,

You staid in office of a second flood.

You giddy creatures, sowers of debate,

You'll love to day, and for no other cause,

But for you yesterday did deeply hate,

You are the wreake of order, breach of lawes.

Your best are foolish, froward, wanton, vaine,

Your worst adulterous, cunning, proud:

...

And *Salome* attends the latter traine,

Or rather [s]he <sup>26</sup> their leader is allowed.

I do the sottishnesse of men bewaile,

That doe with following you inhance your pride:

Twere better that the human race should faile,

Then be by such a mischiefe multiplide.

.....

You are nothing constant but to ill,

You are with nought but wickednesse indude:

Your loves are set on nothing but your will,

And thus my censure I of you conclude.

You are the least of goods, the worst of evils,

Your best are worse then men: your worse then  
divels. (4.6.1575-1618)

I have quoted this lengthy speech almost in its entirety because it is a model illustration of a formal attack on women making its way into the drama. It is significant that it occurs in a play in which the tragic heroine first defends, and then recants, her right to protest patriarchal tyranny. It is curious, too, that the attack is delivered by a sympathetically portrayed male character who clearly has justification for his misogynistic vituperation of Salome. The play gives no reason, however, for Constabarus's broader blame of all women, Mariam excepted. The generality is typical of the genre,<sup>27</sup> and this example follows generic conventions, even heightens and embellishes them. The anaphoric "You" amplifies the charges, the accusing tone, and the device of listing. The catalogue of female vices is as characteristic as the comparison of women to predatory animals. The pithy aphoristic conclusion, which provides effective closure, alludes to the conventional Renaissance figuration of woman as a property category, "the least of goods." Although the attack does not include the usual catalogue of classical, Biblical, or historical exempla, Salome is herself a biblical exemplum. Indeed, the generalized associations of vice that surround her classify Salome as a perfect target for an attack on wicked women.

Yet certain features of this work are distinct from those of the usual specimens of the genre. The exordium, framed in a farewell to the speaker's city and worthy male friends, is unusual, although it is consistent with the plot, which represents Constabarus as a friend and defender of the sons of Babu, whom he had hidden from Herod, thereby risking his life. The allusion to the disruption of the patriarchal legal system—the "wreake of order, breach of lawes"—is more stressed than is usual in Renaissance debate pamphlets. What is also distinctive about the speech is its occasionally comic tone, which subverts



the misogynistic accusations. For example, the lines, "But since a flood once more the world must purge, / You staid in office of a second flood" is comic in its hyperbole. It is possible that the farfetched comparisons, like the reversal of and play on female silence and chastity, are intended to subvert the stereotypes and undermine the genre.<sup>28</sup> The passage in which the sons of Babu continue the attack carries the misogynistic rationale to its extreme:

Come let us to our death: Are we not blest?

Our death will freedome from these creatures giue:

.....

And this I vow that had I leave to live,

I would for ever lead a single life. . . . (4.6.1620-24)

If the men's attitude of making the best of a bad situation verges on excess, it also verges on dark comedy. Although it is difficult to establish whether the author is intentionally using irony,<sup>29</sup> the rhetorical strategy of feigned complicity with misogynistic attacks in the context of the attack passage as a whole actually functions as a parodic subversion of the formal controversy and the hyperbolic patriarchal constructs of women.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, we might well argue that Cary is engaging in her own variation of the traditionally male gender-play that I discuss in the next chapter.

Although she is the catalyst for and deserving subject of Constabarus's attack, Salome shrewdly feigns collusion with the fiction of male discursive priority and control of female discourse. Her verbal negotiations with Herod precipitate the tragic outcome, but she consistently avoids accountability for her agency in these negotiations. In contrast to Mariam, who accepts full responsibility for her overly candid speech, Salome disclaims her own words whenever they might compromise her. She is also strategically silent on occasions in which this ploy is in her best interests. In marked contrast to

Mariam, Salome carefully guards and restrains her discourse with Herod. In his presence she implies that her speech is both subject and complementary to his word, which has total precedence. Rather than address Herod directly on any controversial or delicate issue, she schemes to have intermediaries and spokespersons indirectly act and speak in her place. She employs a messenger to make the accusations against Mariam.

The radical ideas expressed in her private monologue notwithstanding, Salome does not disclose to Herod that she has in his absence initiated a bill of divorce from Constabarus. Instead she induces her brother, Pherorus, to tell her revised "tale" in her place in return for a petition that she will make for him (2.2.1074). The version of the incident that Herod hears from Pherorus is calculated to defend her bold violation and reversal of the established male legal prerogative; but although the defense is constructed by Salome, it will be delivered by Pherorus:

... tell the king that *Consta* hid  
 The sons of Baba, done to death [by Herod's  
 command] before:  
 .....  
 And tell him more that he [Pherorus] for Herod's sake,  
 Not able to endure his brother's foe:  
 Did with a bill our separation make,  
 Though [Salome] loth from *Consta* else to goe. (2.2.1067-  
 73)

As Salome confesses in soliloquy, this story "from [her] mouth would lesser credit finde . . . " (2.2.1079). The revision of the incident also conceals her agency in seeking and initiating the divorce action.

A calculated silence is the first part of Salome's discursive strategy in her plot to "worke [Mariam's] end" by a play on Herod's well-known jealousy and fear for his powerful position (2.2.1082-83). The next step will be to assume control of the verbal negotiations with Herod while ostensibly deferring to his word: to appear to follow his orders while working on his emotional instability to achieve her purpose. Her scheme and rhetorical approach have similarities to Iago's plot and method of discrediting Desdemona in Othello's imagination. Like Iago, Salome intends to "turn" Mariam's meaning in Herod's mind into the negative opposite of her true character. Unlike Iago, however, she must take precautions to confine her dialogue with Herod within the proper rhetorical structures of female discourse:

She shall be charged with so horrid crime,  
 As Herod's feare shall turn his love to hate:  
 I'll make some swear that she desires to clime,  
 And seekes to poyson him for his estate.  
 .....  
 Now tongue of mine [will] with scandall load her  
 name,  
 Turn hers to fountaines, *Herod's* eyes to flame:  
 Yet first I will begin *Pberorus'* suite,  
 That he my earnest businesse may effect:  
 And I of Mariam will keep me mute,  
 Till first some other doth her name detect. (2.2.1086-89)

Publicly, Salome observes the proprieties of feminine speech. In directing male speakers to conduct her plots she can appear discreetly mute, chaste, and deferential. She only speaks to Herod of Mariam after the charges that she has indirectly instigated have been made. Salome then assumes the role of an Iago-

like confidante. In her conversation with Herod she pretends to allow him total control of the discussion of Mariam, although she guides the dialogue whenever she has the opportunity.

Even as she structures the discourse to effect her specific end of persuading Herod to order Mariam's death, Salome rhetorically frames the dialogue in such a way that Herod seems to make the decision. When Herod vacillates before ordering the execution on the pretense that he cannot find a means "to murder her withall" (4.7.1630), Salome readily provides a list of execution methods. Yet when he rationalizes against each means of executing Mariam and still hesitates, Salome reverses her stand to appear to agree with him and even to plead for Mariam's life: "Then let her live for me" (4.7.1653). She slyly anticipates that Herod will not allow her to make the decision and that he will take the opposite position. He does reluctantly give the order for Mariam's execution, and Salome, in the guise of following his command, acts swiftly to give the order (4.7.1661-70). Herod, however, clearly does not wish to put Mariam to death, and he continues to waver, looking for a way out of his dilemma. When he digresses into hyperbolic praise of Mariam, Salome, playing on his jealousy, again agrees but reminds him that Mariam has been "false" (4.7.1700-03). She is well aware that Herod is swept by conflicting passions of love and hate for Mariam<sup>31</sup> and that if she allows him to dwell on his love her plot will fail. If she gives him time to consider, Mariam's innocence and Herod's love for her will prevail in Mariam's defense. On the other hand, if Salome were to speak her mind frankly and reveal her hostility toward Mariam, her open enmity would also work as a defense for Mariam. She thus conceals her thoughts and artfully guides the conversation so that Herod will have little opportunity to focus on Mariam's positive attributes. When Herod almost immediately wants to rescind the death penalty, she concurs but plays on his suspicions: "Tis well in truth: that fault

may be her last" (4.7.1743). Salome's skillful manipulation of the dialogue is successful; Herod's suspicious jealousy lasts just long enough to let the execution order stand.

There is one woman character in the play who perfectly fulfills patriarchal specifications for female speech; she is Graphina, the betrothed of Herod's brother, Pherorus. Graphina neither feigns submission nor disputes the place of women in the symbolic order. She is silent for most of the play, and apparently almost silent in her relationship with Pherorus, for he actually urges her to speak:

Why speaks thou not faire creature? move thy tongue,  
For Silence is a signe of discontent:  
It were to both our loves too great a wrong  
If now this hower do find thee sadly bent. (2.1.586-89)

Pherorus's speech emphasizes the other side of the figuration of good women as emblems of speechless chastity. Now and then even a good woman should speak just to confirm and reinforce masculine discourse; Pherorus has just delivered a long speech expressing his love for Graphina and his joy (prior to Herod's return) that Herod's death leaves him free to marry her. She is, however, only displaying the proper feminine reticence, and on his injunction she breaks her silence to defend herself from any semblance of discontent and to discourse upon her love for him:

Mistake me not my Lord, too oft have I  
Desir'd this time to come with winged feete,  
To be inwrappt with grieve when tis too nie,  
You know my wishes ever yours did meete:  
If I be silent tis no more but feare  
That I should say too little when I speake:

But since you will my imperfections beare,  
 In spite of doubt I will my silence breake:  
 Yet might amazement tie my moving tongue,  
 But that I know before *Pherorus* minde,  
 I have admired your affection long:  
 And cannot yet therein a reason finde.  
 Your hand hath lifted me from lowest state,  
 To highest emincie wondrous grace,  
 And me your hand-maid you have made your mate,  
 Though all but you alone do count me base.  
 You have preserved me pure at my request  
 Though you so weake a vassaile might constraine  
 To yield to your high will, then last not best  
 In my respect a Princesse you disdaine,  
 Then need not all these favours studie crave,  
 To be requited by a simple maid:  
 And studie still you know must silence have,  
 Then be my cause for silence justly waide,  
 But studie cannot boote nor I requite,  
 Except your lowly hand-maides steadfast love  
 And fast obedience may your mind delight,  
 I will not promise more then I can prove. (2.1.590-617)

In contrast to Salome, who must conceal her radical desires to transgress the patriarchal order, and to Mariam, who defends her right to dispute any issue that touches her conscience, Graphina is entirely willing to comply with the established order in which her mind, body, and speech will submit to patriarchal control. Her humility and deference to male precedence are unfeigned; she has

no ambivalences, no internal or external conflicts like Mariam and Salome. It is not necessary for Graphina to negotiate her position in the symbolic order because once married to Pherorus, she will be content with and even embrace her subordinate status. But then, as both the play and Graphina's speech reveal, she is a slave and already quite literally Pherorus's property; her marriage will vastly improve her status, even though she will continue to be his inferior. While her speech attests that even a slave can defend her honour (she has successfully made one verbal negotiation with Pherorus to preserve her chastity), Graphina's defense meets the requirements of the containing frame for good women. She is chaste, silent unless bidden to speak, and then reticent, obedient, and humble. All the indications suggest that although Pherorus will rule gently, Graphina will allow his desires to guide her words. As a dramatic character she embodies the patriarchal logic that males own speech and females use a borrowed language.

Although she epitomizes the rhetorical convention that woman's speech belongs to man, Graphina presents no ideal platform for the female speaker. She plays only a marginal role in the tragedy.<sup>32</sup> Mariam and Salome are the leading women dramatic characters, and each resists, in her own way, the patriarchally defined constraints for women's speech and the patriarchal logic of female enslavement in and through language that Graphina, on the other hand, supports. Yet neither Mariam or Salome conducts a perfect defense against the linguistic oppression of the female. Salome's rhetorical eloquence is not supported by a just cause; she, in fact, epitomizes the male rhetoricians' negative constructs of a decadent feminized eloquence. Mariam's innocence and her just cause for protest are not balanced by a cautious negotiation of the rhetorical decorum that a female speaker must take into consideration for a successful defense. Her open repudiation of Herod's absolutist control of her speech leaves her prey to the

charge of adultery. Salome evades the charges of adultery and violation of the Mosaic divorce law, of which she is guilty, but only through verbal duplicity. The two-sided figuration of women speakers as speechless emblems of chastity or wanton shrews is contested in *Mariam*, but the problem of female speech in relation to female defenses is not resolved.

Nor is order restored by patriarchal absolutism at the end of the play, as Herod lapses into mental chaos and violent lamentation over his agency in *Mariam's* death. When he concedes, finally, that all his hyperbolic ravings, his grief, and his desire to restore *Mariam* to life cannot prevail, he yields entirely to despair and self-recrimination.

He muffle up my self in endles night,  
And never let my eyes behold the light.  
Retire thy selfe vile monster, worse then hee  
That staine the virgin earth with brothers blood,  
Still in some vault or denne inclosed bee,  
Where with thy tears thou maist beget a flood,  
Which flood in time may drowne thee: happie day  
When thou at once shalt die and finde a grave,  
A stone upon the vault, some one shall lay,  
Which monument shall an inscription haue.  
And these shall be the words it shall containe,  
*Heere Herod lies, that hath his Mariam slaine.* (5.1.2189-  
2200)

Herod's condemnation of himself as a monster worse than Cain is an overt confession of guilt. He recognizes too that he has betrayed both himself and *Mariam* through his officious language, that his authoritative word is responsible for *Mariam's* death (5.1.2131). Even the conservative chorus concedes that the



absolutist power behind Herod's word has destroyed Herod as well as Mariam and created only chaos: "But now he hath his power so much betraide, / . . . Now doth he strangely lunatically rave, / Because his Mariams life he cannot save" (5.1.2238-31). Indeed, the abuse of patriarchal power represented in Herod's verbal commands serves ultimately as a "warning to posteritie" (5.1.2233).

Herod's insistence on Mariam's verbal subordination as a reflection of his political and legal authority and his refusal to allow her to express herself in authentic discourse whenever that expression runs counter to his wishes, result in a disaster that calls his model of governance into question. Mariam loses her life, but her struggle for spiritual equality in a system that authorizes male absolutism in the spheres of government, law, and language is more successful. Cary's representation of a corrupt and deranged head and holder of all the constituted power of this system exposes the inadequacies of the projected political model. While Mariam is sacrificed to the conventional hierarchical pattern of male hegemony that entails male control of female constructs and female discourse, she remains an authentic and heroic figure who eludes the limits of the male standards. In structuring her drama on the contradictions surrounding the figurations of women as silent and chaste or wordy and whorish, Cary subversively calls for a reconstruction of the female in the structures of dramatic discourse.

Mariam, like Desdemona and Cordelia, fails at critical points in the dramatic plot to defend herself against false charges. Her failure is predetermined by the conventional male definitions of women, which figuratively constrain female discourse within the tropes of male dominance and

female submission and literally disempower her as a speaking subject. Cary's drama challenges, or at least questions, these linguistic power relations. Her treatment of gender stereotypes subverts the rhetorical female constructs. Cary's characterization of Mariam refigures the female from a material being represented as the property of a proprietary male into a more complex and heterogenous being who defines herself in spiritual terms. The transformation of the female into spiritual terms subverts the fiction of male superiority and female inferiority in several orders of discourse, particularly, as I shall discuss later, in the discourses of divine and civil law. While Othello and King Lear also expose this fiction, Mariam foregrounds and undermines it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See L. T. Fitz, "Egyptian Queens and Male Reviewers: Sexist Attitudes in Antony and Cleopatra Criticisms," Shakespeare Quarterly 28 (1979): 297-316.

<sup>2</sup> Even when Mariam is not present, as is the case in many of the scenes, she is the most important subject of conversation.

<sup>3</sup> As I have discussed elsewhere (See my chapter 2), the hierarchal structure of authority that stresses male powers of magistracy over the female in political models is also reflected in religious hierarchies.

<sup>4</sup> In her cogent essay on Cary's Mariam tragedy, "Valuing Mariam: Genre Study and Feminist Analysis" (Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 10.2 [191]: 233-51, Nancy A. Gutierrez elucidates the conventions of Senecan closet drama that structure the play: the long soliloquies and monologues, the stichomythic dialogue, the reduced number of actors on stage to two or three, the presence of the chorus, and the intellectual and political issues that inform the dialogue. Most important for my argument, Gutierrez notes that closet drama is a vehicle for political discourse, including political dissent (233-37). I also interpret the play as a vehicle for political dissent. Gutierrez argues convincingly that Mariam's challenge to Herod's tyranny represents a "subversive political act that defies Herod's authority . . . in the domestic and public spheres"(245). Like Gutierrez, I see Mariam as a young woman's participation in contemporary literary dialogue [and] issues of sexual politics . . . [as well as a means for] transform[ing] a variety of discourses [into modes] of self-expression and . . .

cultural negotiation" (233). We have both noted different aspects of Cary's transformational strategies, including her revision of Petrarchan values. Gutierrez's illuminating study focuses on Cary's transformation of the Petrarchan sonnet form, whereas my analysis of the drama's Petrarchan elements concentrates on the reifying effect of the male blazon on the female subject of Petrarchan discourse. My inquiry diverges from Gutierrez's generic and sociopolitical analysis primarily in my focus on the rhetorical and literary implications of Cary's transformative reinscriptions of women in the order of language. I also extend my argument and my analysis of Cary's writing to other genres in chapter 6.

<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the duel between Constabarus and Silleus, most of the action occurs offstage.

<sup>6</sup> In the opening scene, Mariam discloses that she has often wished herself free of Herod's constraints, which keep her a prisoner within their domestic confines: "Oft have I wisht that I from him were free . . . For hee by barring me from libertie / To shunne my ranging, taught me first to range" (1.1.18-28).

<sup>7</sup> Jordan 24; See also Maclean, 47-67, esp. 55.

<sup>8</sup> The dilemma drove even such Renaissance humanists as Erasmus to paradox and contradiction. Jordan comments on the inconsistent arguments by means of which Erasmus attempts to link wifely obedience to general injunctions to Christians against disobedience of governing authorities in his treatise Institutio matrimonii christiani [1526]. See Constance Jordan, Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models (Ithaca: Cornell P, 1991) 60-64.

<sup>9</sup> In a recent, unpublished SAA essay, "To Seem, To Be, Elizabeth Tanfield Cary: A Woman's Artful Self-Fashioning," Donald Foster contends that

the characterization of Salome in Mariam represents a repressed "feminist demon invoked by Cary partly as an act of self-exorcism" 3).

<sup>10</sup> In terms of contemporary theory, Julia Kristeva holds that patriarchal constructs of woman presuppose her potential as a "force for subversion." See The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 205. In her own time, Elizabeth Cary was considered a subversive force by at least some of her contemporaries.

<sup>11</sup> See Kenneth B. Murdock, The Sun at Noon: Three Biographical Skerches (London: Macmillan, 1939), 13-14; Anne Cary, The Lady Falkland: Her Life, ed. Richard Simpson from Imperial Archives at Lille (London: Catholic Publishing and Bookselling Co., Ltd., 1861).

<sup>12</sup> Flavius Josephus, The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. William Whiston, (London: Chatto and Windus, n.d.).

<sup>13</sup> See Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1948), 486.

<sup>14</sup> See M. J. Valency, The Tragedies of Herod and Marianne (New York: Columbia UP, 1946).

<sup>15</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, 1509. trans. Leonard F. Dean (1946; New York: Hendrick's House, 1959).

<sup>16</sup> It is not possible to determine whether the allusion to Mariam's "Duskey habits," which she wears to observe mourning for her slain brother and grandfather intentionally echoes the passage in Hamlet in which Gertrude pleads with Hamlet to "cast thy nighted color off, / And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark" (1.2.68-69). Hamlet's reply is, however, similar to Mariam's:

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, [good] mother,

Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
 .....

Nor the dejected havior of the visage,  
 .....

But I have that within which passes show,

These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (1.2.77-86)

17 See Francesco Barbaro, "On Wifely Duties," Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers, eds., Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986)127. It is probably not necessary here to elaborate on the sexualized resonances of a woman's open mouth. The associations between the dangerously suspect openness of all female orifices have been discussed at length by a number of contemporary critics. In the Renaissance, this link is central and obsessive. Herod and the chorus are only making a common assumption.

18 Constance Jordan concludes that "Whenever [feminist] protest critized, however indirectly, patriarchal notions of property as the basis for misogyny or the devaluation of women, it became a cause too risky for most persons to endorse" (Renaissance Feminism 311). Jordan's inquiry is set in the Renaissance. In the considerably earlier historical period in which Mariam is situated, the risk would only be intensified.

19 See Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in Ferguson, Quilligan and Vickers 127-28. See also Patricia Parker, Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property (New York: Methuen, 1987) 126-54.

20 Herod's figure of the broken mirror recalls the scene in which King Richard dashes a mirror to the ground in Shakespeare's Richard II (4.1.279-89).

21 "That wife against her fame her hand doth reare, / that more then to her Lord alone will give / A private word to any second eare" (3.3.1231-33).

22 See Parker, Literary Fat Ladies 13-35, for an excellent elucidation of rhetorical dilation in a discussion of Erasmus's De Copiae.

23 See Marian Trousdale, Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians (North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1982). In her discussion of the pervading influence of rhetorical methods of argument during the Renaissance, Trousdale points to the model of argumentation that Herod seems to expect from Mariam; any proposition not manifestly true calls for a "destruction" that would destroy it or a "confirmation" that would uphold it. Trousdale refers to A booke called the Foundation of Rhetorike, published in 1563 by Richard Rainolde as one of her primary sources for this model of argument (5).

24 In an unpublished SAA essay, "The Nervy Limbs of Elizabeth Cary," Skiles Howard relates Cary and Mariam's representation of humility and chastity as a dancing couple to the Renaissance ideal of the dancing couple as an emblem of marital relations in which the male inevitably leads. See, for example, Sir Thomas Elyot, The Boke Named the Governor, ed. S.E. Lehmberg (1531; (London, 1962), 69-75.

25 Desiderius Erasmus, Coniugium in The Colloquies of Erasmus, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965). This work, dated at about 1523 was translated into English in 1557 as A mery dialogue, declaringe the propertyes of shrowde shrows and honest wyves.

26 "[H]e" as referent to Salome must be a misprint in the copy.

27 One of the conventions of the formal debate is that the writer represents himself as someone who has been wronged by a particular woman, and

therefore carries a grudge against all women. Constabarus is obviously in that position, and from this perspective his attack is not surprising, but simply in keeping with generic conventions. It is also consistent with his role as a character in the play.

28 Swetnam's attack is just one example of hyperbole with comic potential in the popular pamphlet attacks. The hyperbole in this dramatic replica might be intended to project verisimilitude. Although the formal debate is set in the Renaissance and the play is set in the early first-century, the misogynistic discourse in the dramatic version is not surprising, since it, too, looks back to antiquity.

29 I have discussed this problem in chapter two. See also Jordan, 10.

30 As I have discussed in the context of the formal controversy, Joel Altman posits a relationship between dispute and comic structure. See Joel Altman, The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978) 8=9, 107-75.

31 The following passage is typical of Herod's ambivalence towards Mariam:

Oh now the grieffe returnes into my heart,  
And pulles me peecemeale: love and hate doe fight:  
And now hath love acquir'd the greater part,  
Yet now hath hate, affection conquer'd quite.  
And therefore beare her hence: and *Hebrew* why  
Seaze you with Lyons pawes the fairest lam  
Of all the flocke? she must not, shall not, die,  
Without her I most miserable am.



And with her more then most, away, away. (4.4.1508-16)

<sup>32</sup> It is possible that Cary is intentionally ironic in creating a female character so deferential to male precedence and so willing to be dominated. Graphina's status as a slave would only heighten the irony.

Transformations in Gender and Language:  
Transvestism and Lunatic Female Discourse as  
Defense Strategies in Jacobean Comedy

I

In Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl<sup>1</sup> (1611) and Fletcher's The Woman's Prize<sup>2</sup> (ca. 1611), the central female characters employ adroit rhetorical strategies to appropriate, exploit, and transform negative gender constructs into defenses of women. Middleton and Dekker's comic heroine, Moll Cutpurse, and Fletcher's Maria successfully challenge and subvert the fictions of male precedence and female subordination that figure the order of language. Nevertheless, their successes entail contingencies and limitations as female defense strategies. In the first case, Moll is not a representative woman: she is an anomaly who takes pride in her exceptional status. In the second example, Maria's dilemma and her solution are too extreme to apply to most women. The crucial problem with the heroines' struggles to refigure their places in the symbolic order, however, lies in the power of humour to contain and undermine the proposed alternatives. Comedy is obviously an apt genre for experiments and games in gender construction, and each of these works suggests that the objective is not so much feminist reform as gender play.

Moll Cutpurse, the transvestite heroine of The Roaring Girl, eludes containment within antithetical constructs of women and defends herself and her

sex by embracing difference, ambiguity, and marginality. Moll's difference is her defense; she flatly rejects the conventional gender distinctions, and she remains nonplussed by the accusations of monstrosity that her unorthodox gender identity invites. In her self-authorized self-representation Moll irreverently crosses traditional boundaries of linguistic, behavioral, and dress decorum in order to fulfill her personal option of female selfhood. She elects to assume male liberties in a dramatic world limited for most of the play by the conventional gender constructs that shape the imaginations of the other characters. Through her staunch defense of the right to dress, act, and speak like a man if she so desires, she blurs gender differences, severs the link between female silence and chastity, extends transvestism into language, and expands the possibilities for female self-expression. Yet according to the perspective that she enunciates, Moll's heterogeneity is restricted and singular; she does not present herself as a model for all women to emulate but only as a unique possibility of feminine nature in androgynous intersection with male gender categories.

Maria, the young wife in John Fletcher's The Woman's Prize, eludes containment through a different strategy. She emancipates herself from the constraints on female potential registered in traditional male discourse on the female, and she defends herself against the oppression of a harshly domineering husband through a series of seemingly capricious, but actually purposeful, verbal transformations. Maria evades the angelic/demonic feminine dualities by playing on and exploiting the figurative indeterminacy ascribed to female speech by male detractors of women. The inconsistent dialogue that she adopts continually erases the boundaries of the binary oppositions that trope and perpetuate female submission to the male. Yet Maria maintains that she always defers to Petruchio's wishes; her ruse of faithful complementarity allows her to appear to remain within the symbolically demarcated limits of male-authorized marital relations.

Fletcher's comedy is assumed to be a continuation of Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew.<sup>3</sup> In this connection the inversion of rhetorical technique in the Fletcher work illuminates the problem of female defenses. Maria defends herself against Petruchio's misogyny in Fletcher's comedy by using the same strategy that Shakespeare's Petruchio uses to "tame" Kate; she brings a potentially subversive feminized language into play. This language amplifies the elements of madness and inconstancy figured in female speech by the discourse of male rhetoricians and writers. Like Moll, Maria circumvents male definition of her womanhood, and, like Moll, she appropriates and exploits a misogynistic construct of the female in the service of her liberation and her self-representation. Lunatic female discourse like transvestite discourse offers a rhetorically strategic defense for a woman speaker.

## II

Although The Roaring Girl makes no claim to complete historical veracity, the dramatists' inspiration for the character of Moll Cutpurse was an actual historical figure. Moll's real life counterpart, Mary Firth (born in 1584), was notorious as a "bully, whore, bawd, pickpurse, fortuneteller, receiver and forger. As the catalogue of her skills and some further biographical details indicate, Moll, who is said to have found the stitching of "a sampler . . . as grievous as a winding sheet," lived a life of rebellion against conventional gender distinctions.<sup>4</sup> From her childhood she refused traditional feminine pastimes and dress, and insisted on wearing male clothing. Middleton and Dekker represent a softened, idealized version of the rather infamous original: the dramatists' creation "flies / With

wings more lofty.”<sup>5</sup> The transvestite impulse and the repudiation of male role prescriptions for women are, however, common to the real and the fictional Moll; both situate their quarrel with male definitions of the female in the dress code, and both revise patriarchal constructs of women in order to create themselves according to their personal preferences.

The Roaring Girl precedes the Hic Mulier and Haec Vir controversy by nine years; nevertheless, the comedy touches on some of the key points of the latter debate. Like the conclusion to the Haec Vir pamphlet, the play suggests that sexual identity is provisional and relational, a response to contexts. Moll links her own autonomy to the practice of cross-dressing, which enables her to cross other gender lines and evade marriage. She frankly delights in the personal liberty that her male attire gives her to travel where she will and to speak her mind freely. Unruffled by negative reactions to her masculine clothing and behavior, she deals with male attacks on females in bold language that openly repudiates male criteria for good women. While the play makes her chastity and integrity unquestionable, Moll’s outspoken, indecorous, and sometimes sexually explicit language shatters the male stereotype of female virtue, including the ubiquitous equation of female chastity with silence. As a dramatic character she fits into neither of the dichotomous oppositions by which women are defined, positing woman’s right to liberty, choice, and agency in an unladylike language that assumes male prerogatives. Moll’s personal defense argues for freedom from sartorial restrictions and for liberty to enter and speak freely in public areas forbidden to women; her general defense addresses the rights and grievances of her sex as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Her respect for other women’s entitlement to more traditional options prompts her to support and assist another female character, Mary Fitzallard, in her desire for marriage. She has no quarrel with women who wish to uphold systematic gender divisions; Moll takes issue with those who

would deny her the freedom of avoiding absolute gender categories and attack her androgynous dress and behavior as monstrous and unchaste. She also takes a stand against detractors of the unfortunate women who are exploited by the traditional gender system.

In contrast to Hic Mulier and Haec Vir, The Roaring Girl is entirely a secular comedy, and as such it encounters none of the religious sanctions that ultimately silence Hic Mulier's argument for female heterogeneity and lead her to capitulate to patriarchal ideals of female complementarity and subordination. Moll's individual position on female liberty is ratified and amplified by her speech and actions throughout the play. At no point does she waver in her personal insistence on emancipation from male governance. While her apology for other women is less revolutionary, as shall be observed in the duel scene, Moll demands respect toward women from men as part of her engagement in a common feminist cause (3.1.72-113). In a play on language that seems designed to further the implications of gender crossing and comedy, her disreputable (and, for most of the play, double-crossing) servant, Trapdoor, coins a respectful address for Moll; that is, "your mistress-ship."<sup>7</sup>

While Trapdoor pays lip service, at least, to Moll's unladylike abilities, these same attributes provoke less than respectful remarks from other characters. In scenes that anticipate the later transvestite debate, Moll's androgynous dress elicits responses of shocked outrage and confusion. Such negative reactions are expressed usually, though not exclusively, by male speakers.<sup>8</sup> In his description of Moll, whom he believes to be the object of his son Sebastian's affections, Sir Alexander Wengrave exclaims:

"A creature" . . . "nature hath brought forth

To mock the sex of woman." It is a thing

One knows not how to name; her birth began

Ere she was all made. Tis woman more than man  
 Man more than woman, and which to none can hap,  
 The sun gives her two shadows to one shape;  
 Nay, more, let this strange thing walk, stand, or sit,  
 No blazing star draws more eyes after it. (1.2.127-33)

To Sir Alex's representation Sir Davy Dapper replies, "A monster! Tis some monster" (1.2.134). The male speakers are at a loss to explain Moll. From their perspective she is an unnatural and monstrous example of gender confusion. Sir Alex contends that she is a freak of nature, that even the sun gives her "two shadows to one shape." Worse, Moll's "strange" appearance and singular behavior attract as much attention as an unusual natural phenomenon like a comet or "blazing star."<sup>9</sup> Female transvestism thus crosses over into language, forcing language into metaphor and positioning Moll outside the threshold of the symbolic order.<sup>10</sup> Moll is attacked by these male speakers precisely on the grounds of that which she defends, her difference and her indeterminacy according to their standards. Dress is a linguistic marker of patriarchal gender distinctions, and Moll represents an ambiguous entity, a third term that disrupts the patriarchal binaries—denaturalizing, defamiliarizing, and destabilizing the signs in which gender is encoded.<sup>11</sup>

Although Sebastian defends Moll as a ploy to deceive his father into thinking that he wishes to marry her, his defense happens to be valid. Despite her radical dress and behavior, Moll is chaste:

Put case a wanton itch runs through one name  
 More than another; is that name the worse,  
 Where honesty sits possessed in in't? It should rather  
 Appear more excellent, and deserve more praise,  
 When through foul mists a brightness it can raise.

.....  
 Sh'has a bold spirit that mingles with mankind,  
 But nothing else comes near it; and oftentimes  
 Though her apparel somewhat shames her birth;  
 But she is loose in nothing but in mirth. (2.2.162-79)

Sebastian's defense is qualified; he cannot entirely approve of and therefore cannot present a convincing argument for Moll's transgression of the dress code and the gender distinctions that the code represents. He defends Moll's integrity and chastity and argues that her violations of the decorum of female dress and place signify nothing more than "a bold spirit" and an undeserved bad reputation or "name." Although Sebastian's defense implies that conventional female attire is not inextricably linked to female chastity, he does not endorse cross-dressing as a legitimate female option. He does, however, suggest the inadequacies of formulaic patriarchal constructs that link cultural assignments to gender signs within a system of binary oppositions.<sup>12</sup> Moll represents a threat to this system; her ambiguous gender status disturbs the complementary *a priori* female and male figurations.

While she offers no program for universal female emancipation from the codes in which gender is registered, Moll exposes the systematic disempowerment of women in the conventional marriage contract. For her part, she will neither suffer herself to be mapped out as male verbal territory nor disposed of as a male property category in the conventional marriage contract between the sexes. Playing on the notion of gender crossings as one of her reasons for avoiding marriage, Moll declares that she likes to cross over from one side of the bed to the other (2.2.36-37), and that she is "man enough for a woman" (2.2.43). The model of marriage promoted by the play threatens her standard of self-governance; she has "the head of [herself]" (2.2.43) and no desire for



submission to male domination. While she does not challenge the traditional marriage model, she elects to remain free of its restraints for women and to keep herself well out of the confines of male authority. Indeed, Moll's empowerment to act on behalf of herself and to defend other women in the play is predicated on the deliberate exclusion of domestic ideals from her way of life. Cross-dressing is only one manifestation of her refusal to submit to male dominion in marriage or in any other sphere of the symbolic order. Chaste but unchastened, Moll has no desire to figure as a female subordinate to a governing male in dress, speech, or action. Her rejection of Sebastian's marriage proposal is cast in political terms:

Sir, I am so poor to requite you, you must look for  
 nothing but thanks of me. I have no humor to marry; I  
 love to lie on both sides o' the bed myself; and again o'  
 the other side, a wife you know, ought to be obedient,  
 but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey; therefore  
 I'll ne'er go about it. I love you so well, sir, for your  
 good will, I'd be loath you should repent your bargain  
 after; and therefore we'll ne'er come together at first.  
 I have the head now of myself, and am man enough for  
 a woman. Marriage is but a chopping and changing,  
 where a maiden loses one head and has a worse i' the  
 place. (2.2.35-45)

Moll's freedom from the containing frame of the contractual marriage model is purchased by her gender crossings, which entitle her to self-governance. Not only does she cross both sides of the bed, she traverses sexual classification, referring to herself in both female and male terms. Boldly punning on maidens and maidenheads, she figures a symbolic pattern of female oppression in the sexual negotiations of the marriage bed, which strip young women of

maidenhoods, maidenheads, and maiden liberties. Once she understands that Sebastian's proposal to her is part of a plot to win his father over to an acceptance of his desire to marry Mary Fitzallard, she is pleased to assist the lovers. The substitution of Mary for Moll in Sebastian's marriage plans leaves Moll free to defend her personal autonomy and heterogeneity, and to do battle in the general cause of women.

Moll's cause becomes the cause of all women when she agrees to meet a would-be seducer, Laxton, in Gray's Inn Fields for what he believes will be an adulterous liaison. Although she plans to teach Laxton a lesson for his assumption that her free dress, manner, and speech imply moral looseness and for his general disrespect for women,<sup>13</sup> she entices him with sexually suggestive language that encourages his misinterpretation of her motives. In sharp contrast to the tragic heroines discussed earlier, on occasion, Moll, like Salome, uses language to conceal her intentions. Unlike Salome, however, Moll has neither an illicit nor an evil purpose. To give herself the opportunity to defend her honour and the honour of all women she allows Laxton to believe that she shares his desires. She employs her verbal agility to encourage Laxton to misconstrue her response. Her ambiguous riposte to his proposal that they "be merry and lie together" (2.1.279-80) is truthful but misleading: "we shall meet, sir" (2.1.286). She parries Laxton's offer to meet her in a hired coach pulled by four horses with a sexual pun: "You may leave out one well; three horses will serve if I play the jade myself" (2.1.281-83). The gloss for the term "jade" refers both to horse and disreputable woman. "Play the jade" is a stock phrase.<sup>14</sup> Laxton is disagreeably astonished to discover her at their rendezvous, sword in hand. To his further amazement, the anticipated love tryst turns into a duel over Moll's reputation and the reputation of any woman who must deal with male attempts at seduction.<sup>15</sup> Moll uses the duel scene as a platform to defend her own virtue and to put forth

her argument against male domination, exploitation, and oppression of women. She scorns Laxton's reluctance to violate propriety by engaging in feats of arms with a female: "Draw upon a woman! Why, what dos't mean, Moll?" (3.1.76-71). In a wordy forty-two-line challenge, Moll begins the defense of her chastity and a universal defense of all women, including those who, for primarily economic reasons, are less than virtuous. She offers a defensible rationale for women who are forced through poverty, into, at worst, prostitution, or at best, the exchanging of sexual pleasures for some form of material reward. The economic exploitation of women as commodities in circulation for male usage is exposed in her argument. Moll also stresses male responsibility, and offers extenuating circumstances for those unhappily married or impoverished wives who betray themselves and their marriages through susceptibility to male flattery.

While her immediate quarrel is with Laxton, Moll also argues against men as a group. She begins her defense by responding to Laxton's question and putting him on the defensive physically and verbally. Her exordium is brief and to the point: she intends "To teach thy base thoughts manners" (3.1.72). Her long refutation of male slanders against women in general, and against Moll in particular, begins with examples of women who are not actually seduced but whose immodest behavior makes them targets for slander. Moll figures seduction as a sportman's game in which men are the hunters and women the prey. She deploys metaphors of fish and fishermen to represent gullible, defenseless women and lecherous, predatory men (3.1.95-101), and she exposes the unfair male advantage in the rules of the game. Moll elaborates on the negative aspects of such male amusements for the women who are the objects of slander if they indulge in the flirtatious behavior in which men may engage without risk to their reputations:

... Thour't one of those

That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore:  
 If she but cast a liberal eye upon thee,  
 Turn back her head she's thine; or amongst company,  
 By chance drink first to thee, then she's quite gone  
 There is no means to help her; nay, . . .  
 Wilt swear unto thy credulous fellow-lechers,  
 That thou art more in favor with a lady  
 At first sight than her monkey all her lifetime.  
 How many of our sex by such as thou  
 Have their good thoughts paid with a blasted name  
 That never deserved loosely, or did trip  
 In path of whoredom beyond cup and lip? (3.1.72-84)

Her language becomes more militant as she defends her own honour with a violent figure of speech. The word "whore," which has such degrading connotations for women, is transformed into something that Moll can "tear out / From the high German's throat." The "high German" obviously refers to an awesome fighting figure, probably a famous male fencer. Moll is as incensed by covert "privy slanders" as she is at open accusations. Her defense of women who have succumbed to male blandishments draws attention to the lack of gentlemanly honour and sportsmanship in these seductions, and she alludes again to the gendered economic relations that categorize the female as a passive product for male consumption. In the passage that follows she refers to "the lecher's food, his prey:"

. . . What durst move you, sir,  
 To think me whorish?—A name which I'd tear out  
 From the high German's throat, if it lay ledger there  
 To dispatch privy slanders against me!

In thee I defy all men, their worst hates  
 And their best flatteries, all their golden witchcrafts  
 With which they entangle the poor spirits of fools:  
 Distressed needlewomen and trade-fallen wives—  
 Fish that needs must bite or themselves be bitten—  
 .....  
 Those are the lecher's food, his prey. He watches  
 For quarreling wedlocks and poor shifting sisters.  
 (3.1.88-100)

Moll continues the fishing metaphor as she rejects the role that Laxton would have her play in his sport. She grants that she herself is "given to sport" but vigorously denies any connotations of "lust" in her "jest[s]." The game then turns back to fencing as Moll poises her argument on the tip of her sword, threatening to "write" her defense on Laxton's "breast" so that he can take her response back to his friends and keep it in mind himself. Moll creates and inscribes herself in the symbolic order; she is not "meat" for male consumption, and she will not accept social condemnation for her free speech and behavior. On the contrary, she is indignant at the association of her personal liberties with sexual misconduct:

... But why, good fisherman,  
 Am I thought meat for you, that never yet  
 Had angling rod cast towards me?—'Cause you'll say,  
 I'm given to sport, I'm often merry, jest;  
 Had mirth no kindred in the world but lust,  
 O shame take all her friends then! But howe'er  
 Thou and the baser world censure my life,  
 I'll send 'em word by thee, and write so much

Upon thy breast, 'cause thou shalt bear't in mind:  
Tell them 'twere base to yield where I have  
conquered. (3.1.101-10)

The closing challenge in her *peroratio* reverses the insult to her honour and inverts the gendered order of economic relations in which the female is figured as a passive commodity of the active male purchasing agent.<sup>16</sup> Transvestism slides into language and crosses the economic code as Moll reverses the proposition that she is the exchangeable commodity in her negotiation with Laxton: "I scorn to prostitute myself to a man, / I that can prostitute a man to me! / And so I greet thee" (3.1.111-13). She uses a male, or at least an Amazonian, martial conceit: "Would the spirits / Of all my slanderers were clasped in thine, / That I might vex an army at one time!" (3.1.112-15). When she wins the duel, she conquers Laxton not only physically, but also verbally, as she receives the apology that she demands. Indeed, she receives Laxton's retraction in triplicate: "I do repent me; hold! . . . I do confess I have wronged thee, Moll. . . . I ask thee pardon" (3.1.116, 118, 120). Male and female gender distinctions are blurred as Laxton alludes to Moll as "noble girl" . . . and "ghost of a [male] fencer" (3.1.124, 125-26). The usual negotiations between male and prostitute are reversed as Laxton yields both "purse and body" to Moll. He is now the passive commodity, not, as he had earlier surmised, the purchasing agent who has Moll as his commodity. The economic relations of gender are transposed as Moll becomes an active agent empowered to take possession of his purse and body:

*Moll.* I'm your hired whore, sir!

*Lax.* I yield both purse and body.

*Moll.* Both are mine, and now at my disposing.  
(3.1.123)

In a monologue after Laxton's exit Moll articulates her argument against the patriarchal construct of woman as a negotiable commodity exchangeable for other goods. Although she has just defended women who are forced by harsh economic necessity to accept their status as merchandise for male consumption, she scorns to degrade herself in such negotiations. In a sharp reversal of the status quo, Moll assumes not only control of her own mind and body but authority for the disposition of Laxton's life and body, which she spares while rejecting it for carnal pleasure, as well as his purse, which she accepts. Her will, "wit and spirit" provide her with economic independence and allow her to govern her body free of male surveillance and control. Moll's militance in feats of arms carries over into language:

If I could meet my enemies one by one thus,  
I might make pretty shift with 'em in time,  
And make 'em know she that has wit and spirit  
May scorn to live beholding to her body for meat,  
Or for apparel, like your common dame,  
That makes shame get her clothes to cover shame.  
Base is that mind that kneels unto her body  
.....  
(3.1.131-37)

Although she refuses conventional female enclosure within domestic confines, Moll converts the term "house" into an analogue for her body, and she defends her entitlement to self-governance through the vehicle of this metaphor. Given the liberties of place that she appropriates, Moll's corporeal metaphor is a little surprising: "My spirit shall be mistress of this house / As long as I have time in't . . ." (3.1.139-4). Later she defends her mobility and her reputation, which suffers for her wanderings outside a woman's domain. In defense of her

freedom to pass into traditional male haunts she declares: "Perhaps for my mad going some reprove me; / I please myself and care not else who loves me" (5.1.348-49).

Moll's transvestism, however, remains the central issue. Throughout the comedy Sir Alex's disapproval is chiefly provoked by her defiance of the sartorial code. In the second act he laments that he has "brought up [his] son to marry a Dutch slop and a French doublet; a codpiece daughter!"<sup>17</sup> Encountering Moll in man's clothing in the final scene, and assuming that she will be Sebastian's bride, he expostulates: "Is this your wedding gown?" (5.2.99). Sir Alex defines Moll by her clothing, implying that Sebastian would wed her clothes, not her person. For him, gender is constructed by the dress code, which Moll crosses, and transvestism as the problem that disrupts his binary logic. Moll's gender categories are based on broader criteria. When she in jest reproves Sir Alex for his negative attitude to the proposed wedding, Moll entirely dissolves male/female categories: "Methinks you should be proud of such a daughter, / As good a man as your son" (5.2.151-52). She counters Sir Alex's disparagement, "O monstrous impudence!" (5.2.153), with tongue-in-cheek praise of her own aggressive, androgynic-virago attributes and a comic reversal of the symbolic order in which the male is typically figured as a protector of women. She reverses the patriarchal code that privileges the male assignment of value or status to women; she will enhance Sir Guy's position:

You had no note before: an unmarked knight;  
Now all the town will take regard on you,  
And all your enemies fear you for my sake:  
You may pass where you list, through crowds most thick,  
And come off bravely with your purse unpicked!  
You do not know the benefits I bring with me:



No cheat dare work on you with thumb or knife,  
 While you've a roaring girl to your son's wife!  
 (5.2.154-61)

Sir Alex is not particularly grateful for the reversal of the status quo implied in Moll's offer to defend him against pickpockets and other thieves as he calls her "A devil rampant" (5.2.162). He does not relent his harsh verdict on her attire and behavior until the three young people confess that the love between Sebastian and Moll is "feigned" (5.2.171), and that Mary Fitzallard is his prospective daughter-in-law. From that moment, Sir Alex ceases to attack Moll's transvestism and androgynous nature. To her claim "Father and son, I ha' done you simple service here," he replies: "Thou art a mad girl, and yet I cannot now / Condemn thee" (5.2.206-08). Moll is not satisfied with a half-hearted apology, however; she insists on her due and proper respect:

Condemn me? Troth an you should sir,  
 .....  
 I'd give you the slip at gallows and cozen the people.  
 Heard you this jest my lord?  
 .....  
 He was in fear his son would marry me,  
 But never dreamt that I would ne'er agree.  
 (5.2. 209-13)

Just as Laxton recants his disdainful opinions of Moll after the duel, Sir Alex begins to apologize for his earlier opinions: "In troth, thou'rt a good wench; I'm sorry now / The opinion was so hard I conceived of thee: / Some wrongs I've done thee" (5.2.226-28). Sensing masculine apology in the air, her roguish servant Trapdoor kneels before Moll to echo Sir Alex's apology in order to avoid Moll's wrath at his double-dealing with the elderly knight: "Is the wind there

now? Tis time for me to kneel and confess first, / For fear it come too late and my brains feel it / Upon my paws I ask your pardon, mistress!" (5.2.229-32). He makes a comic and equivocal plea for pardon for Sir Alex's schemes to entrap her, and confesses to his complicity in the plot, although he attempts to redeem himself in the last line:

Pray forgive him;  
 But may I counsel you, you should never do't.  
 Many a trap t' ensnare your worship's life  
 Have I laid privily: chains-watches, jewels-  
 And when he saw nothing could mount you up,  
 Four hollow-hearted angels he then gave you,  
 By which he meant to trap you, I to save you.  
 (5.2.235-41) <sup>18</sup>

Sir Alex endorses and completes the cycle of male apology. He reassigns the accusation "whore" to its source, the public opinion that falsely associates Moll's gender ambiguity and boldness in dress, speech, and passage with a lapse in female chastity. It is the "common voice" that delivers such public opinion through error, envy, or intentional deception that is figured as "the whore" responsible for deceiving him and slandering Moll. Sir Alex retracts his own false impression and seeks to make redress for his previous injustice. Once he assumes responsibility for his own judgement, he recognizes the fallacy of received opinions that establish gender hierarchies, conventions, and distinctions, and he acknowledges that Moll's violations of decorum do not indicate that she is unchaste:

To all which, shame and grief cry guilty.  
 Forgive me; now I cast the world's eyes from me,  
 And look upon thee freely with mine own:

I see the most of many wrongs before thee  
 Cast from the jaws of Envy and her people,  
 And nothing foul but that. I'll never more  
 Condemn by common voice, for that's the whore  
 That deceives man's opinion, mocks his trust,  
 Cozens his love, and makes his love unjust.  
 (5.2.242-250)

Moll's freedom to engender herself as an androgynous female, to shatter the link between female silence and chastity, and to evade submission to male governance with impunity is conditional, however. Her disinclination to marry his son is precisely what endears her to Sebastian's father; his respect for Moll coincides with the exchange of Mary for Moll as a daughter-in-law. Within the terms of the play, Moll is entitled to her difference and her mixed gender because as an exception she does not dismantle the symbolic order. Her refashioning is self-limited, and she neither encourages other female characters to follow her lead nor brings her emancipated ideas to bear on the marriage contract. As she reminds "Father and son" (5.2.206), she has performed services for them, and these services have been employed in the interests of preserving the established conventions from which she is personally exempt. Since the institution of marriage would curb her privileges she renounces it, at least for the duration of the play. Indeed, her speech on marriage in the final scene suggests that it is the least of her future desires. When Lord Noland enquires, "Why, thou had'st a suitor once, . . . when wilt marry?" (5.2.214), Moll's response discloses no eagerness to change her state:

Who, I, my lord? I'll tell you when i' faith:  
 When you shall hear  
 Gallants void from sergeant's fear,

Honesty and truth unslandered,  
 Woman manned, but never pandered,  
 Cheats booted but not coached,  
 Vessels older ere they're broached;  
 If my mind be then not varied,  
 Next day following, I'll be married. (5.2.21-23)

While Moll is in no haste to relinquish her autonomy in order to join the ranks of the legitimated patriarchal order, she does not advocate female revolution against this order, and her vision of the kind of world in which she might consider marriage calls for reforms for men as well as for women. At the play's conclusion she is a unifying rather than a disruptive force. In her successful defense of her own transvestite liberties Moll raises issues of gender construction and sexual differentiation, but as an exceptional unmarried woman who defers to communal marriage ideals, she poses no problem for traditional gender models. Although she appropriates male modes of dress, speech, and behavior, Moll is herself ultimately appropriated by the patriarchy. Since she generally endorses their gender constructs, they can afford to be both verbally and materially generous to her. Sir Alex, happy with the turn in events, concludes and amplifies the chorus of male apologies to Moll with an offer to "make [her] wrongs amends" by "thrice doubl[ing]" the marked currency by which he had planned to entrap her (5.2.255-56).

It is important to reflect that her bold and singular self-creation notwithstanding, the "roaring girl" is necessarily created by male discourse: as the fictional construct of male playwrights, she is a generic as well as a specific type, the androgynous virago. In his epistle preceding the play, Middleton explicitly states that Moll's representation is an instance of the improvement of nature by art: "tis the excellency of a writer to leave things better than he finds

'em." <sup>19</sup> Further, although she plays a central role in the comedy, Moll's freedom of speech and lifestyle come at the cost of her exclusion from the dominant structures of the community, to which she figures as a lively and colourful outsider. Since her exceptional status ensures her marginality, Moll's transgression of dress and speech codes poses no threat to the established patriarchal order, which the play reinforces in its conclusion. To some degree as well Moll uses her agency to comply with the establishment when she plots with Mary and Sebastian to facilitate their plans for an entirely conventional marriage. <sup>20</sup> Since the marriage plot is crucial to the comic resolution of the play, Moll's agency, individuality, and subversion of the status quo prevail only in the more marginal parameters of the legitimized order. While she personally refutes the order of male dominance and female subjection that the institution of marriage implies (2.1.35-45, 5.2.213-15), Mary fully accepts it. In contrast to Moll, who makes no effort to conform to the expectations of male judges, Mary aspires to be deserving of her prospective father-in-law's approval and "judgement." When Sir Alex finally gives his blessings to the union of Mary and Sebastian, he apologizes for the impaired judgement that had earlier motivated his resistance to Mary as his son's bride:

Forgive me, worthy gentlewoman; 'twas my blindness:

When I rejected thee, I saw thee not;

Sorrow and willful rashness grew like films

Over the eyes of judgement, now so clear

I see the brightness of thy worth appear. (5.2.191-95)

In complete accord with the patriarchal practice of assigning value to women, Mary replies "Duty and love may I deserve in those, / And all my wishes have a perfect close" (5.2.196-97). The contingency that Sir Alex's approval of Mary is only given after the young people delude him into considering her solely as an

alternative to the prospect of Moll as a daughter-in-law further emphasizes Moll's position as an outsider.

The dramatic characterization of Moll Cutpurse thus erases conventional gender distinctions, including the code of male domination and female submission, as an individual, exceptional case but presents no argument for a general dissolution of these categories. Rather it suggests that the dramatists were interested in experimentation in gender construction. As a large body of recent criticism gives evidence, the topos of playing with gender was a popular and entertaining Renaissance pursuit.<sup>21</sup> If we read The Roaring Girl as a playful and experimental transvestite game, Moll's creation is just one example of a number of such amusing creative activities staged for the mutual entertainment of dramatists and audience.

### III

Another amusing male game presented for the enjoyment of Renaissance theatrical audiences was the "refashioning [of] autonomous female figures along traditional gender lines; that is, appropriating them to conserve the status quo"<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew is perhaps the most celebrated example to fall under this rubric. As a putative response to the former, Fletcher's The Woman's Prize enters the gender game by rewriting and refashioning the shrew, the shrew tamer, and the play. In Fletcher's comedy Petruchio, the shrew tamer, becomes the tamed, and his role makes him almost as fit a subject for reformation as Shakespeare's famous Kate. The role reversal carries over into language as

Maria uses the same linguistic strategy to refashion Petruchio that Petruchio uses on Katherine in the first play.

In his essay "The Turn of the Shrew" in Shakespeare and the Question of Theory, Joel Fineman describes the highly effective verbal technique adopted in The Taming of the Shrew.<sup>23</sup> He observes that Petruchio achieves the taming of Kate through the usurpation of a "lunatic" female language in which the key feature is inconstancy.<sup>24</sup> Fineman draws on a well-known Robert Fludd illustration of Renaissance iconography,<sup>25</sup> an encyclopedic picture of the cosmic hierarchy, which also contains "a representation of a corresponding gender hierarchy" (152). Using the Fludd illustration to support his argument, he links female linguistic inconstancy to the representation of the changing, waxing, waning moon on the female side of the figure of nature in the picture. The female side stands in contrast to the male side represented by the all-powerful, changeless, unmoving sun (152-55). Fineman holds that the illustration functions as a "speaking picture," an assumption that he bases on the Renaissance poetics of *ut pictura poesis* and "the idealist aesthetics, metaphysics, and cosmology . . . attaching to this visual idealism or visual idealization of the Word" (151).

Fineman notes that in the personified icons male/female complementarity is figured in a horizontal gender opposition sketched in the vertical metaphysical hierarchy of the woman's upward gaze at the moon, "which reflects the sun" (153). According to this construct, woman is the mimetic simulacrum of man, and she is figured by the lunar light that reveals her "lunatic difference" (153). As Fineman remarks, the difference propounded in this conventional iconography is the difference of mimetic likeness, which includes a potential for the subversion of its own systematic paradox (153). He contends that in The Taming of the Shrew, Petruchio reforms Kate by invoking the logic of a linguistic balance produced by male stability and female instability. Petruchio holds up a

corrective mirror to Kate and reclaims her in the interests of the status quo by speaking "the lunatic language of women" (154). Fineman, in effect, proposes that Flood's iconography translates lunar female difference into lunatic female language. If we apply Fineman's argument to the two plays, gender balance is realized in each through the unbalanced language used by the tamer/reformer of the opposite gender. In The Women's Prize, Maria, not Petruchio, who is possibly the same Petruchio as Shakespeare's Petruchio, uses this subversive language as a strategy to tame the tamer.

Although the dating is conjectural, Fletcher's The Woman's Prize was probably written and presented on the stage for the first time in 1611, the same year that The Roaring Girl was published. It is included in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon but is considered to be the sole work of Fletcher.<sup>26</sup> While the strongest internal evidence for the assumption that it is a continuation of The Taming of the Shrew is the strategy adopted by Maria of curing Petruchio's madness with another madness,<sup>27</sup> the previous offstage marriage of the leading male character, Petruchio, to a scolding, shrewish wife is another possible link. The marriage on which Fletcher's play centers occurs after the death of the first wife.

As the play begins, the prologue situates it within the genre of comedy and the topos of the *querelle des femmes*. While it is presumably an *in utramque partem* argument for the other side of the shrew-taming problem, the issue of the legitimacy of male misogyny is also raised. The tone and content of the prologue imply as well that the work is an exercise in the witty repartee of male gender games. Even the casting notation on Maria and Livia, "[t]he two masculine daughters of Petronius" (16), hints at experimentation in gender construction and role reversals. The dramatist declares that he intends to present a defense of women; he qualifies his "end" as "sport" rather than "politique discourse."



Ladies to you, in whose defense and right,  
 Fletcher's brave Muse prepared herself to fight  
 A battaile without blood, 'twas well fought too,  
 (The victory's yours, though got with much ado),  
 We do present this Comedy, in which  
 A rivulet of pure wit flowes, strong and rich  
 In Fancy, Language, and all parts that may  
 Adde grace and ornament to a merry Play.  
 Which this may prove. Yet not to go too far  
 In promises from this our female war,  
 We do intreat that angry men would not  
 Expect the mazes of a subtle plot,  
 Set Speeches, high expressions; and what's worse,  
 In a true Comedy, politique discourse.  
 The end we ayme at, is to make you sport;  
 Yet neither gall the City, nor the Court.  
 Heare, and observe his Comique straine and when  
 Y're sick of melancholy, see't agen.  
 'Tis no deere Physick, since 'twill quit the cost:  
 Or his intentions, with our pains, are lost.  
 (prologue,1-20)

The comic tone of the prologue notwithstanding, the opening scene, which takes place immediately after the wedding of Maria to Petruchio, reveals that the new bride's plight will be a sorry one unless she marshals a defense against her husband's harsh absolutism. Even according to his friends Tranio and Sophocles, Petruchio's abuse of patriarchal prerogatives exceeds the limits of the conventional marriage model. Indeed, in The Women's Prize the friends pity

Maria and describe Petruchio as "this Dragon" (1.1.106), an association that potentially, at least, places him outside the frame of the conventional marriage model and outside the threshold of the legitimate patriarchy.<sup>28</sup> Although belligerent male speech and actions, particularly when confined to the domestic sphere, are less serious infractions of the sociosymbolic order than female shrewishness, within the terms of Fletcher's comic world Petruchio's extremes are not sanctioned. On the contrary, his abuse of male prerogatives represents a threat to the political stability of the patriarchy.<sup>29</sup> The disorderly conduct of a female shrew would of course be dealt with more rigorously, but Petruchio's excessive misogyny is a liability for the status quo and a justification for Maria's self-defense.<sup>30</sup>

From Tranio's and Sophocles's perspective in the opening scene, Maria is the embodiment of patriarchal constructs of a good woman: "this soft maid" (1.1.21), and "this tender soule" (1.1.40). They perceive her as defenseless against Petruchio's misogyny. Tranio predicts that Maria will not be permitted to eat, drink, speak, or take the least action "[u]nlesse [Petruchio] bid[s] her" (1.1.41-43). Sophocles wagers "ten pounds to twenty shillings" that Petruchio "will bury" his young bride within three weeks (1.1.47). While the spirit of comedy heightens the hyperbole, it does not gloss over Petruchio's extremes, which entitle Maria to a radical solution to her problem. Tranio protests that if he were a woman married to Petruchio,

I would learn to eat coales with an angry Cat,  
And spit fire at him: I would (to prevent him)  
Do all the ramping, roaring tricks, a whore  
Being drunke, and tumbling ripe, would tremble at  
There is no safety else, nor morall wisdom,  
To be a wife, and his. (1.1.24-29)

Tranio's speech is particularly interesting for its resonances of a puzzling speech in The Taming of the Shrew. Fineman draws attention to the passage, which he finds pivotal to Petruchio's taming techniques but ambiguous in its language. In the passage in question, Petruchio's servant, Grumio, explains the meaning and method of his master's feigned madness and its bearing on the action (with an emphasis on the verbal action) of the play:

A' my word, and she knew him as well as I do, she  
would think scolding would do little good upon him.  
She may call him half a score knaves or so. Why,  
that's nothing; and he begin once, he'll rail in his  
rope-tricks. I'll tell you what, sir, and she stand him  
but a little, and he will throw a figure in her face, and  
so disfigure her with it that she will have no more  
eyes to see than a cat. (1.2.108-15)

Fineman remarks on the indeterminacy of the term "rope-tricks" which bewilders literary scholars and poses a problem for the editors of the Oxford and Riverside editions. The Oxford editor interprets the term as perhaps "rhetricks" or perhaps "tricks that can be punished adequately only by hanging."<sup>31</sup> The Riverside edition includes parenthetical question marks in its gloss: "*rope-tricks*: blunder for *rhetoric* (an interpretation supported by *figure* in line 114(?)) or tricks that deserve hanging (?)" (142). Another possible decoding that I would offer in relation to the verbal action of the play concurs with the gloss of *rope-tricks* as *rhetoric* in the general sense of figurative speech but more specifically as rhetoric employed in the service of shrew taming. The figure implied in this interpretation is the analogy to the prescribed legal treatment of a female scold; that is, tying her onto a cucking stool before her ducking or immersion in water over her head. In Shakespeare's comedy Petruchio achieves the figurative

equivalent of cucking the shrew by constraining Kate's scolding tongue through his mad linguistic cure. In a linguistic parallel to the way in which the shrew must capitulate before her duckings cease, Kate finally capitulates to Petruchio's verbal correction, "obediently takes her husband at his lunatic, female, figurative word," and conforms to patriarchal ventriloquism (143). Kate's cure begins when she agrees to name the sun the moon and back again, or whatever Petruchio pleases, according to the changes of his mind.<sup>32</sup> She even agrees to a linguistic gender game in which she addresses the elderly Vincentio as "Young budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet" and then as "reverent father" solely to humour Petruchio's whims (5.1.37, 5.147). Kate is thus immersed by Petruchio over her head in irrationally figured language, to reclaim her for the rational literal language of the male-controlled symbolic order.

In The Woman's Prize the point of Tranio's speech authorizing Maria to "[do] all the ramping, roaring tricks," is to entitle her to use all the lunatic female rhetorical tricks at her disposal to cure Petruchio of his misogyny, which parallels Kate's shrewishness in The Taming of the Shrew. Both Fletcher's Petruchio and Shakespeare's Kate are cured of their mad behavior and restored to their proper places in the symbolic order by linguistic madness. Although Tranio and Sophocles retract their advocacy of Maria when she later uses a rhetorically tricky defense strategy, the echoes of "rope-tricks" in "ramping, roaring tricks" imply a patriarchally legitimized gender reversal in taming roles. Petruchio's exaggerated misogyny entitles Maria to interpret the inequity of her situation as a "cause" (1.2.125, 1.3.267). His reputation for misogynistic oppression provides the catalyst and the opening for her feminist rebellion.

Shortly after the wedding ceremony, Maria begins her defense strategy by re-creating herself; she exchanges the male "tender . . . soft" representation of her character for a new version of femininity. In a speech to her cousin Byancha,

who instigates her rebellion, Maria announces the first of her series of multiple transformations:

... Now cosen,  
I am no more the gentle tame *Maria*;  
Mistake me not; I have a new soule in me  
Made of a North-wind, nothing but tempest.  
(1.2.69-72)

A little later in response to her sister Livia's astonished question, "You are not mad?" (1.2.89), she explicitly links madness to her plan for Petruchio's cure and to strategic defenses of their sex generally: "Yes wench, and so must you be, / Or none of our acquaintance, mark me *Livia*, / Or indeed fit for our sex" (1.2.90-92). Maria gives Petruchio's harsh male absolutist attitude as her cause: "... there's a fellow / Must yet ... / Be made a man, for yet he is a monster" (1.2.101-03). Rather than be oppressed by a tyrannous husband she undertakes to "tame" him and begins by avoiding Petruchio's bed, vowing to remain chaste until he mends his ways. Until this feat is accomplished she will not

Give way unto my married husbands will,  
Or be a wife, in any thing but hopes:  
Till I have made him easie as a child,  
And tame as feare; he shall not win a smile,  
Or a pleas'd look, from this austerity. (1.2.110-14)

Maria's play on the term "tame," first in reference to herself in her recreation speech and then to Petruchio in her vow, is another bit of evidence that this is a reversal of the shrew-taming and the shrew taming vocabulary of Shakespeare's comedy. The play also carries allusions to the conventions of the formal controversy. Byancha's affirmation of Maria's "brave cause" emphasizes the polemical nature of Maria's defense (1.2.125). In calling the speech "a strange

exordium" (1.2.121), Livia refers to the rhetorical structure of the formal debate. She situates her sister's bold speech in the antitheses in which women are figured in the Renaissance controversy and declares it as "distant from your sweetnesse" (1.2.131). But the radical shift in Maria's manner of speech defies the rhetorical conventions of the genre in which female speech is either reluctant or complementary to male discourse and averts the stereotypical female polarities of good and evil. Maria's revised self-representation is only the first of the series of transformations that will allow her to appropriate the irrational potential of female speech figured in the debate pamphlets, and to deploy it in the service of taming Petruchio.

Maria follows her verbal transformation and prepares herself for her defense by barricading herself and Byancha with cannons and provisions in Petruchio's house on her wedding night and refusing him entry. To Petruchio and his friends' amazement she stands firm in her resolve against his importunities, moving Sophocles to revoke his sympathy for her: "I finde that all the pity bestowed upon this woman, makes but an Anagram of an ill wife, for she was never vertuous" (1.3.122-23). Maria, however, has no desire for male defenders. She maintains her exclusively female defense against Petruchio's misogyny and she tosses him a verbal challenge:

You [Petruchio] have been famous for a woman-hater,  
And beare the fear'd-name of a brave wife-breaker:  
A woman now shall take those honours off,  
And tame you. (1.3.268-71)

As the two women continue to hold off Petruchio, Sophocles enters into the discourse of the gender battle. He figures female resistance in martial terms as he describes "the women's trenches" to Livia's young lover, Rowland (1.4.125). Sophocles testifies that Maria

... holds [Petruchio] out at Pike's end, and defies him,  
 And now is fortifide; such a regiment of Rutters  
 Never defied men braver: I am sent  
 To view their preparation. (1.4.27-30)

The mock seriousness and military vocabulary are obviously part of the humour, but Maria's "[i]nsurrection" (2.1.54) prompts a harshly ironic shrew-taming figure from her father, Petronius: "We'l ship 'em out in Cuck-stooles, there they'l saile / As brave Columbus did, till they discover / The happy Islands of obedience" (2.1.56-58). Byancha's comparison of the women's position to the seige of Troy, and herself as Aeneas carrying Maria on her back through dangerous seas to seek a new land where they can live like Amazons, continues the comic figurative battle of the sexes and revises Petronius's navigation metaphors from ignominious defeat to epic triumph:

... and I, as did *Aeneas*,  
 Will on my back, spite of the Myrmidons,  
 Carry this warlike Lady, and through Seas  
 Unknown, and unbeleev'd, seek out a Land,  
 Where like a race of noble *Amazons*,  
 We'le root our selves, and to our endlesse glory  
 Live, and despise base men. (2.2.32-38)

When Livia offers to join Maria and Byancha she declares a "great zeale" for the women's cause and the "liberty" that her sister "stand[s] for" (2.1.76-77). Byancha and Maria amplify the honour and the importance of their cause as a female defense. Byancha warns that if Livia betrays them she betrays all women.<sup>33</sup> Maria follows Byancha's exhortation with her own, telling her sister that if she is false to the female cause

... all women,

Will (like so many furies) shake their Keyes,  
 And toss their flaming distaffes o'er their heads,  
 Crying Revenge: take heed, 'tis hideous,  
 Oh 'tis a fearefull office: if thou had'st  
 (Though thou bees't perfect now) when thou cam'st hither,  
 A false Imagination, get thee gone,  
 And as my learned Cozin said repent,  
 This place is sought by soundnesse. (2.1.102-12)

The trope of the blazing female symbol—the women's "flaming distaffes"—simultaneously represents and amplifies the power of the women's argument, sustains the epic metaphorical level, and stresses the play on gender. Livia's offering of "Cakes, and cold meat, / And tripe of prooffe . . . wine, and beere" (2.1.115-16) brings the cause down to earth and re-establishes the comic vein.

While Petruchio expounds on a variety of punishments such as the "crab-tree-cudgell" and hard "flock-bed for her bones" (2.4.27-29) that he will heap on Maria for her "brazen resolution" (2.4.8), his servants Jacques and Pedro inform him that an army of women has come to her defense. The expression "women's movement" <sup>34</sup> is an apt figure for Pedro's graphic account of the marching women:

Stand to your guard sir, all the devils extant  
 Are broke upon us, like a cloud of thunder;  
 There are more women, marching hitherward,  
 In rescue of my Mistris, then e'er turned taile  
 At Sturbridge Faire; and I believe as fiery. (2.4.37-41)

The catalogue that Jacques gives of the opposition is typical of the conventions of the formal debate. His representation of the batallion of women combines allusions to contemporary women and mythological figures with parody and gender construction at its most fantastic. While it provides a comic motif, the



description of domestic items used as martial weapons in a war between the sexes also suggests the threat that the women's rebellion poses to the established order, here figured in the genealogy of the gods and mortals as the battle of the Titans against heaven:

... led by a Tanner's wife,  
 I know her by her hide; a desperate woman:  
 She flead her husband in her youth, and made  
 Raynes of his hide to ride the Parish, her plackett  
 Lookes like the straights of Gibraltar, still wider  
 .....  
 They are genealogy of Jennets, gotten  
 And born thus, by the boysterous breath of husbands;  
 .....  
 ... cry they can,  
 But more for Noble spight, then feare: and crying  
 Like the old Gyants that were foes to Heaven,  
 They heave ye stoole on stoole, and fling main Potlids  
 Like massie rocks, dart ladles, toasting Irons,  
 And tongs like thunderbolts. . . . (2.4.42-58)

The theme of combat is amplified by Pedro and Jacques who embellish their accounts with references to disruptive, brawling women, as, for example, "one [who] brought in the beares against the Canons / Of two church-wardens, . . . and fought 'em, / And in the churchyard after evensong" (2.4.68-70). Even at Sophocles's urging to "give [Maria] fair conditions," Petruchio hesitates to "offer peace" (2.6.7) and makes the battle of the sexes explicit in his self-depiction as "[a] wel known man of war" (2.6.4,7,19).

On the women's side, the country wife proclaims that Maria's defiance conduces "to the comfort of distressed damsels, / Woemen out-worn in wedlock, and such vessels" (2.6.70-71). She prepares to present Maria's thirteen causes, which she will, according to the proper rhetorical format, partition into seven parts (2.6.73). But Petruchio yields under the combined female pressure: "No more wars: puissant Ladies, shew conditions, / And freely I accept 'em" (2.6.115). He agrees to accept the terms of Maria's "Articles" (2.6.126). In this document, Maria's revision of the traditional male-governed marriage contract gives her complete personal autonomy, economic independence, control of the household and of her own education. Petruchio agrees to all of her demands:

. . . Liberty and clothes,  
 When, and in what way she wil: continuall moneys,  
 Company, and all the house at her dispose;  
 No tongue to say, why is this? or whether wil it;  
 .....  
 Two thousand pound in present: then for Musick,  
 And women to read French. (2.6.135-144)

A clause is added that Livia shall not be importuned to marry her elderly suitor Moroso, for a full month (2.6.145-46). The delay gives the women an opportunity to devise a plan to unite Livia instead with Rowland, the husband of her choice. Petruchio concedes gracefully to the victorious women and orders "a run of wine" for Maria's supporters (2.6.168).

Maria's cure of Petruchio's "one madnesse with another" is not yet complete, however (4.1.96). Although he keeps his word, she again switches tactics and undergoes another transformation. When he is finally allowed to move back into his house she largely ignores him,<sup>35</sup> openly flirts with his friend

Sophocles,<sup>36</sup> and accumulates personal and household expenses with such extravagance that he exclaims:

Now in the name of madnesse, what star raign'd,  
What dog-star, bull, or bear-star, when I married  
This second wife, this whirlwind, that takes all  
Within her compasse? (3.3.148-51)

Petruchio tries a strategy of his own and feigns illness to gain Maria's sympathy, but she outwits him. Announcing publicly that Petruchio is infectious, she has his servants carry off all the household goods, then locks and quarantines him inside the same house to which she earlier denied him access. When Petruchio escapes and confronts her she performs another verbal reversal, claiming that he had locked her out and denied her visitation although she "[l]ov'd him, . . . nay doted, / Nay had run mad had she not married him" (4.2.42-43). While Maria's verbal transformations allow her to examine, question, and transform the patriarchally defined contractual marriage model with its premise of male governance and female subordination, they bewilder Petruchio and defy his mastery through their indeterminacy. Even before Maria's mischievous retelling of the quarantine episode he confesses his perplexity:

. . . could I finde her  
But constant any way, I had done my businesse;  
Were she a whore directly, or a scold,  
An unthrift, or a woman made to hate me,  
I had my wish and knew which way to rayne<sup>37</sup> her:  
But while she shews these, and all their losses,  
A kinde of linsey woolsey mingled mischief  
Not to be ghest at, and whether true, or borrowed,  
Not certaine neither, what a hap had I. (4.2.11-20)

Petruchio can decipher neither Maria's rapidly changing persona nor her continuously shifting discourse. She fits into none of the patriarchal categories for women, and he is at a loss to know how to control her mystifying speech and actions. At one point, Petruchio declares in astonishment "This woman would have made a most rare Jesuite, / She can prevaricate on anything" (4.2.55-56). After her ingenious rerendering of the quarantine incident, Maria concludes with the accusation that he has "abus'd [her] wretchedly, / And in such a way that shames the name of husband, / . . . With breach of honesty, care, kindnesse, manners" (4.2.72-76). As Maria continues her verbal and character transformations at one time pretending to be hurt by Petruchio's neglect (4.2.85-88), at another feigning madness (4.5.45-50), and at still another time pretending complete submission to his "will" (4.2.101) Petruchio concedes that he is baffled. In amazement he declares: "the Rayne-bow / When she hangs in heaven, sheds not her colours / Quicker and more then this deceitfull woman / Weaves in her dyes of wickednesse" (4.5.33-36).

As Maria's multiple transformations elude every attempt by Petruchio to restore the conventional order of marital relations, he is driven to extremes. His next move is an announcement that he will leave her, although with the economic support agreed upon in the "Articles," and travel. Petruchio confides to Sophocles that he actually desires "nothing lesse" than travel, but he feels compelled to follow through on his threat because Maria joyously urges him on and orders his trunks and horses for the journey (4.5.184-90). As she helps him to prepare for a sea voyage she rejoices that Petruchio will "[c]ome home an aged man, as did *Ulysses*, / And I your glad *Penelope*" (4.5.172-73).

While they prepare to accompany Petruchio, Jacques and Pedro banter about the havoc created by Maria's discursive strategy. Pedro looks forward "[t]o hav[ing] the Sea between us and this woman, / Nothing can drown her tongue but

a storm" (5.2.6-7). Their stychomythic repartee on the effects of her tongue suggests the confusion wrought by Maria's linguistic transformations:

Pedro.	Oh her tongue, her tongue.
Jacques.	Rather her many tongues.
Pedro.	Or rather strange tongues.
Jacques.	Her lying tongue.
Pedro.	Her lisping tongue.
Jacques.	Her long tongue.
Pedro.	Her lawlesse tongue.
Jacques.	Her loud tongue.
Pedro.	And her lickrish-
Jacques.	Many other tongues, and many stranger tongues

Then ever Babel had to tell his ruines. . . (5.2.31-40)

Maria speaks a language that the men do not understand, a language that escapes male control and surveillance. Speaking from a continually changing series of positions, she erases the boundaries necessary for the conventional binary feminine oppositions; she is neither a good woman enclosed within the symbolic order nor an evil woman outside this order but a multiple and various model of femininity. Maria cannot be pushed to the limits of speech since she herself appropriates these limits as a verbal technique. Her lunatic discourse finally pushes Petruchio into silence.

At his wit's end in dealing with Maria's taming strategies Petruchio finally desists from all argument and feigns his own death. Always one step ahead, Maria sees through Petruchio's sham and soon rouses him back to speech. Standing by Petruchio's coffin she weeps loudly, explaining to their family and friends that her grief is not for her husband's death but for his "poore unmanly wretched

foolish life" (5.4.20). In another speech on the follies of Petruchio's life she adds: "He was a foole, and farewell he" (5.4.32). Petruchio is goaded into ending the pretense of his untimely demise and breaking his silence; he rises from his coffin in capitulation and despair, crying "O Maria, / Oh my unhappinesse, my misery" (5.4.40-41). But his cure is now completed,<sup>38</sup> and Maria performs yet another transformation. She becomes at last a loving and dutiful wife, promising, "Thus I begin my new love" (5.4.46). Finally, she reassures Petruchio of her reversion to a conventional female role: "From this houre . . . / I dedicate in service to your pleasure" (5.4.57-58).

In this play, in which the discourse of misogynistic male dominance is figured as excessive, and stereotypically unstable and excessive female speech is refigured as corrective, Petruchio makes the final transformation. He affirms that he is "born again" (5.4.60), and that Maria will never have cause to resort to her "tricks" (5.4.51-55). The claim of Petruchio's *re-naissance* seems an obvious parallel to Kate's conversion in The Taming of the Shrew. Yet if this is so we must recall that generations of critics have questioned the sincerity of Kate's capitulation. Indeed, Fletcher's play, with its allusions to the shrewish behavior of Petruchio's first wife, is an argument against it; the lack of closure to the Sly framing story is another possible hint that Kate's reformation is feigned or ironic.<sup>39</sup> Her final speech notwithstanding, no conclusive evidence can be given to support the reliability of her word or her acceptance of the marital status quo. On the surface her affirmation is convincing, but we cannot know ultimately whether her tropes of male dominance and female submission constitute rhetorical language only, or a revelation of Kate's mind and meaning.<sup>40</sup> We will either, like Petruchio, have to take her at her word, or consent to the absence of closure.

Fletcher's play on the other hand has a stronger sense of closure. He ostensibly delivers both the prize promised to women in the title and the female defense pledged in the prologue. Maria appears to win the women's prize of a democratic model of marriage by her transformative verbal strategy, which reforms and liberalizes her relationship with Petruchio. Her lunatic, unstable discourse subverts the unbalanced structure of the symbolic marital contract with its male/female, dominance/subservience, equation and replaces it with one that strikes a better equilibrium between women and men. Not only do we have Maria and Petruchio's word for it; the dramatist confirms that his intention all along has been "to teach the sexes due equality in marriage" (epilogue, 7).<sup>41</sup> The resolution of The Woman's Prize is not, however, entirely a reversal of Shakespeare's shrew-taming comedy in which speech returns in the end to patriarchal inflection. Maria does not attempt to make Petruchio her ventriloquistic subject as his namesake does with Kate in the other play. Fletcher rules out tyranny for wives as well as husbands as he contracts Maria and Petruchio to "stand bound to love mutually" (epilogue, 8).

Yet while the dialogue and action of the play and the pronouncements of the epilogue all point to the success of Maria's self-defensive cure of Petruchio's misogyny and her renegotiation of their marriage contract, the prologue gives advance notice that we should not take this success seriously. The dramatist promises that "The end we ayme at is to make you sport" (prologue, 16). He emphatically denies that "politique discourse" is intended, thus subverting any conclusive political interpretation of an ideal marriage model. In the comic world of the play, subversion of the gendered status quo is possible, but the witty wordplay and the humour of this "true Comedy" (prologue, 14) subvert the argument that the play seems to make just as Petruchio's final words do:

Lets in, and drink of all hands, and be joviall:

I have my colt again, and now she carries;

And gentlemen whoever marries next,

Let him be sure he keep him to his Text. (5.4.87-90)

Although the tone is "joviall," Petruchio's use of the colt-riding metaphor to represent male/female marital relations (along with the obvious sexual innuendo), echoes the familiar animal-training tropes of the formal controversy attacks on women. The shrewtamer is tamed not in the interest of promoting a new order but of preserving the ante of the status quo through benign patriarchal governance: "[men] should not raigh as tyrants o'er their wives" (epilogue, 4). Tyranny and misogyny are not part of the script that the next man who marries should "keep . . . to," but one suspects that male dominance is, and that the battle of the sexes fought and won in this literary terrain is primarily a witty gender game for the male dramatist.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girl. Ed. Paul A. Mulholland (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1987), 72-113. All my quotations from the play are taken from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon, Ed. Fredson Bowers (London: Dent, 1966) Vol. 4, 3. This is the edition from which I cite all references to and quotations taken from the play.

<sup>3</sup> Although there are obvious differences between the two plays, there are also some convincing parallels. In the first place, the two casts of characters share several names. The most striking example of this coincidence is the naming of the male protagonists in the works--the two Petruchios. Maria, the heroine of The Woman's Prize, has a cousin named Byancha, a variation on the spelling of Bianca, Kate's younger sister in The Taming of the Shrew. Both plays contain a character called Tranio; in Fletcher's play he is a friend of Petruchio, whereas in Shakespeare's comedy he is Petruchio's servant. Although in The Woman's Prize a prologue and epilogue are substituted for the Sly frame story, both plays contain the subplot of the wooing of a younger sister of the central female character by a young suitor whom she loves and an elderly suitor whom she disdains. Perhaps the most notable similarity lies in the verbal tactics employed by Petruchio in the earlier play and by Kate in the later. We might well ask, however, why, if the two Petruchios are one, does Fletcher's Petruchio not recognize Maria's linguistic tricks?

<sup>4</sup> See The Works of Thomas Middleron, ed. A. H. Bullen, 8 vols. (1885-87; New York: AMSP, 1964) vol.4,4.

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girl, ed. Andor Gomme, *New Mermaids* (London: Ernest Benn, 1976), xiv.

<sup>6</sup> These public places are chiefly taverns and rough areas of London. Moll's liberties are not pursued in a privileged, respectable setting, and other than the marriage question, the comedy raises no serious political issues, such as the fitness of women for civic duty. Yet despite the disreputable aspects of the places that she frequents and despite her transgressions of the decorum of female dress and place, Moll does not make herself a sexual commodity. Indeed, she protests this form of reification and exploitation of the female.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, 5.1.245.

<sup>8</sup> In a scene in act 2 one of the female characters, Mrs. Openwork, refuses to sell Moll some fabric, selected for the tailoring of one of her unconventional garments. The shopkeeper's wife orders Moll out of the shop: "I'll sell ye nothing; I warn ye my house and shop" (2.1.235-36).

<sup>9</sup> One of the most instructive recent essays on the figure of the hermaphrodite in Renaissance literature is "Fetishizing Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe" by Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds., Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity (New York: Routledge, 1991) 80-111.

The representation of the hermaphrodite in Renaissance literature is riddled with contradictions and ambivalences. At one end of the scale of contradictions, the hermaphrodite is discursively situated as the monster described by Sir Alex and Sir Davy Dapper in the scene just quoted from

Middleton and Dekker's comedy. Among the more influential works that elaborate the monster theory are Ambrose Pare's Of Monsters and Prodigies and An Introduction or Compendious Way to Chiurgerie, qtd. in Jones and Stallybrass, 82-83. See Parey, Ambroise, The Workes of Ambrose Parey, trans. Thomas Johnson (London, 1634). Qtd. in Jones and Stallybrass, 110. The first text mixed medical and magical geneologies of monsters, the second attempted to give a natural explanation for the phenomenon. George Sandys's translation of and commentary on Ovid's Metamorphoses combines medical and legal perspectives of hermaphroditism with examples from ancient history and recent law cases (Jones and Stallybrass, 94-99). For an excellent discussion of favourable conceptions of the androgyne as "a perfect balance of opposing principles" in which the female is a "constitutive agent" in a quest for spiritual unity, see Jones and Stallybrass, 98-100. Elizabeth I, James I, and Francis I are three Renaissance monarchs who appropriated the figure of the hermaphrodite for political purposes. See Marie Axton, The Queen's Two Bodies (London: Royal Historical Society, 1979); Jonathan Goldberg, James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983) 142; Jean R. Brink, Maryanne C. Horowitz, and Allison P. Coudert, eds., Playing with Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991) 99-132; Jones and Stallybrass, 98; also my chapter 1, note 17. While The Roaring Girl dramatizes the negative responses toward the androgynous appearance of transvestites, the play also represents some positive associations of this ambivalent figure, such as the scene in the final act when Moll promotes a unified conclusion to the dramatic events.

<sup>10</sup> Jones and Stallybrass distinguish two dominant trends in the analysis of this figure: the first is the reading of the hermaphrodite as "the problem which a binary logic attempts to erase" (80). The second represents androgyny "as the vanishing point of all binary logics [and the hermaphrodite as] a figure which embodies the dissolution of male and female as absolute categories." (Moll exemplifies both trends: from the perspective of most of the other characters, she represents the first trend; from her own perspective, the second). Jones and Stallybrass hold that both kinds of analysis tend to "slide into the assumption that gender is a known quantity which is then, at a second stage, destabilized" (80). Their argument demonstrates, on the contrary, the lack of grounding and the lability of the gendering process (81-83). As a dramatic study in gender ambiguity the characterization of Moll supports the latter argument.

<sup>11</sup> See David Kaufman, "Dressed for Success," *Nation* 4 Feb. 1992. In part of his article Kaufman reviews Marjorie Garber's Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> See Kaufman 240.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, 2.1.154-56, 2.1.80-96.

<sup>14</sup> "Jade" refers to either a poorly conditioned horse or a prostitute. See Mulholland, 113, n.82. In this instance Moll clearly intends a sexual connotation.

<sup>15</sup> For an interesting literary precedent to this female challenge to a duel with an insulting male, see the Venetian courtesan Veronica Franco's poetic work the Terza rime (1575). While the motive of male seduction is not an issue in Franco's work, the reaction to male misogyny is common to both defenses. For an excellent analysis of Franco's literary skills and rhetorical strategies in this work as well as some engrossing biographical details, see Margaret F. Rosenthal's

essay "Veronica Franco's Terza Rime: The Venetian Courtesan's Defense" in the *Renaissance Quarterly*, 5.1011 (1989): 227-257. I am indebted to Ann R. Jones for drawing this material to my attention at the Folger seminar mentioned earlier. The eighteen *capitoli* in Franco's oeuvre constitute a *tenzone*, "a genre traditionally associated with polemical debate and argumentation" (231). Franco's challenge to a verbal duel was made to a male poet who wrote and circulated an anonymous satire in which he denounces her as a "common whore" (See Rosenthal, 229-231, esp. 231). The *capitolo* 13 is a bold challenge to this anonymous adversary, later identified as Maffio Venier, to a duel of honour in which Franco defends her reputation and the reputations of all women: "and I undertake to defend all women / against you, who are so scornful of them" (*capitolo* 16. 79-80, trans. Ann R. Jones).

Although there are significant differences between Franco's poetically complex verse and Moll's verbal defense, there are also points in common. In each instance a strong female boldly challenges a misogynistic male to a duel in order to requite herself against an insult to her honour, and to undertake in the process of her self-defense, a broader defense of women. Franco's weapons are words couched in a brilliant display of rhetorical skill that exemplify Peacham's alliance of rhetorical figures with martial weapons of attack and defense. She offers her opponent the choice of linguistic weapons: "The sword that strikes and pierces in your hand— / the common Venetian tongue— . . . [or] Tuscan . . . [in] its learned or comic form" (16, 112-16). Moll's weapons are a combination of language and literal arms—her strong arms and her sword. Although Moll is a creation of male dramatists while Franco constructed her own literary persona, both defenses are fought on literary terrain (Qtd. from an unpublished paper read

at Folger by Ann R. Jones, "Designing Women: The Self as Spectacle in Mary Wroth and Veronica Franco"). Both women are triumphant in what they propose as an engagement with a male adversary in feats of arms. In different ways both Moll and Franco undermine the reification and the simultaneous elevation and degradation of women figured in Petrarchan conceits.

<sup>16</sup> See Marilyn Miguel and Juliana Schliesari, eds., Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991). In an illuminating essay in this collection, "Economy, Woman, and Renaissance Discourse," Carla Freccero remarks on the gender implications of Marx's discussion of the anthropomorphism of commodity fetishism. She draws attention to Marx's humorous (for him) footnote to the passage on commodity possessors, explaining that "in a twelfth-century French text, *femmes folles de leur corps*, or 'wanton women,' were included in the list of commodities at the fair of Lendit" (192 n. 1). Freccero quotes Luce Irigaray's interpretation of Marx's analysis in her discussion on the exchange of women: Irigaray contends that "heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles: there are producer subjects and agents of exchange (male) on the one hand, productive earth and commodities (female) on the other." See Karl Marx, "The Process of Exchange," Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, ed. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977) vol.1, 178; Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985), 192; Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," Toward an Anthropology of Women, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review, 1975), 157-210.

17 The three terms refer to well-known items of male clothing. The term "slop" refers to wide breeches worn by men of the period. See 2.2. n.82.

18 The "hollow-hearted angels" are gold coins marked with holes in them for later identification, in order to allow Sir Alex to claim that Moll had stolen them. See 4.1.203-07.

19 Mulholland 69. The prologue also reflects the dramatists' consciousness of their gender-shaping role in their creation of Moll as a stage character:

To know what girl this roaring girl should be,  
 For of that tribe are many. One is she  
 That roars at midnight in deep tavern bowls,  
 That beats the watch, and constables controls;  
 Another roars i' th' daytime, swears, stabs, gives braves,  
 Yet sells her soul to the lust of fools and slaves:  
 Both these are suburb-roarers. Then there's besides  
 A civil, city-roaring girl, whose pride,  
 Feasting, and riding, shakes her husband's state,  
 And leaves him roaring through an iron grate.  
 None of these roaring girls is ours: she flies  
 With wings more lofty. Thus her character lies.  
 (prologue, 15-26).

20 The initial resistance of Sebastian's father to their wedding plans on the grounds of Mary's small dowry provides an economic motive as the impediment to their marriage. The economic motive, is, however, superceded by horror at the prospect of Moll as a daughter-in-law.

<sup>21</sup> See Brink, Horowitz, and Coudert, ix; Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 66-93; Marjorie Garber, ed., Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987); Simon Shepherd, Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama (New York: St. Martin's P, 1981); Page DuBois, Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1982); Abby W. Kleinbaum, The War Against the Amazons (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983); Wm. Blake Tyrell, Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984); Olive Patricia Dickason, The Myth of the Savage: and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas (Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 1984); Mary Elizabeth Perry, "The Manly Woman: A Historical Case Study," New Gender Scholarship: Brezking New Boundaries, eds. Harry Brod and Walter Williams, spec. issue of American Behavioral Scientist, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987); Winfried Schleiner, "Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances," Sixteenth-Century Journal 19 (1988): 605-19; Marie Delcourt, Hermaphrodite: Mythes et rites de la bisexualité dans l'antiquité classique (Paris: P.G.F, 1958); Mircea Eliade, Mephistoles and the Androgyne, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965); Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (New York: Norton, 1968) 200, 211-17; Lauren Silberman, "Mythographic Transformations of Ovid's Hermaphrodite," Sixteenth Century Journal 19 (1988): 643-52; Stevie Davies, The Feminine Reclaimed: The Idea of Woman in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1986); Diane Kelsey McColley, Milton's Eve (Urbana: U of



Illinois P, 1983); Julia M. Walker, ed., Milton and the Idea of Woman (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988); all qtd. Brink, Horowitz, and Coudert, xix.

<sup>22</sup> See Brink, Horowitz, and Coudert, ix.

<sup>23</sup> See Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, eds., Shakespeare and the Question of Theory (New York: Methuen, 1985).

<sup>24</sup> See Parker and Hartman, 154.

<sup>25</sup> Fludd was a seventeenth-century hermeticist. Figure 7 comes from his Utriusque Cosmi Majoris (Oppenheim, 1617). See also Jocelyn Godwin, Robert Fludd (London: 1979). Both works are cited in Parker, Hartman, 158.

<sup>26</sup> See Mulholland, 3.

<sup>27</sup> In a dialogue with Maria's father Petronius, Byancha explicitly states that Maria's rhetorical strategy has reformed Petruchio by "cur[ing] . . . [o]ne madnesse with another." (4.1.93-94)

<sup>28</sup> Tranio declares,

Me thinks her father has dealt harshly with her,  
Exceeding harshly, and not like a Father,  
To match her to this Dragon; I protest  
I pity the poore gentlewoman. (1.1.6-10)

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent survey and analysis of the historical, political and social context of the religious and legal measures enforced against shrews, or scolding women in early Stuart England see A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), esp. D. E. Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England," 116-36.

<sup>30</sup> In the early seventeenth century, when the play was published, the threat of a political crisis in gender relations appears have been a historical as well as a literary phenomenon. According to the available historical data, patriarchal authority was all the more rigorously upheld in an attempt to preserve the status quo, and shrews were treated harshly with impunity, even with communal approval. (See Underdown, "Taming").

<sup>31</sup> Qtd. in Parker, Hartman 142.

<sup>32</sup> Then God be blest it [is] the blessed sun,  
But sun it is not when you say it is not;  
And the moon changes even as your mind.  
What you will have it nam'd, even that it is,  
And so it shall be so for Katherine. (135,  
4.3.18-22)

All quotations of The Taming of the Shrew are taken from The Riverside Shakespeare.

<sup>33</sup> This passage reads:

If ye be false, repent, goe home and pray,  
And to the serious women of the City  
Confesse your selfe; bring not a sinne so heynous  
To load thy soule, to this place: mark me Livia,  
If thou bee'st double and betrays't our honours,  
And we fail in ou: purpose: get thee where  
There is no women living, nor no hope  
There ever shall be. (2.2.84-90)

Byancha's allusion to the capitalized "City" suggests not only an analogy of the city of women to the powerful patriarchal symbolism and connotations of Rome, but also possibly to Christine de Pizan's metaphorical City of Ladies. The allusion is probably also a playful reference to Middleton's play Women Beware Women. See Thomas Middleton, Women Beware Women, ed. J. R. Mulryne (London: Methuen, 1975). Livia is the name of the female character who betrays the other women in the play. Sophocles's Greek name is no doubt another allusion to Greek drama, and Livia's to Roman plays.

34 Linda Woodbridge in Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Women (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984) also makes this association. In her analysis of the play she asserts that Maria's insurrection instigates a "veritable women's movement" (197).

35 In a dialogue between Jacques and Pedro on Petruchio's marital situation Pedro attests that their master has "found his full match now" (3.2.3).

Jacques. That I believe too.

Pedro. How did she entertaine him?

Jacques. She lookt on him-

Pedro. But scurvily.

Jacques. Faith with no great affection

That I saw: and I heard some say he kiss'd her.

But 'twas upon a treaty, and some coppies

Say but her cheek. (3.2.4-10)

36 After Petruchio complains about her actions Maria attests to Sophocles,

Would I had been so happy when I married,

But to have met an honest man like thee,

For I am sure thou art good, I know thou art honest,  
 A handsome, hurtlesse man, a loving man,  
 Though never a penny with him; and these eyes,  
 That face, and that true heart; wear this for my sake,  
 And when thou thinkst upon me pity me:  
 I am cast away. (3.3.130-37)

37 As we shall note, Petruchio will return to the horse-training metaphor in the conclusion.

38 Maria's speech:  
 I have done my worst, and have my end, forgive me;  
 From this houre make me what you please: I have tam'd ye,  
 And now am vowd your servant: Look not strangely,  
 Nor feare what I say to you. Dare you kisse me?  
 Thus I begin my new love. (5.4.44-48)

39 In the first case the audience is perfectly aware of the inevitable frustration of Sly's desire to enjoy his lovely new wife, the trickster-lord's page boy in female clothing. The pageboy's transvestite disguise may well suggest duplicity in Kate's apparent metamorphosis. Fineman proposes that "the absence of a final frame" in Shakespeare's comedy implies an ongoing "desire for closure that the play calls forth in order to postpone," a desire that enhances its perennial popularity (Parker and Hartman, 156).

40 I refer to the famous speech in which Kate begins by alluding to the traditional patriarchal model of the relations between the sexes:

Fie, fie, unknit that threat'ng unkind brow,  
 And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,

To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.  
 It blots thy beauty as frosts do the meads,  
 Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,  
 And in no sense is meet nor amiable.  
 A woman moved is like a fountain troubled  
 Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty.

.....  
 (5.2.136-43)

<sup>41</sup> The full epilogue reads:

The Tamer's tam'd, but so, as nor the men  
 Can find one just cause to complaine of, when  
 They fitly do consider in their lives,  
 They should not raige as Tyrants o'er their wives.  
 Nor can the women from this president  
 Insult, or triumph: it being aptly meant ,  
 To teach the Sexes due equality;  
 And as they stand bound, to love mutually.  
 If this effect, arising from a cause  
 Well lay'd and grounded, may deserve applause,  
 We something more then hope, our honest ends  
 Will keep the men, and women too, our friends.  
 (epilogue,1-12)

Playing the Game Rhetorically: Elizabeth Cary's Politic Defense Strategies

I

Like a number of other entertaining Renaissance intellectual pursuits, playing with gender was an exclusive game for male players. Women were excluded from active participation in this literary game, and they were assigned passive roles as the textual constructs of male authors. Given this milieu and a system in which literary women were instructed to limit themselves to copies or translations of male writers' works, Elizabeth Cary's decision to compose an original drama was in itself a radical challenge to her period's established gender constructs. Her dramatization of the problem of women's speech in relation to rhetorical modes and strategies of female defense defies the exclusiveness of this male literary amusement, though it remains within the bounds of female decorum. Yet Cary's play on and subversion of the male fiction of the chaste and silent, unchaste and vocal, gender clichés in the *Mariam* tragedy may well be construed as a highly subversive gender game.

In contrast to the comic spirit of male gender games, Cary's tragedy represents a serious attempt to reconstitute the female in drama and to explore rhetorical strategies of female defense by working within and subverting the existing structures of male-controlled discourse. Although she was only seventeen or eighteen years old when she wrote the drama, Cary was well aware of the gendered power relations in both the conflicts and the protocol

surrounding female speech, particularly public speech, and of the nullifying effect of this repression on the discourse of women's defenses. The details of the full-length biography written by one of her daughters, Anne Cary Falkland, a Benedictine nun at Cambray, give evidence that such issues formed the material of Cary's private life as well as her one extant work of dramatic fiction. The biography, which I shall examine briefly, and the personal letters, which I shall examine in more detail, reveal that in her life as in her art, Cary appropriated and converted male rhetorical strategies of female containment into enabling modes of female defense.

Since we have only one surviving dramatic work by Cary, we have no resource for assessing further developments in the discursive structure of her female defenses in this genre. Although Anne Cary attests that as well as a number of other literary productions, her mother wrote some more plays, these have apparently been lost.<sup>1</sup> Cary's letters, however, which are preserved among British Domestic and State Papers, give us an opportunity to examine the rhetorical techniques whereby she assumes control of, and reverses, male ventriloquism of female discourse. In her letters to the British Privy Council and Charles I, Cary negotiates and transforms the tropes that inscribe female subordination in the order of language into a persuasive discourse of female self-defense. Although she figures herself as a disempowered female speaker, entrusting her case to the mediation and control of powerful male advocates, her rhetorical strategy nonetheless effectively mediates male discourse and defends her polemically. The biography sheds light on other interesting defenses in which Cary achieves forensic triumphs generally not available to women, again through the subversion of male-determined orders of discourse. The first and the final female defenses described Anne Cary's biography of her mother, The Lady Falkland: Her Life, quite literally place Cary in judicial settings. In her

final defense she participates in an unmediated dialogue with male interlocutors and successfully employs legal discourse to refute a charge that could have resulted in her imprisonment. Through the biographical and epistolary forms of literary discourse we are thus enabled to reconstitute Cary the writer and to gain some insights into the rhetorical structures of several other defenses that she undertook.

## II

The circumstances attending the publication of her play—the recall of an earlier printing<sup>2</sup> and the anonymity of the 1613 edition in which she identified herself only as E. C., as well as the dramatic conflict on which the work centers—all focus attention on the repression of female speech, including, of course, written speech. Cary's apparent complicity in the code of female silence was an appropriate strategy to protect herself against the attacks likely to follow the open publication of a play by a female author—a defensive rhetorical gender game so to speak. Even so, the play takes further precautions. As we have noted, *Mariam* rather pointedly contains an attack on wordy, forward, wanton women that reads like an excerpt from a formal debate pamphlet. The judgement of the chorus and the tragic outcome of this closet drama also support the familiar rationale for the silencing of female speech, especially female public speech. Cary thus ostensibly defers to the literary and social conventions of her time that assign a woman's written words, like her spoken words, to the private sphere, as patriarchal property reserved for private audiences only.



Yet while Cary's authorial stance and her play both reinforce the prevailing literary conventions, they also discreetly subvert them. Her defensive concealment of first her work, then her name from public circulation reveals an awareness of the proprieties of female discourse but not necessarily an inclination to yield to them. She must have been aware that the initial abortive printing and the later anonymous publication allowed her written words the potential at least of being preserved. The former might have been read before its recall, and the latter clearly allowed a readership if not an audience. Nor could her work have been entirely anonymous. As the prefatory poem indicates,<sup>3</sup> Cary was well known in English literary circles and her initials would have been recognized by some of her contemporaries. In the long run, Cary has not been silenced. More than three centuries later her literary oeuvre and her life are receiving critical attention.<sup>4</sup>

While Cary's life and writings have, until recently, "figure[d] without impropriety" in that marginal historical space to which Virginia Woolf alludes in A Room of One's Own,<sup>5</sup> they are given a central place in her daughter's biography that, like the *Mariam* tragedy, remained hidden from the public for centuries. To the best of my knowledge the manuscript of Cary's biography, discovered among the archives at Lille in 1861,<sup>6</sup> represents the only published early seventeenth-century biography of a woman writer by her daughter. It is an engrossing and moving account of the day-to-day details of a life that is in itself material for dramatic fiction. It also contains precisely the kind of historical information on Elizabethan women for which Virginia Woolf conducted her fruitless search in the British Museum.<sup>7</sup> Anne Cary is an objective as well as an informative biographer despite her closeness to her subject. She represents her mother as an extraordinary woman, complete with ordinary human failings. Nor is Anne unsympathetic to Henry Cary, whom she describes as a devoted father.

Nonetheless, the *Life* is a defense, not only of Elizabeth Cary's controversial Catholic recusancy but also of her personal and artistic integrity. If the biography is not sufficient justification for the former, the conversion to the Catholic church of six of her surviving children <sup>8</sup> against powerful political and ecclesiastical opposition, is a defense of her personal moral and religious principles. Taken together the biography and the letters defend Cary's insistence on a woman's right to spiritual self-determination. Further, the writing and preservation of the biography discreetly subverts the prescribed code of silence surrounding women and women authors.

The woman who emerges from Anne Cary's narrative is a remarkable figure for her own time or for any period in history. Cary was a woman of vast intellectual range and acuity; her learning and her linguistic facility were prodigious. <sup>9</sup> The determination and perseverance she showed when pursuing projects that were important to her is noteworthy. Anne Cary informs us that as a child her mother bribed the family servants to supply her with candles to read all night against the orders of her parents. This is an early instance of a quiet rebellion against constraints: not open defiance but an insistence on following her own interests. Although most of her literary productions are not extant, Cary continued to read and write whenever the circumstances of her later life allowed. In addition to her literary pursuits she was usually engaged in some form of charitable work. Her philanthropies in Ireland when her husband was lord deputy in that country ended in personal disaster, due in large measure to her genius for mismanaging money. Cary's visionary attempt to establish trade schools for the children of destitute Irish families, however, deserves at least a historical footnote.

While she lacked financial expertise Cary had other skills, dedicating her considerable energies as much to domestic and spiritual priorities as to her

literary ones. Her daughter attests that Cary combined her numerous endeavours with the most scrupulous attention to family and household responsibilities, and that she was devoted to the care of her eleven children, servants, and home (11-12). According to Anne Cary, her mother submitted herself entirely to her "very absolute" husband, Henry Cary, later Viscount Falkland, <sup>10</sup> on every issue except religion (14). Cary's quest for spiritual liberty and her personal religious conflicts ended in her recusancy and the poverty and actual starvation, detailed in the *Life* and letters, when her husband abandoned her as a consequence. <sup>11</sup> The eight-year period of privation and misery that she experienced prior to her reconciliation with Falkland six months before his death was marked, however, by literary productivity, <sup>12</sup> and during the extremely difficult period of her life after his death, she continued her inveterate reading and writing. At this time she also participated in a highly dramatic incident that reveals her forensic expertise and her knowledge of civil law. Despite an almost total lack of funds she arranged to have her two youngest sons, who had been placed in her eldest son, Lucius's custody, <sup>13</sup> kidnapped, with the result that she was arraigned before the Star Chamber in 1636 (182). Threatened with imprisonment in the Tower of London if her answers did not satisfy her judges, Cary conducted a brilliant and perfectly legal self-defense. The woman who could never manage money handled her own case and the traditionally male enclave of legal discourse so well that she outwitted and baffled her judges; they gave up questioning her and sent her home in the chief justice's carriage (101-02).

Given the illumination that some further biographical details shed on Cary's life, her remarkably competent Star Chamber defense is not as surprising as it may seem. While she was well aware that women's subordination and silence were inscribed in the order of civil law <sup>14</sup> as extensions of the orders of divine and natural law, and although like other women in the Renaissance, she

had no formal training in the arts of legal rhetoric, dialectic, and disputation, Cary had some contact with legal discourse. Her father, Lawrence Tanfield, was one of the most successful lawyers of his time. Tanfield practised as an advocate from 1579-1606, when he was appointed justice to King James's Bench. We have no evidence that Tanfield instructed his only child in the fine points of law, but it is probable that she had access to his library. During her clandestine night readings some of her father's legal texts might well have been among her reading materials. We do know that in her private life she revealed a formidable legal mind, and there is, as I shall shortly discuss, a recurring legal motif in her writings. Anne Cary records that the control of legal discourse and knowledge of the judicial process imparted by her mother at the kidnapping trial prompted one judge to "as[k] her if she meant to teach them law. She answered she did but desire them to remember what she made no question they knew before, and that she, being a lawyer's daughter, was not wholly ignorant" (102).

Another incident related from Cary's early life suggests that Tanfield might have tolerated or even encouraged her legal bent. At the age of ten she was allowed to be present at a trial in which her father had to decide whether a frightened elderly woman who had confessed to crimes of murder by witchcraft was guilty. Apparently suspecting that the confessions were coerced, the child whispered to her father that he should ask the accused "whether she had bewitched to death Mr. John Symondes, . . . her uncle . . .," who was among the spectators at the trial (5-6). When the trembling woman confessed to this murder as she had the others, Tanfield inquired more closely into the matter and discovered that the woman's accusers had intimidated her into false confessions. The defendant was acquitted. We have no record of Tanfield's reaction to his daughter's surreptitious but successful defense argument. We do, however, have an early indication of Cary's rhetorical strategies for subversion of the code of

female silence. We also have evidence that she was on familiar terms with the British judicial system. This familiarity made her a uniquely qualified female defense advocate. As we have noted, The Tragedie of Mariam makes reference to the legal system, specifically as this system relates to women's rights. The play also echoes her experience of the trial just described, since it stresses the propriety of female silence in public and the effectiveness of a whisper to a male agent as a female discursive strategy.

The rhetorical strategy of speaking through a male proxy allowed Cary to defend herself at the crucial period of her life when she was left destitute by her husband after her conversion to Catholicism. The appendix added to her biography by Richard Simpson includes, among other documents, some of Elizabeth Cary's letters to Lord Conway, a friend to her husband and herself and an official in the court of Charles I. One letter is addressed directly to King Charles, although it is preceded by a cover letter to Conway, who is requested to deliver it. I wish to draw attention to the letters because the rhetorical strategies employed by Cary in defense of her actions and her requests for financial assistance at a time when she quite literally had no funds for food, lodging, or any of the barest necessities of life, illuminate the techniques of verbal negotiation in the *Mariam* tragedy years earlier. They also illustrate her legal expertise and skills in the art of disputation generally reserved for men.

Cary's brilliant exploitation of the ethos of female submission and humility in connection with women's discourse is the most interesting aspect of her letters. Working within the prescribed constraints for female speech, she appropriates and uses the tropes that figure woman and woman's speech negatively, transforming them into a positive female defense by subverting male proprietorship of female language. The rhetorical strategies are covertly implied in *Mariam*<sup>15</sup> and rather overtly apparent in the letters. Yet the Privy Council

commission appointed by Charles in 1627 to deal with the matter seems not to have noticed. The document that registers their decision in her favour begins with the words, "Whereas, upon the humble petition <sup>16</sup> of Elizabeth, Vice Countess of Falkland, wife unto Henry, Vice Count of Falkland, now Lord Deputy of Ireland, made unto his Majesty, for competent maintenance to be allowed unto her," and so forth. These were the public male agents who spoke for Cary and through whom Cary herself spoke, while figuring herself as a conventional model of female humility and a silent and obedient wife. It is amusing that the Privy Council document ends with a stern warning to Falkland that he should apply himself to the "effectual performance" of his financial responsibilities so "that the Lady, your wife, may have no further cause to complain neither to His Majesty nor this board. And so, &c." (164). While the excerpts from the letters that we examine reflect Cary's always deferential tone toward her male ruler and judges, the commission must have been weary of her entirely convincing arguments. <sup>17</sup>

Here, for example, in one of her briefer letters to Lord Conway, is the request that he deliver her letter to the King:

My Lord,—I must beseech you to do me the great favour, with all the speed you can, to present this humble petition into His Majesty's hands; and be pleased to importune him to read it; for it concerns no less than the saving me from starving. If it be possible I beseech you deliver it when my Lord Steward and my Lord Chamberlain are by, in whose good wises I have much confidence. If you will oblige me this much I will faithfully pray for you. If you can, I pray you let the Duke of Buckingham be present; for I

know he will second so just and necessary a request. Though it were not manners in me, yet I beseech your Lordship, put into His Majesty's memory that if I had been suffered at first to go unto my lord, all this had not happened; therefore I hope he will not see me perish for want of food. I have left my humble petitionary letter to His Majesty open which I do beseech you first to read, and then cause it to be sealed before you deliver it. If you second it strongly to His Majesty, I dare be bound you shall receive extraordinary thanks from all the three great ladies of my Lord of Buckingham's family, beside your reward from God Almighty for doing so charitable an act. Expedition is also my suit, for delay may destroy me. I rest

Your Lordship's faithful servant,

E. Falkland

Her apparent adherence to the conventions of female discourse notwithstanding, the writer is politically astute and in full control of her language. She is actually her own solicitor, requesting that Conway not only deliver her message, which she as a woman ordinarily could not do (on this occasion she was banned from the court, and could not circumvent that convention, as she might otherwise have done), but also that he deliver it in the presence of her own carefully selected advocates, who are favourable to her cause. She rhetorically constitutes herself in the properly humble discourse prescribed for the female, then presents an argument against which no gentleman would argue, that she be saved from starvation. She brings in three powerful aristocratic ladies, among whom are

included the duchess of Buckingham and the countess of Denbeigh, whose "extraordinary thanks" would make them character witnesses in her defense. Her final request for haste on Conway's part in delivering her suit is so persuasive that it would be extremely difficult to put her off. Here, too, she defends herself against any charge of unladylike or indecorous behavior; since she is in a life-threatening situation, one cannot fault her discourse for its somewhat directive tone. Nevertheless, Conway's "faithful servant," as she signs herself, gives him very careful directions regarding the preparations for conducting her defense.

If Cary invokes the conventional ethos of female humility to good effect in her discourse with Lord Conway, she rhetorically amplifies the stance in her address to King Charles. The form of her letter to the king is a judicial oration. It begins with an *exordium*, a defense and a confirmation of Cary's humility and obedience as a subject, then moves into the refutation, an entirely logical explanation of the reasons why she cannot obey the king's command to go to her mother's house. This particular excerpt ends with a discreet reminder to the king that even subjects have some legal rights:

May it Please Your Majesty,—I have been so little accustomed to the framing of petitions hitherto, and have so little help to assist me in anything, as I am driven to express myself in this manner; though the humility of my heart would willingly have presented itself in a lowlier form (if any such there be) than a petition. Though I am secure how clear I am from the least disobedience to your Majesty, yet, having lately received a command, . . . wherein your secretaries have expressed your pleasure to be that I should go



down to Burford to my mother, I was enforced to address myself this way to your Majesty (since I am forbidden immediate access to you), that I might avoid the semblance of what I so much hate, which is disobedience. I know your Majesty intends to command no impossibilities; and this is accidentally no less, my mother being gone to Bath, and intending to come up, before she see her own house, to kneel before your royal feet, to crave the freedom of a subject, that neither she nor I may be proceeded against without due form of law. . . . (148)

We might question the seriousness of the writer's tone when she wonders whether there are any forms lowlier than petitions, but we cannot question her command of logic, dialectic, or rhetorical framing techniques. Nor can we question her knowledge of the judicial process and the proper form of a judicial oration. The proposition put forth in her narration is indisputable because it is fully developed and supported. She points out that her mother's absence from her house is the accidental cause of her (Cary's) inability to obey the king's command. The allusion to her mother's kneeling before the king's "royal feet" <sup>18</sup> subtly introduces a formal cause—they have not been allowed the due process of law to which they are entitled as subjects in the serving of this order. A little later she gives the final cause: the motive of the agent. Her mother, Mrs. Tanfield, who represents Cary's only source of material support if the Lord Deputy will not provide for her, will also refuse maintenance for her daughter if Cary comes to live with her. In this part of the letter she includes a combined material and final cause: her deceased father, who had made her his heir, disinherited her solely because she signed the private income that he had given

her over to her husband. For good measure she encloses a letter from her mother, corroborating that she strongly objects to Cary's presence in her home, as a piece of material evidence. In this argument, as in the clause with which it begins, Cary is using the figure of *epithonema*, or Puttenham's *surclose*. The entire argument to this point falls under the figure of *antiphora*, or anticipation: "responding in advance to anticipated objections." Puttenham's *passager*, "appearing to pass over a matter lightly," is also suggested in the delicate reminder of a subject's rights, made so deferentially within the rhetorical context of homage to the king that the radical thrust of Cary's argument is concealed. After she has laid out her essentially indisputable arguments, she concludes with a plea combining female humility and reason, softening the unfeminine trait of reason by exhibiting an excessive humility:

Therefore, I most humbly importune your Majesty to call back a command so prejudicial to me, since to obey it, will be the means to deprive me of all livelihood hereafter; yet that should not hinder me that would hazard any temporal good to show my zeal to do your Majesty service, but that this is besides impossible because of my mother's absence from her own house. (149)

The qualifying phrase, "temporal good" is important here, for she is clearly making a strong request to be excused from such service before declaring it impossible. Like a wise lawyer, Cary gracefully concedes that which cannot be denied, the change of religion that has caused her unhappy predicament. Elsewhere in the letter she states, "I have done nothing to lose [my lord's favour] but what I could not with a safe conscience leave undone" (150). Whether or not she has read Puttenham, and there is no mention of rhetorical texts in the

allusions to her extensive readings in the *Life*, she skillfully employs the figure of *paramologia*, or admittance. This figure is followed by another display of humility in which she figures herself as the king's "meanest subject," entirely dependant upon his beneficent and merciful care.

Cary's appeal to monarchical patriarchy is followed by praise of Henry Cary. She argues that the king's mercy to her "can in no way be prejudicial to my lord, your faithful servant, . . . who, upon my soul, doth perpetually neglect himself and his own affairs, rather than in any one point to omit what may tend to your Majesty's honour or profit" (150). She then makes an excuse for Falkland's cruelty to her, declaring that he is not aware of her miserable circumstances (Falkland is still in Ireland). The Latin term for the rhetorical figure of excuse is *dichologia*. This section of the letter is followed by an amplification of Cary's humility, subjection, and obedience to patriarchy: "I had rather sustain any misery than petition to be supplied contrary to my lord's will, to which I have and will submit me as far as till I be obliged in conscience not to suffer myself to perish; and I hope it will not offend him that I have recourse to that fountain of clemency, which is your Majesty" (150). The stress on her womanly humility and the appeal to the highest English representative of earthly patriarchy, troped as a "fountain of clemency," partially obscures the fact that she is challenging Falkland's will and appealing to a higher authority, one to which Falkland himself is subject. We should also note Cary's reference again to her conscience, that will not "suffer [her] to perish." Her conscience, which presumably defers only to the will of God, is nonetheless defined by herself as an autonomous, spiritually motivating force. In a double *surclose* she argues that she will submit herself to her husband's will, but she cannot go against human reason or divine will in allowing herself to "perish" of starvation. Her implication is that Falkland would certainly not wish to be responsible for her death. All in all, Cary's

writing here is a model of unimpeachably mild refutation of her husband's behavior.

This section of Cary's petition also reiterates the pressing nature of her needs; she has "not means for one meal " (150) and asks the king to assist her or to "refer it to any two of your privy council," the latter request revealing her knowledge of the legal protocol of Charles's court. Her letter closes with a blessing for the king combined with a mitigating reference to her recusancy and a final emphasis on her ethos of female humility:

I beseech God to bless your Majesty with all His best  
blessings, both here and hereafter; and I dare say you  
have not upon earth one of any belief that is more  
loyally affected to you than

Your Majesty's most humble obedient  
subject and servant,  
E. Falkland <sup>19</sup>

By figuring herself as a defenseless woman, utterly dependent upon her male protectors, and by heightening and intensifying the ethos of feminine humility, Cary disarms her potential male critics. Judging by the comments of the male agents who were commissioned to determine her affairs, she successfully persuaded them to support her entirely legal, and ostensibly humble but rhetorically skillful, petition.

Yet although Christian humility might be invoked, Elizabeth Cary had gone against the combined authority of king, state, church, and husband in her religious conversion, and even as she pleaded humility she acknowledged that she would not follow any order contrary to her own conscience. She also pleaded quite eloquently for her legal rights as a subject in her letter to the king, revealing a sophisticated awareness of those rights as well as of the legal

proceedings due her. Her highly amplified stance of female humility was probably her most effective technique for subverting patriarchal authority; yet her command of language, her legal expertise, and her skill in the masculine art of disputation should not be overlooked. Cary uses the rhetorical strategy of troping herself as a figure of servitude to simultaneously conceal and enhance her considerable powers of persuasion. Witness the close of another letter to Lord Conway requesting a favour for one of her Catholic friends:

You have already made me your *servant*; and add this  
favour, and you will make me your *slave*. You shall  
never be ashamed of any favour you do to

Your faithful *servant*,

E. Falkland (emphasis added)

The "faithful servant" has managed to direct Conway in a number of instances. Her strategy of self-abasement was actually a strategy of self-defense that allowed her to speak out boldly, albeit indirectly. It was a shrewd and admirably negotiated system of exchange. In conceding to her pleas, and particularly in forwarding her petitions, the powerful men to whom she was so deferential gave Cary a voice and a measure of control over her own affairs. As a child her whispered few words of direction to her father had successfully defended a helpless elderly woman. Herself an apparently defenseless older woman at the time of this correspondence, she defended herself by proxy through her male speakers. She wrote the text; they delivered it. Yet while Cary did not hesitate to appropriate male rhetorical privilege and to subvert male ventriloquism by revising gendered figures of speech and language to win her cases, her cases were just, and her arguments, according to the historical sources from which they are transcribed, were presented truthfully.<sup>20</sup> In her letters, Cary transforms the rhetorical conventions that constrain female speech. She

deploys the figure of amplification to play on, and intensify, the male-defined gender constructs that assign women a subordinate place in the order of language. Through her subversion and reversal of gendered linguistic power relations in her epistolary discourse, she transforms the negative female tropes into a positive female defense.

### III

Cary thus took the opportunity to exercise her considerable skills as a defender of women in several arenas. Several of the instances of legal disputation to which Anne Cary refers were conducted in the medium of actual speech, although the first was whispered in private in observance of the code of female silence. In her letters, too, Cary displayed the proper reluctance to speak in public; her male-mediated self-defense was notably successful, however. On the occasion of her Star Chamber trial, called to answer directly to the Privy Council, she was forced to abandon the usual proprieties of female speech. In this case she conducted her own defense without male mediators. Her forensic triumph in the officially authorized and prestigious male court of law was achieved not by engaging in the complicated discourse of negotiation and exchange with male mediators to which she was compelled to resort in the letters but by the direct and expert usage of legal discourse. In the dramatic discourse of her *Mariam* tragedy, Cary raised the issue of spiritual equality in a system that legally sanctioned male absolutism <sup>21</sup> in male/female relations. Although her fictional character, *Mariam*, is sacrificed to the traditional hierarchical pattern of male hegemony and control of women and women's speech, Cary gives her a

spiritual victory. In representing Mariam outside the limits of conventional male models and in playing on, and subverting, male gender categories and constructs in her drama, Cary calls female stereotypes into question.

Cary draws attention to and challenges male rhetorical gender constructs and the subordinate place assigned to women in the order of language in at least one other literary form. The preface and dedication of her work The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinal of Perron, to the Answere of the Most Excellent King of Great Britaine<sup>22</sup> expose and discard the advice given by rhetoricians like Puttenham to female writers that they inscribe themselves among the second-rate.<sup>23</sup> In the preface Cary examines literary gender constructs and conventions, finds them lacking and makes her own revisions. First she declares it beneath her intention "To looke for glorie from Translation," the task deemed appropriate for women by male rhetoricians, poets and educators. She defends her endeavour although translation is a rather low literary form, because she has a spiritual purpose that has nothing to do with male conventions for female authors. Her preface follows:

#### To The Reader

##### Reader

Thou shalt heere receive a Translation wel intended, wherein the Translator could have noe other end, but to informe thee aright. To looke for glorie from Translation, is beneath my intention, and if I had aimed at that, I would not have chosen so late a writer, but heere I have stored up, as much of antiquitie, as would most fitlie serve for this purpose. I desire to have noe more guest at of me, but that I am a Catholique, and a Woman: the first serves for mine

honor, and the second, for my excuse, since if the worke be but meanelly done, it is noe wonder, for my Sexe can raise noe great expectation of anie thing that shall come from me: yet were it a great follie in me, if I would expose to the view of the world, a worke of this kinde, except I judged it, to want nothing fitt, for a Translation. Therefore, I will confesse, I thinke it well done, and so had I confest sufficientlie in printing it: if it gaine noe applause, hee that writt it faire, hath lost more labour then I have done, for I dare avouch, it hath bene four times as long in transcribing, as it was in translating. I will not make use of that worne-out forme of saying, I printed it against my will, mooved by the importunitie of Friends: I was mooved to it by my beleefe, that it might make those English that understand not French, whereof there are manie, even in our universities, reade Perron; And when that is done, I have my End, the rest I leave to God's pleasure.

Cary's definition of honor revises the standards of silence and female chastity put forth as signs of good women in Renaissance treatises and handbooks. She defines her "honor" solely in relation to her controversial choice of religion: "that I am a Catholique serves for mine honor." She expresses the male-imposed ethos of female humility in her acknowledgements that she is "a Woman," and that her gender serves for her "excuse, since if the worke be but meanelly done it is noe wonder, for my Sexe can raise noe great expectation of anie thing that shall come from me." Yet she alludes to the overtly misogynist tradition of demeaning



women in order to sabotage it. Male misogyny is summarily dismissed in Cary's confession that she thinks her work "well done, and so had [she] confest sufficientlie in printing it." This reversal implies that her sex, therefore, can raise expectations for women's abilities from her example. Cary then amplifies her reversal and subverts the tropes of male precedence and female subordination in the gendered English system of male and female linguistic instruction. She exhibits none of the conventional female reluctance to speak (in this case, textually) in her declaration that she will use no inauthentic "worne-out forme of saying" that she printed the book against her will, to satisfy the importunity of friends. As a woman author, she assumes the prerogative of making the work of a French writer with whom she shares a common religious point of view available to all English readers who "understand not French," among whom are included students at the all-male universities. Reversing rhetorical gender precedence, she will provide instruction to learned men.

In leaving the rest "to God's pleasure" rather than the pursuit of earthly glory, Cary invokes religion to support her literary enterprise. While we might argue here that her religious stance and her anonymity conspire to silence her word, we should also bear in mind that her disavowal of male standards of evaluation of the female generally, and the female writer specifically, firmly asserts female equality and openly contests the boundaries set for the containment of women's speech. Furthermore, Cary needed to leave no authorial signature for the English Catholic clergy, three of whom had included poems of praise for the work that follows her dedication.<sup>24</sup> The male students of Cambridge and Oxford to whom she directs her work as doctrinal instruction<sup>25</sup> would quite possibly be aware of her identity.<sup>26</sup> Nor is her signature necessary for the feminist scholars who, in taking her work out of the canonical closet and

into the light of current scholarship, supply the missing inscription and defend Cary's feminist literary challenge.

The language of Cary's preface constitutes a form of political discourse when we consider that she is expressing dissent against, and challenging the patriarchal authority of the Church of England, the monarchy, and the entire English Protestant political body. The subversive potential of her presumably modest literary work was recognized by the institutionalized English religious hierarchy when Archbishop Abbotts (of Canterbury) had the English copies seized and burned.<sup>27</sup> The few copies that remain are evidence, however, that Cary found protectors for her work long before the efforts of feminist researchers. Indeed, she dedicated her translation to the most powerful of British female patrons, Henrietta Maria, queen of England and a Catholic:

To The Majestie of Henrietta Maria of Bourbon

Queene of Great Brittain

Your Majestie,

May please to be informed, that I have in this dedication delivered you that right, that I durst not with-hold from you: your challenge hath so manie just titles, as had I given it to anie others protection, I had done your Maiestie a palpable iniurie. You are a daughter of France, and therefore fittest to owne his worke who was in his time, an Ornament of your countrie. You are the Queene of England, and therefore fittest to patronize the making him an English man, that, was before so famous a Frenchman. You are Kinge James his Sonns wife, and therefore, since the misfortune of our times, hath made it a

presumption, to give the Inheritance of this worke (that was sent to the Father in Frech) to the Sonne in English, whose proper right it is, you are fittest to receive it for him, who are such a parte of him, as none can make you two, other then one. And for the honor of my Sexe, let me saie it, you are a woeman, though farr above other wemen, therefore fittest to protect a womans worke, if a plaine translation wherein there is nothing aimed at, but rightlie to expresse the Authors intencion may be called a worke. And last (to crowne your other additions) you are a Catholicke, and a zealous one, and therefore fittest to receive the dedication of a Catholicke-worke. And besides all this which doth appropriate it to you for my particular, your Maiestie is she, to whom I professe my selfe.

A most faithfull subject, and a  
most humble servant

In openly requesting the queen's protection and addressing the queen as a positive female example, the dedication differs from the formal debate practice of citing religious and classical heroines. Henrietta Maria is not only a symbol of female royal power; she is a politically influential, living contemporary. Cary attests to the political impulse of her choice in her statement that "the misfortune of our times" prevents her from delivering the work to James's son, Charles I. Since current policies preclude the transference of Perron's reply to Charles, the queen has "just titles" to receive it into her "protection." The radical nature of Cary's revisionary gender constructs is reflected in her decision first to defend a

male work, then to look to another female as a higher authority figure and her protector.

Cary defines the queen as both protector and collaborator in her own self-authorized literary task of maker, a task that male rhetoricians and poets like Sidney figure as a male-controlled poetics, generally aided by the *prosopopoeia* of feminized nature as a secondary adjunct. In calling on another member of her own sex to act as co-creator in the translation of Perron the Frenchman into an Englishman, Cary reverses the tropes of male dominance and female submission that define women's literary and verbal discourse. The etymology of metaphor as "translation" comes into play in Cary's literary reconstitution of the cardinal in which she requests the queen's assistance: "You are a daughter of France, and therefore fittest to owne his worke who was in his time, an Ornament of your countrie. You are the Queene of England, and therefore fittest to patronize the making him an English man, that, was before so famous a Frenchman." The anaphoric stress on "You," "therefore," and "fittest" implies that Cary is in control of the logic, rhetoric, and decorum of her designation of Henrietta Maria as patron and defender of her bold literary remaking of Perron.

Male constructs of the female are further revised in Cary's amplification of the topos of female honor, attributed in the preface to her individual identity as a Catholic. In the dedication she associates women's honor in a more general sense with the queen as an exceptional example of Catholicism as well as female honor: "And for the honor of my Sexe, let me saie it, you are a woeman, though farr above other wemen, therefore fittest to protect a womans worke. . . . you are a Catholike, and a zealous one, and therefore fittest to receive the dedication of a Catholicke-worke." Cary simultaneously praises her sex and religion, and seeks protection and patronage for her work from her designated example of female excellence and magnanimity. The clause "though farr above other wemen" links

Henrietta Maria to the Virgin Mary, thus identifying the living queen with a biblical exemplum. The single allusion to a historical and religious exemplum, however, does not obscure the significance of the fact that Henrietta Maria is also a contemporary example.<sup>28</sup> While this defense of her work links her gender to Catholicism, Cary feminizes the term *Catholic* into a precisely opposite connotation to that projected by Wilson; she converts her version of Catholicism into a sign of all that is good and praiseworthy in women. For amplification we have a chorus of three poems, at least one of which was written by a member of the all-male Catholic clergy, praising Cary's labours, intelligence, and virtues to suggest that she succeeded in converting this particular form of patriarchal discourse<sup>29</sup> into a persuasive defense of her sex. Cary, indeed, seems to have had a penchant for appropriating and transforming various modes of patriarchal discourse into women's defenses, and in the process reinscribing woman in the order of language.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Anne Cary, The Lady Falkland: Her Life, ed. Richard Simpson from a manuscript in the Imperial Archives at Lille (London: Catholic Publishing and Bookselling Co., Ltd., 1861). Among the apparently lost works reported in the biography are the "Life of Tamberlaine" in verse, a play, set in Sicily and dedicated and presented to her husband by Elizabeth Cary shortly after their marriage (9). Cary refers to this play in her dedication of Mariam to her sister-in-law, another Elizabeth Cary. Anne Cary also notes that her mother wrote on the lives of several female saints in verse, and composed poems to the Virgin Mary. Her earliest published work was a translation of a French geography, "The Mirror of the Worlde," dedicated to her great-uncle on her mother's side, Sir Henry Lee, and written when Cary was about ten years old. The manuscript of this translation is in the church at Burford, Oxfordshire, Cary's place of birth. See Kenneth B. Murdock, The Sun at Noon: Three biographical Sketches (New York: Macmillan, 1939)10-11. Cary continued to do translations all her life. Her translation of The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinall of Perron. to the Answere of the Most Excellent King of Great Britaine was published at Douay in 1630 and seized and burned by the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Abbots. A few copies of the latter survived. A verse biography entitled The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, signed E.F. and dated 1627 is generally attributed to Cary, although, as in the Mariam tragedy, we have only the initials to indicate her authorship. The Life refers also to Cary's

translations of Cardinal Perron's works and a translation of Blossius on which she was working until the time of her death.

<sup>2</sup> Life, 9.

<sup>3</sup> A complimentary verse by the poet John Davies, praising the literary talents of the countesses of Pembroke and Bedford and those of Elizabeth Cary, was published in 1612 as a dedication to his "The Muse's Sacrifice Or, Divine Meditations." Davies had been one of Cary's childhood tutors, and the section of the poem addressed to her encourages her to publish her plays:

CARY (of whom Minerva stands in feare,  
lest she from her, should get ARTS Regencie)  
Of ART so moves the great-all-moving Spheare,  
that ev'ry Orbe of Science moves thereby.  
Thou mak'st Melpomen proud, and my Heart great  
of such a Pupill, who, in Buskin fine,  
With Feete of State, dost make thy Muse to mete  
the scenes of Syracuse and Palestine.

Art, Language; yea; abstruse and holy Tongues  
thy Wit and Grace acquir'd thy Fame to raise;  
And still to fill thine owne, and others' Songs'  
thine with thy Parts, and others, with thy praise.

Such nervy Limbes of Art, and Straines of Wit  
Times past ne'er knew the weaker Sexe to have;  
And Times to come will hardly credit it,

if thus thou give thy Workes both Birth and  
Grave.

See The Complete Works of John Davies of Herford, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (New York: AMSP, 1967) 11, 4-5. Davies is quoted in Sandra K. Fischer, "Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny, Domestic and Religious," Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1985) 225-37. Fischer also notes that John Marston dedicated his collected Works to "The Right Honourable, the Lady Elizabeth Carey, Viscountess Falkland . . . Because your Honour is well acquainted with the Muses." Richard More dedicated his 1614 edition of England's Helicon "TO THE TRULY VERTUOUS AND Honourable Lady, the Lady ELIZABETH CARIE." Among other tributes to her learning and religious piety were praises by Father Leander, mentioned in the Life, and allusions to her prolific output by Mr. Clayton in In Laudem nobilissimae heroinae (cit. Fischer, Silent, 231).

<sup>4</sup> In addition to a number of critical essays, among which are included Elaine Beilin, "Elizabeth Cary and The Tragedie of Mariam," Papers on Language and Literature 16. 1 (1980). The latter is also included in Beilin's Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987). The Malone Society reprint of Mariam, ed. A.C. Dunstan and W. W. Greg (Oxford: MSR-Oxford UP, 1914) has been updated with a 1988 printing.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harbinger-Harcourt, 1957) 47. Until recently, the little criticism that Cary's play received was mostly negative. Chambers Encyclopaedia of English Literature 1 calls it "a



long-winded poem" (490). The Dictionary of National Biography vol. 9, (64), refers to it as "a tedious poem." In an inaugural-dissertation, "Examination of Two English Dramas: 'The Tragedy of Mariam' by Elizabeth Carew; and 'The True Tragedy of Herod and Antipater: With the Death of faire Mariam,'" by Gervase Markham, and William Sampson" Cyril Dunstan remarks on the regularity of the poetic rhythm and end rhymes, "[p]overty of thought, frequent exaggeration, attempts at rhetoric which are too obvious [as] the most conspicuous faults in the drama" (43). Dunstan points to a few strong lines and concludes that "The dramatist is no mean workman as far as construction is concerned but is no poet" (43). Elsewhere he notes that "It seems to have escaped everyone's notice that Elizabeth Carew's drama [Dunstan here enhances Cary's invisibility by confusing Cary with Elizabeth Carew] with its Chorus, its Nuntio, its division into five acts, its observation of the unities, its lack of action, its very long exposition, its lack of comic scenes, etc. is one of the most, if not the most, regular of all English Classical dramas" (4). See also M. J. Valency, The Tragedies of Herod and Mariamne (New York: Columbia UP, 1946).

<sup>6</sup> See note 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cary was born during Elizabeth's reign; she was fifteen years old when James came to the throne, and she lived well into the reign of Charles I.

<sup>8</sup> Her eldest son, Lucius, the second Viscount Falkland was an atheist. Although he did not share his mother's religious views, he was devoted to her and shared many of her literary interests.

<sup>9</sup> Cary's self-taught mastery of foreign languages, including French, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew among others and her insatiable lifelong reading habits are described in the biography (Life, 4).

<sup>10</sup> Henry Cary was made Viscount Falkland in 1620. See Murdock, 15.

One might suspect that Cary's submission to Henry Cary's will was the same kind of deference that she displayed in her letters to the British Privy Council. As I shall demonstrate, in my analysis of the letters, Cary's deferential stance was actually deployed as a strategy to discreetly guide the influential men to whom she turned for assistance.

<sup>11</sup> Cary's destitution in the final years of her marriage is particularly ironic in view of the fact that Henry Cary married her solely for her money. Cary's father, Lawrence Tanfield, was an extremely wealthy man, and as an only child she inherited a considerable fortune. The Carys on the other hand had some social status but little money when the marriage was arranged.

<sup>12</sup> Life, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Cary's children were taken from her on the grounds of her recusancy.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, there were few areas of male-appropriated areas of discourse more firmly closed to women during the early seventeenth-century than English law.

<sup>15</sup> Cyril Dunstan makes no specific references to the "too obvious" attempts at rhetoric for which he faults Cary as a dramatist (see note 5) and no reference to her rhetorical strategies per se.

<sup>16</sup> While this is a formulaic address for the time, I would argue that Cary's male protectors interpreted it literally in her case.

<sup>17</sup> Obviously we cannot underestimate the response that Falkland's excessively harsh treatment of his wife would provoke from the Privy Council. The facts that Charles was tolerant of if not openly sympathetic to Catholics and

that he was very fond of his Catholic queen, Henrietta Maria, no doubt also contributed to his advocacy of Cary's cause.

<sup>18</sup> This deferential posture was customary form for the period. Subjects petitioning the Crown often performed deep obeisances to the ground. Cary's rhetorical stance thus follows conventional decorum. Her letters, however, heighten and amplify the stress on her humility as a female subject.

<sup>19</sup> State Papers Domestic, May 18, 1627. Vol. 1.xiii. No. 89.

<sup>20</sup> See Anne Cary, Life, and the appendix to that work, also Murdock, The Sun at Noon.

<sup>21</sup> Cary's play was written during James's reign and may well have reflected a subversive challenge to James's absolutist politics. I will not enter a discussion here of the well-known political challenges to royal absolutism that culminated in the execution of Charles II. Male absolutism in respect to wives and women-in-general faced no such political challenges, largely due to women's legal and economic disempowerment. See, for example, Constance Jordan, Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) 309-11.

<sup>22</sup> The Reply Of The Most Illustrious Cardinall Of Perron. To The Answere Of The Most Excellent King Of Great Britaine, The First Tome Trans. into English (Douay: Martin Bogart, 1630), Folger STC. Cary's text is a translation of the French cardinal's reply on a religious issue to James I.

<sup>23</sup> See my chapter 1.

<sup>24</sup> The Latin title of this poem translates as "In Praise of Noble Women." I include an excerpt from the English translation:

One woman, in one Month, so large a booke,

In such a full emphatik stile to turne:  
 Ist not all one, as when a spacious brooke,  
 Flowes in a moment from a little Burne?  
 Or is't not rather to exceede the Moone  
 In swift performance of so long a race,  
 To end so great and hard a worke as soone,  
 As Cynthia doth her various galliard trace?  
 Or is she not that miracle of Arts  
 The true Elixir, that by onely touch  
 To any mettals, worth of gold imparts?  
 For me, I think she valewes thrice as much.  
 A wondrous Quintessence of woman-kind,  
 In whome alone, what els in'all, we find.

Another reads:

Beleeve me reader, they are much deluded  
 Whoe think that learning's not for ladies fitt;  
 For wisdom with their sexe as well doth fitt,  
 As orient pearle in golden chace included.  
 T'will make their husbands, if they have true eyes,  
 Wise beauty, beauteous wisdom deerly prize.

The poem from which this last excerpt is taken was composed by a member of the Catholic clergy and friend to Elizabeth Cary, one Father Leander. The text also includes another anonymous lengthy poem in praise of her translation.

<sup>25</sup> The contention surrounding her recusancy made her a well-known figure in her own time.

<sup>26</sup> Many of these men were friends of her son, Lucius Cary, the second Viscount Falkland. See the Life and Murdoch, The Sun at Noon. Cary and her son frequently engaged in religious disputes, partly in earnest and partly as intellectual exercises, in the presence of his friends.

<sup>27</sup> Life, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Cary renamed herself Mary after her conversion (See Life, 39,117).

<sup>29</sup> Among a number of excellent references on the topic of patristic and scholastic oppression and subordination of the female, I recommend for further reading Jordan, Renaissance Feminism and Maclean, The Renaissance Notion of Women (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980).

## Conclusion

My analysis of the rhetorical structures of women's defenses in the several genres of early Stuart letters selected for this study traces a pattern of recurrent tropes figuring women in a subordinate place in the order of language. The Renaissance rhetorical handbooks, the pamphlets of the formal debate over women, and the dramatic tragedies and comedies that we have explored are informed by a subtext of patriarchal absolutism expressed in the linguistic power relations that privilege male speech and assign control and proprietorship of women and women's speech to men. According to the conventions devised by male rhetoricians and male writers in general in the early seventeenth-century, women neither use nor study the figures of rhetoric. They are themselves used figuratively as the silent, passive constructs of the male authors. The rhetorical fiction that equates silence with female chastity, connoting female fluency in any medium as the sign of a fallen woman, poses a dilemma for female defenses. In all of the examples selected for this scrutiny, female apologists must negotiate or contest these constraints against female speech in order to transform their negative rhetorical positions and reconstitute themselves as empowered speaking subjects.

I have argued that the problem of women's negative inscription in the dominant rhetorical structures of early Stuart discourse begins in the rhetorical treatises, canonized as authoritative guides to proper speech. Patriarchal control of women's speech continues in the gender polemics of the formal controversy. In the arguments on both sides, women are constructed in binary terms and

defended or attacked as abstract and overly simplified personifications of good or evil. Indeed, the entire debate over women seems to be a rhetorical exercise designed to train male writers in the arts of dialectic and to contain women within the male-defined conventions that assign them to a marginal place in the symbolic order. In the discourse of the debate pamphlets as in the rhetorical treatises, women are figured as complementary adjuncts to the male speaker/agents who control and determine the genre. Male proprietorship of women's place and meaning in the order of language is revealed even in the defense arguments of female apologists, ventriloquistically repeating male definitions of women.

The pattern of female oppression in the order of language is particularly evident in the dramatic tragedies examined in this inquiry. Desdemona, Cordelia, and Mariam, each in her own way, attempts to negotiate the subordinate female position in language, and to challenge the limits that patriarchal absolutism imposes on female speech. In Othello, Desdemona is destroyed by the power of male fictions of female place and meaning in the symbolic order, particularly by the fiction of woman as male property, and by the authority of the male word. Male effacement of female speech ends in disaster in this play in which Desdemona is victimized by Iago's and Othello's violent abuses of patriarchal authority. In King Lear, Cordelia, too, is sacrificed to male proprietorship of female discourse and to the abuse of patriarchal power. Because she will not speak according to Lear's desires in the opening scene in the play, he accuses her of filial disloyalty and sets in motion the events that lead to their mutual destruction.

The most direct confrontation between patriarchal absolutism and women's speech, however, occurs in Elizabeth Cary's Mariam tragedy. Although Cary's protagonist, Mariam, like Desdemona and Cordelia, is unable to

defend herself against a false accusation, she does succeed in liberating herself from patriarchal control of her speech, subverting both Herod's authority and the constricting terms by which women are defined. Both Cary and Shakespeare expose and subvert the fiction of women as the properties of proprietary males. Yet while Shakespeare addresses the related problems of women's defenses and the constraints on female speech, Orbello and King Lear focus on the male protagonists; Cary's tragedy centers on the female characters and the female issues. Cary's experiments with the gender stereotypes that are the logical corollary of the tropes of male dominance and female subordination, challenge conventional patriarchal logic and reinscribe women in a more central place in the order of language.

Through the appropriation and exploitation of negative male constructs of women, the comic heroines in Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl and Fletcher's The Woman's Prize individually subvert the rhetorical figurations that constrain female discourse and impede female defenses. Yet Moll Cutpurse and Maria are both situated marginally in the symbolic order—Moll, through her status as a transvestite and outsider, and Maria, through the extremity of her situation that requires a radical solution. Moll's autonomous speech and her bold defense of women imply that in crossing the dress code she crosses linguistic gender lines, assuming male verbal freedom with her male garments. Yet her personal autonomy is only an individual exemption from the general rule. In resorting to an irrational feminized language, figured as female inconstancy, to cure Petruchio of his misogyny, Maria suggests that no reasoned, logical arguments would suffice to transform women's place in the symbolic order. Once Petruchio is cured, she reverts to the conventional woman's role in the marriage model. Both plays thus suggest temporary, playful digressions from the status quo of gender relations and from the constraints on female apologists.



Treading more boldly in her examinations and revisions of gendered power relations in the order of language, Elizabeth Cary traverses several modes and genres of female apologies—drama, letters, legal discourse, and a translation-preface. Cary's drama subverts patriarchal constructs of women by reversing and exposing them as fallacious. Her artful appropriation of the rhetorical figures that suppress women's speech in her letters to Charles I and the British Privy Council transforms them into eloquent and successful self-defenses. Cary's skill in the art of legal dialectics in her Star Chamber defense is abundant proof of her rejection of patriarchal limits on female speech. It is, however, in the preface to her translation of Perron and the dedication to Queen Henrietta Maria that she engages these gender issues directly, in the process refiguring the tropes of female subordination, rewriting women's place in the symbolic contract, and presenting an unapologetic defense of women.

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## Statement of Originality

In Defense of Her Sex contributes to feminist research of the gender polemics of the English Renaissance. One aspect of this contribution lies in the application of Julia Kristeva's model of the unstable place of women in the order of language to an early seventeenth-century context. Beginning with an analysis of selected Renaissance rhetorical treatises, I demonstrate the constitution of women as disempowered speaking subjects on the margins of discourse. By examining the tropes of male dominance and female subordination across a variety of genres, I find evidence that the constraints on women's speech are figured in literature as they are experienced in life. My focus on women's defenses of women reveals the attempts of real and fictional women in the early Stuart period to reconstitute themselves as speaking subjects.

As my study acknowledges, I am indebted to the work of numerous critics. However, even where my debt is greatest, I have endeavoured to take the argument in a somewhat different direction. For example, Patricia Parker's investigation of the lexicon, structures, and figures of rhetoric in relation to gender and to the discipline of rhetoric as a motivated discourse in Literary Fat Ladies has proved a useful guide for my general approach and methodology, and Constance Jordan's pan-European and transgeneric critical study of literary defenses of women, Renaissance Feminism, has helped to broaden the context of my thesis. My inquiry, nevertheless, focuses more narrowly on both issues. It diverges from Parker's work in centering specifically on the rhetorical problems that confront real and fictional women attempting to forge a more central place for

themselves in the order of language, and contrasts to Jordan's in being limited to English resources, and extending to the genre of drama.